111th Congress, 1st Session – – – – – – – – – – – – – – House Document 111–23

PROCEEDINGS OF 90th NATIONAL CONVENTION *of the*

AMERICAN LEGION

Phoenix, Arizona

August 22–28, 2008

2008 : 90th NATIONAL CONVENTION OF THE AMERICAN LEGION : 2008

111th Congress, 1st Session – – – – – – – – – – – – – – House Document 111–23

PROCEEDINGS OF THE 90TH NATIONAL CONVENTION OF THE AMERICAN LEGION

COMMUNICATION

FROM

THE DIRECTOR, NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION, THE AMERICAN LEGION

TRANSMITTING

THE FINANCIAL STATEMENT AND INDEPENDENT AUDIT OF THE AMERICAN LEGION PROCEEDINGS OF THE 90TH ANNUAL NATIONAL CONVENTION OF THE AMERICAN LEGION, HELD IN PHOENIX, ARIZONA FROM AUGUST 22–28, 2008, AND A REPORT ON THE ORGANIZATION'S ACTIVITIES FOR THE YEAR PRECEDING THE CONVENTION, PURSUANT TO 36 U.S.C. 49

MARCH 10, 2009.—Referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs and ordered to be printed

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LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

THE AMERICAN LEGION,
Washington, DC, March 9, 2009.

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

DEAR MADAM SPEAKER: In compliance with current public law we herewith transmit for printing as a House document a financial statement and independent audit of The American Legion, proceedings of our 90th annual National Convention held in Phoenix, Arizona from August 22–28, 2008 and a report on our organization's activities for the year preceding the convention.

Sincerely,

STEVE A. ROBERTSON,
Director, National Legislative Commission.

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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, in as small space as possible, of what took place at the Ninetieth Annual National Convention in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26-28, 2008.

The final report of the National Organization, for the period ending December 31, 2007, and Balance Sheet as of December 31, 2007 and Surplus Analysis, January 1, 2007 to December 31, 2007 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 or all *resolve clause(s)* is used when a quotation from a resolution is required for publication.

Robert W. Spanogle
National Adjutant

Note: At various times, the National Vice Commanders, as follows, presided over the Convention sessions, when called upon by presiding officer, in accordance with the Uniform Code of Procedure as shown in the verbatim proceedings: Peggy G. Dettori, Alaska; Thomas L. Burns, Jr., Delaware: Randall A. Fisher, Kentucky; Donald Hayden, Minnesota; David A. Korth, Wisconsin.

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 John J. Pershing*
Marshall Ferdinand Foch*

PARIS CAUCUS
Paris France, March 15 to 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, Missouri, May 8 to 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, Minnesota, November 10 to 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, September 27 to 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: Robert A. Adams*, Indiana

3rd NATIONAL CONVENTION
Kansas City, Missouri, October 31 to November 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, Louisiana, October 16 to 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, California, October 16 to 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, Minnesota, September 15 to 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, Nebraska, October 5 to 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, Pennsylvania, October 11 to 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, New York, October 18, 1927
Paris, France, September 19 to 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, October 8 to 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 Indiana

11th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Louisville, Kentucky, September 30 to October 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, Massachusetts, October 6 to 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, Michigan, September 21 to 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, Oregon, September 12 to 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, Illinois, October 2 to 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, Florida, October 22 to 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, Missouri, September 23 to 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; Quimby 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, September 21 to 24, 1936
Commander: Ray Murphy*, Iowa
Vice Commanders: Raymond F. Gates*, Connecticut; Dr. W.E. Whitlock*, Florida; Oscar W. Worthwine*, Idaho; Dr. F. Whitney Godwin*, Virginia; Louis R. Probst*, 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, New York, September 20 to 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, California, September 19 to 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, Illinois, September 25 to 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, Massachusetts, September 23 to 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, Wisconsin, September 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, Missouri, September 19 to 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, Nebraska, September 21 to 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
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana

26th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Chicago, Illinois, September 18 to 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, Illinois, November 18 to 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, California, September 30 to October 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, New York, August 28 to 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 Florida, October 18 to 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, Pennsylvania, August 29 to September 1, 1949
Commander: S. Perry Brown*, Texas
Theodore Roosevelt, Jr.*, New York, Past National Commander
Vice Commanders: James Lane, Alabama; Leonard W. Moody*, Arkansas; James Annin*, Montana; Walter E. Alessandroni*, Pennsylvania; Edward J. Kelly*, Connecticut
Adjutant: Henry H. Dudley*, Nebraska.
Chaplain: Rev. Thomas Grice*, California
Historian: Monte C. Sandlin*, Alabama
Treasurer: Neal Grider*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana

32nd NATIONAL CONVENTION
Los Angeles, California, October 9 to 12, 1950
Commander: George N. Craig*, Indiana

Vice Commanders: Milton G. Boock*, Minnesota; David H. Fleisher*, Missouri; Frank E. Lowe*, Maine; J. E. Martie*, Nevada; Dr. D. R. Perry*, North Carolina
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, Florida, October 15 to 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, New York, August 25 to 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, Missouri, August 31 to September 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., August 30 to September 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, Florida, October 10 to 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, California, September 3 to 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, New Jersey, September 16 to 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, Illinois, September 1 to 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, Minnesota, August 24 to 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, Florida, October 15 to 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, Colorado, September 9 to 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, Nevada, October 5 to 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, Florida, September 6 to 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, September 18 to 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, Oregon, August 20 to 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., August 30 to September 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, Massachusetts, August 25 to 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, Louisiana, September 6 to 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, Georgia, August 22 to 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, Oregon, August 28 to September 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, August 27 to September 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, Illinois, August 18 to 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, August 17 to 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, Florida, August 16 to 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, Minnesota, August 15 to 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, Washington, August 20 to 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 Grimes*, Colorado
Treasurer: William Francis Polen*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

59th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Denver, Colorado, August 19 to 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, Louisiana, August 18 to 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, August 17 to 23, 1979
Commander: John M. Carey*, Michigan
Hamilton Fish*, New York, Past National Commander

Vice Commanders: L. Max Connoly*, 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, Massachusetts, August 15 to 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, August 28 to September 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, Illinois, August 20 to 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, Washington, August 19 to 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, September 3 to 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, Louisiana, August 23 to 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, August 29 to September 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, August 21 to 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, Kentucky, September 6 to 8, 1988
Commander: John P. 'Jake' Comer, Massachusetts
Vice Commanders: Neale V. Cabral*, Connecticut; Joe Frank, Jr., Missouri; W. P. 'Bill' Peterson*, Montana; Paul B. Phifer, Jr.*, Virginia; F. Leon Reed*, Arkansas
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Rev. Jerry Salveson*, Minnesota
Historian: Edward F. Brennan*, Illinois
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

71st NATIONAL CONVENTION
Baltimore, Maryland, September 5 to 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, Indiana, August 28 to 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, Arizona, September 3 to 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, Illinois, August 25 to 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, Pennsylvania, September 3 to 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, Minnesota, September 6 to 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, Indiana, September 4 to 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, Maryland

78th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Salt Lake City, Utah, August 30 to September 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, Maryland

79th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Orlando, Florida, August 29 to September 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, Maryland

80th NATIONAL CONVENTION
New Orleans, Louisiana, September 4 to 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, Maryland

81st NATIONAL CONVENTION
Anaheim, California, September 3 to 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, Wisconsin, September 1 to 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, August 24-30, 2001
Commander: Ray G. Smith, North Carolina
Vice Commanders: Charles C. Ragsdell, Arkansas; James E. Koutz, Indiana;
Henry P. Bradley, Massachusetts; John C. Pellegrini, Montana; William A. Weatherly*, South Carolina
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Calvin C. Turpin, California
Historian: James Buterbaugh, Kansas
Treasurer: George A. Buskirk, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

84th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Charlotte, North Carolina, August 27-29, 2002
Commander: Richard J. Santos, Maryland
Vice Commanders: Russell H. Hanseter, Wisconsin; Charles R. John*, Oklahoma; Terry D. Lewis, Pennsylvania; James F. Mareschal, Missouri; Dale R. Salmen, Nevada
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: David F. Russell, Virginia
Historian: Walter L. Davis, Michigan
Treasurer: George A. Buskirk, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

85th NATIONAL CONVENTION
St. Louis, Missouri, August 26-28, 2003
Commander: Ronald F. Conley, Pennsylvania
Vice Commanders: Jefferson 'Jeff' Luginbuel; Roy L. Kirkham, Louisiana; Robert M. Johnson, Maryland; Robert G. Bournival, New Hampshire; Donavon R. Mason, South Dakota
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Rev. Norris A. Keirn, Indiana
Historian: Donald F. Simons, Texas
Treasurer: George A. Buskirk, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Maryland

86th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004
Commander: John A. Brieden, III, Texas
Vice Commanders: Richard G. Denbow, Iowa; Michael Dennis Helm, Kansas;
Fang A. Wong, New York; Clinton E. Thompson, North Carolina; Todd E. White, Wyoming
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Rev. Dr. William J. P. Doubek, III, Missouri
Historian: Fae Casper, Georgia
Treasurer: George A. Buskirk, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Maryland

87th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Honolulu, Hawaii, August 23-25, 2005
Commander: Thomas P. Cadmus, Michigan
Vice Commanders: Marco A. Valenzuela, Arizona; Charles W. Barrett, Georgia; Samuel Barney, Ohio; Wayne B. Richey, South Carolina; Linda M. Thayer, Vermont
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Rev. James T. Akers, Kansas
Historian: W. Frazier Brinley, Connecticut
Treasurer: George A. Buskirk, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Maryland

88th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Salt Lake City, Utah, August 29-31, 2006
Commander: Thomas L. Bock, Colorado
Vice Commanders: Willard F. Coffey, Michigan; James H. Hall, New Jersey; Taurino J. Trevino, New Mexico; Sebastian T. Roll, North Dakota; Michael E. Harris, Virginia
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Steven E. Wright, Utah
Historian: Johnny B. Keel, Louisiana
Treasurer: George A. Buskirk, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Maryland

89th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Reno, Nevada, August 28-30, 2007
Commander: Paul A. Morin, Massachusetts
Vice Commanders: Bryon W. White, Alabama; Elgin Wahlborg, Kansas; Lloyd H. Woods, Maine; Robert C. Lahiere, Tennessee; Allan C. Setterberg, Utah
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Stanley Gruneich, South Dakota
Historian: Michael J. Miskell, Pennsylvania
Treasurer: George A. Buskirk, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Maryland

90th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Phoenix, Arizona, August 26-28, 2008
Commander: Martin F. Conatser
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
Chaplain: Rev. Elliott L. Foss, Jr. Georgia
Historian: James M. Holmes
Treasurer: George A. Buskirk, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Maryland

PROCEEDINGS

of the

90th Annual Convention

of

The American Legion

Tuesday, August 26, 2008

…At 8:00 a.m. the Delegates were entertained by Mr. Peter Ole, the organist.

…At 8:30 a.m. the Delegates assembled for the 90th Annual National Convention, and the following proceedings were conducted.

Call to Order
Martin 'Marty' Conatser, Illinois, National Commander

The 90th National Convention will come to order.

Ladies and gentlemen, please rise as the National Champion Color Guard from Post 49, Tilton, New Hampshire presents our National Colors and please remain standing for our National Anthem. We will have a special honor this morning. Our National Anthem will be presented by a group of service members live via satellite from Joint Base Balad in Iraq. Please begin.

…At this time the delegates saluted the flag and remained standing for the singing of the National Anthem by service members, including Captain Lisa Kopczynski, from Joint Base Balad, Iraq.

For the Invocation, I call on the National Chaplain, Rev. Elliott L. Foss of Kingsland, Georgia. Ladies and gentlemen; please uncover.

Invocation
Elliott L. Foss, Georgia, National Chaplain

Let us pray. God we come here today for freedom. We come here today for peace, and we come to honor brave men and women who have served and are still serving. We know Father, that all gave some, some gave all. As we enter into this 90th convention, we pray Your spirit to be with us in strength, giving us wisdom, giving us courage to stand up and do what must be done, and God bless America today. We need you now more than ever. Let hope continue to be throughout this world for freedom and democracy. Bless our soldiers, our sailors, our airmen, our Marines, Coast Guardsmen, our reserve units throughout this world. And when the war is over, bring them home safely. For we pray it for God and for country. Amen.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: Thank you, Chaplain Elliott.

Pledge of Allegiance

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: Ladies and gentlemen, the National Sergeant-at-Arms, Denver R. Phelps, will lead us in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

…At this time, the Delegation recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

POW/MIA Empty Chair Ceremony
Michael D. Helm, Nebraska, Chairman, Foreign Relations Commission
'Doc' Simon, Vermont, Vice Chairman, Foreign Relations Commission

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: At this time we pause to remember those who are listed as Prisoners of War or Missing in Action from the wars in which we have been engaged.

We in The American Legion will never forget them. We will not ease the pressure on our government to do the right thing, and continue to work for an accounting of all those missing.

Now I call on Chairman of the Foreign Relations Commission, Michael D. Helm of Nebraska and 'Doc' Simon of Vermont, Vice Chairman of the Foreign Relations Commission, to place the POW/MIA flag on the empty chair.

…At this time the POW/MIA flag is placed on the Empty Chair.

Please cover.

Preamble to The American Legion Constitution
Martin 'Marty' Conatser, Illinois, National Commander

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: Legionnaires please join me in reaffirming our commitment to the principles and ideas of which the great American Legion was founded by reciting the Preamble to the Constitution.

…At this time, the Delegation recited the Preamble.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: Please be seated. We're going to return to our friends and comrades in Iraq for a few moments before we continue. Representing the 3rd Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) at Joint Base Balad, is Brigadier General Michael J. Lally Commander of all logistics operations in Iraq. General, we thank you for all your service to our country, and for helping us start our 90th National Convention. We want to assure you that we are gathered here, as we have since our founding, to support all of you, and your families in your noble mission. And we pledge our support to you after you return home to make sure that your country does not forget your sacrifices and your contributions to the entire free world. May God bless and watch over all of you.

Address: Brigadier General Michael J. Lally
Third Sustainment Command, Joint Base Balad, Iraq

Ladies and gentlemen, I'm Brigadier General Michael J. Lally. I'm the Commander of the 3rd Expeditionary Sustainment Command, currently stationed here at Joint Base Balad. It's a great pleasure; let me back up here a second. For the last 90 years, The American Legion has dedicated itself to serving our communities, serving our veterans, and serving our great country. It is my pleasure to welcome you to this National Convention, but first of all I personally want to thank each and every one of you, for your past and future service to our nation.

Legionnaires like you, and the Legionnaires behind me right here are what make this nation great, and ensure that we're ready for the future. The values you fought for, that you continue to fight for, are the same values that we cherish and fight for everyday here in Iraq, and I want to guarantee you, that the American service men and women over here, will never let you or our great nation down. Therefore, on behalf of the 16,000 service members in the 3rd Expeditionary Sustainment Command, and the thousands of American sailors, airmen, Marine, and soldiers throughout Iraq, we wish you a safe, rewarding, and productive National Convention. Before I leave, these great Americans behind me have one more to say.

SOLDIERS: Thank you American Legion for all your continuing support. Sustaining the line! (*Applause and Cheering from the Delegates*)

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: I want to thank you Sir, and on behalf of all the Delegates, from the Legion, the Auxiliary, and the Sons that are with us this morning, we're so proud of your service, and all of our soldiers' service.

BRIGADIER GENERAL MICHAEL J. LALLY: Thank you very much, and I hope you guys have a great time.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: Now please welcome to our convention from Huntsville, Alabama, the musical group Valor.

Musical Selection: *Together We Will Stand*

ANNOUNCER: Together, we will stand as we have since our founding in 1919. We stand in support of our comrades, our buddies. When he or she is called to duty, we stand for their families, when they return; we stand united to fight for the benefits, the care, and

the dignity they deserve. We make sure that their nation stands behind them, and supports their gallant fight for freedom, and we stand and fight for that glorious flag, our beloved symbol of the greatest country on earth. We stand firmly to provide a foundation for the children of our nation so that they may appreciate and defend the freedoms we have provided them. Together, we do these things; it is our calling, our duty, our privilege. We do these things to preserve our heritage, our honor, our freedom. (Applause)

Please welcome to the stage now, our 2007 and 2008 Youth Champions. They represent the thousands of young men and women that you support throughout the year through our many programs.

Our first champion is Joseph W. Riley, the 2008 Boys Nation President, sponsored by American Legion Post 248 in Etowah, Tennessee. Joseph is also the Tennessee American Legion Oratorical Contest state winner. He hopes to study law, and serve his country in the JAG Corps. Please welcome, your 2008 Boys Nation President, Joseph W. Riley.

The American Legion Youth Champions
2008 Boys Nation President
Joseph W. Riley, Tennessee

I want to first of all, thank you for allowing me to be here today, and on behalf of all those who participated in the Boys State, and Boys Nation Programs, let me simply say, thank you for the service that you gave to this country in uniform, and for the service that you continue to give to Americas' youth through The American Legion.

I can promise you, The American Legion has a tremendous impact on my life, and I have watched literally thousands of other young men and women from across this country leave American Legion programs completely transformed, and so because of your work, I can promise you that our generation is better equipped to accept from you the torch of leadership, and I want to share with you just one story from Boys Nation. After President Bush had spoke with us, he left and I gathered up about five or six of my buddies, and we started singing the "Battle Hymn of the Republic," and before long all 98 Boys Nation Senators had joined in, and we were singing at the top of our lungs, "Glory, Glory, Hallelujah," and I tell you, to stand there in the White House, with 98 of our country's future leaders, showing their support voluntarily and proudly for this country, and for their faith, it was an experience that I'll never forget it. It sent chill bumps up my back, because it showed me that you know, it really doesn't matter what they say on TV, the future of America is still strong. And so I thank you, for giving my friends and I our voice, and I promise you that because of your efforts, we will continue to sing the song of liberty and freedom for generations to come. So thank you and God bless America. (*Applause*)

ANNOUNCER: In competition in Colorado Springs, just a few weeks ago Ethan Settlemires of Walnut, Mississippi captured the 2008 Junior Shooting Sports Precision Championship, with a score of 2462.2 out of 2509. Ethan was unable to attend today's' ceremony.

The 2008 Junior Shooting Sports Champion is from Fort Worth, Texas, sponsored by Post 569, in addition to capturing The American Legion crown, she also won the National Jr. ROTC Championship earlier this year. Coming in with a final score of 2286.8 out of 2509, please welcome your American Legion Junior Shooting Sports Champion, Xentri Garza

Junior Shooting Sports Champion
Xentri Garza, Texas

Good morning everybody. My name is Xentri Garza, and I'm from Fort Worth, Texas, and I'm a senior at R.L. Paschal High School where I'm on the sporter shooting team, and the Jr. ROTC Program. I developed a love for shooting at a very young age. As far as I can remember I was three or four years old. Thanks to my Dad for everything, he taught me well. It has opened doors and has given me opportunity to travel to many wonderful states, such as, Colorado, Tennessee, Kentucky, Alabama, and Georgia, and

I've met many friends. I've met friends all the way from Alaska, and it's been quite a pleasure traveling.

The competitions have helped me in many aspects such as focus, team work, and goal setting. I plan on attending college, and pursuing a career in law enforcement, and possibly enlisting in the service. I want to support my country and keep it safe as you veterans have done. In closing, I would like to thank God, American Legion, my family, Post 569 in Fort Worth, and Mike Buss for all his hospitality. Without all of you, I would not be here. Ya'll are like my family, and I want to give special thanks to all of ya'll. Thank ya'll very much. (*Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: The 2008 Eagle Scout of the Year is Paul 'J.P.' Banwart, Shakopee, Minnesota. The eighteen year old was recognized for his passion and commitment to the environment and conservation. For his conservation projects and community service he has received Bronze, Silver, and Gold Medal Congressional Awards, Time/Warner Youth Service Award for Outstanding Dedication to Community Volunteer Work, Lions Community Service Award, and the Presidential Volunteer Service Gold Award. And while still a high school senior, he completed his Associates Degree at Normandale Community College in Bloomington. Please welcome Paul Banwart, the 2008 Eagle Scout of the Year.

2008 Eagle Scout of the Year
Paul 'J. P.' Banwart, Minnesota

Good morning. Let me just say, it's a great pleasure to be here today. I've been in the scouting program since I was five years old, and now I'm 18, so I've been in it quite a while, and when I first started the program, I would have never thought that I'd be here today. And let me just tell you, it is a great honor to be here among you veterans to receive such a prestigious honor, I cannot thank you enough.

All this could not be possible without you, without your commitment, your dedication to this country. A lot of people say thank you, but I truly mean it. I think it's absolutely great that you have a pillar, one of your Four Pillars dedicated to the youth of America. Not many organizations have that, and if they do, they don't stick to it as much as they probably should. You can say, we are the future America, but you don't just support us, but you allow us the infrastructure to grow and mature into bright young individuals that can help lead this country into a new generation, a new society.

On behalf of the Boy Scouting program, I'd like to thank each and every one of you for standing by us, and supporting our ideals, our traditions, and making America a better place to live. My successes are only the reflection of those who have influenced me throughout my life. So, I'd like to give thanks to my parents, Patty and Mark; my many numerous Scout leaders that I've had throughout the years; my posts; my district; the Minnesota Department, and of course the national organization for allowing me the opportunity to be here. I would also like to give a special thanks to Mike Buss, who has allowed us to come here, go out on the town, and just have an incredible experience. One of the most memorable experiences I'll have in my life, and I'd like to thank him personally for making this happen. I wish many more years to The American Legion dedicated to our communities, our Armed Forces, and our youth. Thank you. (*Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: The 2008 Oratorical Contest Champion from Elkton, Maryland, could not be here with us today. Please turn your attention to the video screens for his video taped message.

2008 1st Place Winner National Oratorical Contest
Spencer Harjung, Maryland

I'm Spencer Harjung, the winner of the 2008 National Oratorical Competition. Unfortunately, I'm unable to attend the convention due to my studies at the University of North Carolina at Ashville, for which The American Legion's generous scholarships helped pay, but being able to attend my first choice school wasn't the only reward derived from this experience. Three years ago, I had no affiliation whatsoever with The American Legion, in fact, I would scarcely even notice Mason-Dixon Post 194 when I'd

drive by it in my hometown of Rising Sun, Maryland, but in my Junior year of high school, my AP U.S. teacher required everyone in the class to participate in this Constitutional Speech competition. So, we all prepared and presented our ten minute speeches, but I didn't know then that the results of this ten minute speech would not only include my opportunity to speak before thousands of peers, Legionnaires, and parents, but that I would form meaningful life-long friendships; that I would have the opportunity to appear on national television; that I would educate and be educated in the Constitution of this great nation, and perhaps the greatest reward of all, that I would be accepted with unequivocal compassion into The American Legion family. And I'm not the only one that experienced these rewards. Every individual from the winners at the posts, and district levels, to the runners up in the Indianapolis competition have experienced these same rewards.

The veterans of this organization are working toward a better America, beginning with the youth, and working one individual at a time, and I believe that I can speak on behalf of all of those youths when I say, "Thank you." Thank you for your outstanding service to this outstanding country. In times of war and in times of peace you have lead both on the front lines and behind the scenes to ensure that the qualities and the principles you exemplify are being carried on in future generations of Americans. The American Legion Preamble, states that you associate yourselves together, to uphold and defend the Constitution, to safeguard the principles of freedom, justice, and democracy, to create a sense of mutual helpfulness to better America, and to create a sense of individual obligation towards your community, state and nation. Need I say more? These principles are embodied in the speech competition and in every program of The American Legion, that is the spirit of The American Legion, and that is the spirit of the United States of America, and that's why I'm deeply honored to represent this nation and its heroes as the winner of the 2008 National Oratorical Computation. Thank you. (*Applause*)

ANNOUNCER: The 2007 George W. Rulon, American Legion Baseball Player of the Year is Blaine Thomas Drozd of Genoa, Nebraska. The award is given based on integrity, mental attitude, corporation, citizenship, sportsmanship, scholastic aptitude, and good conduct. Blaine is also an Eagle Scout and is currently studying Physical Therapy and Athletic Training at the University of Nebraska, at Kearney. Please welcome your 2007 Legion Baseball Player of the Year, Blaine Drozd.

2007 American Legion Baseball Player of the Year
Blaine T. Drozd, Nebraska

Good morning. I have to follow that Oratorical Contest winner, and I didn't eat my Wheaties, so we'll see how I do. My baseball career started at a coach-pitch and having ended up here is way beyond where I thought I'd be, especially here at the National Convention in Phoenix, Arizona. Standing before you with this title before my name, still gives me goose bumps. As each day passes, I find out more and more just how honorable this award is, and how privileged I am to have received it. I'm proud to represent my family, friends, community, university, state, nation, and most of all my local, state, and national American Legion.

I played American Legion Baseball for Post 263 out of Silver Creek, Nebraska. While playing Legion Baseball, I batted about a .300 average in my career, and I was an outfielder. In the four years I played, I played two seasons with our juniors' team and three with our seniors' team. I'd like to start by thanking God for blessing me with my amazing parents. And I want to thank my parents whom I can never thank enough, and I firmly believe one of the hardest things to do in life is to thank your parents. I don't care what anyone says, how do you give back to someone who has given you so much in so little amount of time? I'd also like to thank my grandparents for giving my awesome parents. A big thank you to my brother, Brandon, who almost made it here, but got beat out beat by an awesome Eagle Scout as well, he was runner up in the Eagle Scout Award. And my little sister Jamie and my awesome girlfriend Emily. I love them all so much and for what they've done for me. I'm really proud to be here with my father, who the Legion has brought down here with me too.

I'd like to thank my friends, community, all my teachers, coaches, Todd Hire, the Adams family for getting me started in Scouting, my Boy Scout Troop 151, the local Legion Post 144, Post 263 for sponsoring our baseball team which is Silver Creek, a small town in Nebraska. Also a few Legion members that stood out, John Buehl, and Ralph Jibb wrote my recommendations for the scholarship. Ralph Jibb, is a member and he's coached for over 30 years, our baseball teams, so that's a pretty high honor, and he's helped my love for baseball double. Jim Quinlan and Michael Buss they chauffer us around and take us to all these fancy places. We feel like royalty. Along with that, I'd like to thank the Auxiliary as well, and the Sons of The American Legion, which I am a part of, for all they do with the Legion as well.

Along with the trip to Arizona, I got to go to Cooperstown, New York, where the Baseball Hall of Fame is, which is indescribable. It's something you really must see for yourself if you love the game. The Hall of Fame game got cancelled, but the trip was so amazing that it didn't matter, because you guys are just that great.

In closing, I'll tell you a little bit about my Eagle Scout, because the veterans love it when I talk about it. I had a patriotic thought while walking through Valley View Cemetery, a little bit before Memorial Day posting flags in 2003. I discovered some damaged emblems and I decided to update and replace all the damaged emblems in the cemetery of the Auxiliary and the Legion Members for my Eagle Scout project, and today all the flags in the cemetery stand tall and proud on Memorial Day, which I believe is really respectful. And I've never done this for the praise, I do it for the respect and gratitude for all deceased who have worked valiantly to make our lives what they are today. Especially the veterans like you, and the troops serving today. Thank you, my American Legion family, and God bless America. (*Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: Your 2007-2008 Youth Champions. (Applause and Music playing)

Presentation of the Spirit of Service Awards

ANNOUNCER: Our next awards exemplify all that we as Legionnaires do throughout the year. Our Spirit of Service Awards are given to our comrades on active duty for their contributions to their communities and fellow citizens above and beyond the call. Assisting National Commander Conatser, in presenting the awards, is the Commandant of the United States Marine Corps, General James T. Conway.

Our first award is to Army Sgt. Jeffery K. Jenkins, who serves as a mentor and role model to children and adults alike, in his community at Fort Shafter, Hawaii. He donated more than 250 hours as a volunteer tutor, physical education instructor, chaperone, and role model for his local elementary school as part of his unit's Partnership in Education Program. He also mentors disadvantaged youth, and young adults in his community. He is the recipient of the Military Outstanding Volunteer Service Medal. Representing the United States Army, please welcome Sgt. Jeffery K. Jenkins.

SGT. JEFFERY K. JENKINS: I don't have a speech prepared like those high speed young individuals, the leaders of our future America. All I can say is I feel prouder than Michael Phelps after his eighth gold medal from the gratitude and everything that I've received from The American Legion. I'd like to thank you, and again, thank you.

ANNOUNCER: Hospital Corpsman, 2nd Class Kedrick D. Thorn has volunteered thousands of hours in support of his communities and fellow service members throughout his Navy career. In addition to his support of elementary school students and the Big Brothers/Big Sisters program, he has dedicated to helping Wounded Warriors returning from Operations Iraqi and Enduring Freedom. He volunteers his skills to help returning amputees develop exercise and fitness regiments to achieve their goals. Ladies and gentlemen, HM2 Kedrick D. Thorn, United States Navy.

HM2 KEDRICK D. THORN: First, I want to thank The American Legion for inviting me here. Since the day I stepped off the plane, I've had nothing but warm welcome. Especially to all the Corpsmen that are out there. You know, when I first joined the military, I had no idea that I would be up here, standing here giving this speech. I

planned on doing four years and then getting out, but then something happened you know. Three little words that come to mind: honor, courage, and commitment. I can definitely say working with the Army, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, and Navy amputees have really given me such a great pride, and honor to do what I do in this country.

Again, I want to thank The American Legion, but there is one person that I definitely want to thank. Someone who's been there with me through it all, who dealt with my attitudes, dealt with the ups and downs, a person who's struggled to do her best and instill what I have now in me, and that's my mother who is somewhere out there. Where are you? Right there! Again, I want to thank The American Legion. Thank you.

ANNOUNCER: Corporal Kerri Frost has served in a number of community outreach events and as a coach and role model for young people in her community in Okinawa, Japan. In addition to lending her leadership and organizational skills to Community Service and Family Readiness events, she volunteers at the local Child Development Center caring for physically and mentally handicapped children, and coaching and refereeing youth soccer. For her unselfish dedication to service, The American Legion Spirit of Service Award is presented to Corporal Kerri Frost United States Marine Corps.

CORPORAL KERRI FROST: Good morning ladies and gentlemen. I'm Corporal Kerri Frost. I'm stationed in Okinawa, Japan. I had a very long flight to get here. I'm very proud to win this award. I really didn't know what this award was until I actually won it, and I honestly didn't think I would have won it. When my staff sergeant came up to me and said at the time, "Lance Corporal Frost, I'm going to put you up for this award," I just looked at him and said, "good to go staff sergeant, whatever you say." Now that I've been here, and now that I see that it is such a big award to receive, and I know what it's all about, and I've become a part of The American Legion Family, it's just a great honor. I'm just proud that I'm a part of this family and I'm proud to carry on the legacy of all the Marines before me and along with all the other branches, as well, I want to thank The American Legion. Semper Fidelis. (*Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: Despite being underway for over 180 days a year, Petty Officer James A. Abels volunteers numerous hours of his off duty time working with national and state parks, historical sites, and veterans' functions. He is a co-founder of the "Bluejackets," a World War II maritime living history group and many other groups educating his fellow citizens on military heritage. He is also active in the Fleet Reserve Association, and The American Legion, serving as a pallbearer and honor guard member honoring veterans throughout our history. Representing the United States Coast Guard, is Boatswain's Mate Second Class, James A. Abels.

BM2 JAMES A. ABELS: Good morning everybody. I'd like to thank The American Legion for having all of us out here. It has been a great reception. You guys have been treating us quite well. It's a great honor to be here on behalf of the Coast Guard and The American Legion to receive this award. I was pretty excited that I found out I won it. I was actually in a school in California, and a friend of mine at the Coast Guard Headquarters called me. It was about 5:30 in the morning, California time, when I found out. It definitely made my week out there.

I'd like to thank a couple of people for this, my parents, they are the one who got me involved in Military History, history in general, family history, and I thank them for pretty much feeding the fire, keeping me interested and supporting me with it. I thank a lot of my friends. A lot of these projects I worked on we were in a group, so there are a few of us that have been doing this since the start. Mr. Bob Crickenberger from Chesapeake Beach, Maryland; Tristan Barney, York, Pennsylvania; Luca Marsh, Lancaster, Pennsylvania; Mike Kervey, Adamstown, Pennsylvania; and Dennis Chantney, Westminster, Maryland. And I would like to thank my supervisors and my fellow shipmates who pulled a lot of extra watches, and afforded me the time off to go do these activities. Most importantly though, I'd like to thank the veterans. Their stories are very interesting, and without their service this country definitely wouldn't be what it is today. So thank you. (*Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: Staff Sergeant Jeffery S. Reese is described as a "consummate community servant" in his nomination package. He's a dedicated youth leader, organizing and conducting Boy Scout events and serving as a role model for young people throughout his community. He's also active with the Salvation Army, Meals on Wheels, local school mentoring events and many other activities. It's estimated that he volunteered nearly 800 hours in 2007 alone. Please welcome, Staff Sergeant Jeffery S. Reese, United States Air Force.

STAFF SERGEANT JEFFERY S. REESE: Once again, good morning. For me this has been a very humbling experience from the beginning. I've worked with so many people and I know there are so many people out there who are doing so much in the community, and I've always felt like they've always been doing more than me. And so I feel very blessed and very humbled to be here representing the United States Air Force. I feel very privileged to have the opportunity to serve the country that I love on a daily basis. I feel very privileged to serve the community that I live in, and fortunately I get to live in the state of Montana, where it's very easily to fall in love with the community also.

Finally, I feel very honored to be here amongst the members of The American Legion at this convention, and to be able to stand with you now, and stand with you in the future, the veterans here, the members here who have paved the way for me, and my fellow service members, who made this nation the great nation that it is today, and I'm honored to become a member of The American Legion, and too try to carry that legacy and those values on in my future. God bless America. Thank you. (*Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: Ladies and gentlemen please show your appreciation to the 2008, American Legion Spirit of Service Award winners. (Applause and Music playing)

[The Convention Delegates viewed the following video, text of video follows.]

"As we begin our 90th National Convention, it signals the end of another year of service to our nation. The beginning of a new slate of leaders to guide us into the beginning of yet another decade of service. But nothing really ends here. It is a time for renewal. We renew our commitment to our children, our military, our veterans, and our flag. Together we will stand as we have since our beginning, together we will stand for as long as we are able to support and defend this glorious nation in which we live.

For us to tell you how much it means that you put the time in, and I know that all you guys are old vets that did the other stint in 'Nam and Korea, and everything, and thanks for not letting my husband and all these other guys go through what you went through, it means a lot and they appreciate it, even though they'll never tell you. Their stupid weepy stupid wives have to get on here and tell you, but they do appreciate it, and we know who's taking care of our soldiers. We know it's not the civilians, and it's not the politicians, it's the prior servicemen that know what it feels like to be left out there hanging, and have no one care, and we appreciate you all. And we're sorry you went through what you went through, but thanks for changing things, and making it possible for organizations like The American Legion to do Heroes to Hometowns and really help troops out.

Thank you so much, this is a great welcoming, coming home. This is outstanding, I appreciate it very much.

Thank you so much for everything you did for us. Thank you.

We'll keep doing it for you.

Keep doing what you're doing.

Thank you all very, very much. God bless you all. Thank you, thank you very much."

Music selections: *I Still Do* and *God Bless The USA* by Valor

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: Well, thank you to the group Valor from Huntsville, Alabama for their inspirational music. I want to congratulate our Youth Champions, our Spirit of Service Award Winners. They're what's good about America.

Our next speaker is a graduate from Southwest Missouri State University, and was commissioned as a Marine Corps infantry officer in 1970. He commanded Battalion Landing Team 3-2 during Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. He also commanded One Marine Expeditionary Force during two combat tours in Iraq. His personal decorations include the Defense Distinguished Service Medal with Palm, the Navy Distinguished Service Medal, the Legion of Merit, and the Defense Meritorious Service Medal. He's 34th Commandant of the United States Marine Corps, please help me welcome, General James T. Conway.

Address: General James T. Conway
Commandant, United States Marine Corps

Thank you, Legionnaires and family members. It's great to be with you this morning, and thank you Marty for the fine introduction. My mother would be delighted with the introduction. My mother-in-law would still be skeptical, but that's another story.

I'd like to introduce two people who are on the stage with me this morning. First of all, Annette and Sergeant Major would you please stand up? My wife is probably the prettiest girl in Washington, D.C. and the Sergeant Major, is one of the finest Marines that ever wore that uniform. Thanks for coming down with us this morning.

I would add just a couple of things to the introduction that Marty offered. First of all, I was born, actually, in the great state of Arkansas, in the northeast Arkansas hills. It's tough country as some of you may know. You folks in some cases are old enough to remember the movie *Deliverance*. When *Deliverance* came out, folks in my part of the country thought that was a love story. I've got to tell you, unlike some previous Commandants, I don't come from a long line of military officers, colonels and generals. My father was in the 45th Infantry Division in World War II, and I had some uncles who drove landing craft, but as an example of that, when Annette and I went home after about ten years in the Marine Corps with our children to visit some of my family, my Granny met us on the porch and she said, "Hi, are you a Sergeant yet?" I said, "No Granny, I don't think I'll ever be a Sergeant," and she said, "Well I hate that, I thought you might amount to something if you made Sergeant." At that point my uncle Bob chimed in, he said, "Well boy if the Army ain't going to promote you, they ought to let you out." That's my same uncle Bob who served three days in the United States Army. He reported into boot camp and he said the first day they gave him a comb, and that afternoon they cut off all his hair. The second day, they gave him a tooth brush, and that afternoon they pulled seven of his teeth. On the third day, they gave him a jock strap, and uncle Bob went over the fence that night and never did go back. He kept saying, "Them people is crazy."

Folks, in all seriousness, Marty and the organizers asked me to talk about three or four things today with you folks. One is of course how our Corps is doing in the long war in Iraq and Afghanistan. Secondly, the health of the force. They asked if I would talk about some of my concerns as the Commandant, and lastly talk about something of our vision, and what we have planned for the Corps in the future. I'm very happy to do that.

In fact, the Sergeant Major and I just got back from our last visit to Iraq eight days ago, a week ago yesterday, and I can tell you that things, at least in the al Anbar where the Marines are almost exclusive assigned, are incredibly good these days. When I left Iraq in the fall of 2004, it was a deadly, and a volatile al Anbar. We were in a fight every day. We were losing Marines just about every day. We were always giving better than we got, but we were in a very serious fight.

That all changed in the fall of 2006, because at the time the Sunni sheiks came to our leadership, and they said, "You know, we've had it up to here with the al Qaeda, they have a murder and intimidation campaign that is killing our young. They are showing us 15th century kind of Sharia law that we have no interest in, and now finally they want to inter-marry our women." Maybe that was the last straw, but in any event, they said to our leadership there, "If you will join us, then we will turn on these people, and we will slaughter them." That was their term, and frankly that is what's been happening in the province ever since. The surge reinforced success in that it gave us the opportunity to get the places that we had not been. But today in the Al Anbar province, it is an amazing thing to see, because essentially the Iraqi's have got it. They are in charge. Now it is still

a dangerous place, you can still get killed in Anbar province, but there is just absolutely no way that in 2004 that we would have thought that it would be in a very real sense the model for what's taking place in the rest of Iraq.

We went to Afghanistan, and I can tell you that as much as the attacks and the causalities are down in Iraq, there's a different trajectory taking place in Afghanistan. Attacks are up, and causalities are up. I truly think ladies and gentlemen, we're going to be there for a while, because you have some of the elements of a long term insurgency in place in Afghanistan. You have the drug fields which represent money to the insurgents, and you have safe haven not far away.

We visited two main units there, we have about 4,000 Marines in Afghanistan, about 400 are training the Afghan Army. We have the 24th MEU [Marine Expeditionary Unit] and the 2nd Battalion 7th Marines. Those two units are both in the south. They're pretty much alongside of each other, and they're on those ratlines that exist between the drug fields and the safe haven. They're taking a fight to the enemy every day, and they're doing incredible work. Now, the opportunity or the ability to put those numbers of Marines there, into Afghanistan, has kept our Corps at surge through probably November at this point, because both units have been extended.

I attended the meeting with the Secretary of Defense, when he made the decision to do that, and I said to him, "Sir, we can do it, but it's going to hurt. We're going to have to take one for the team here, but I understand the spring offensive. I understand the window of opportunity that exists in Afghanistan, and we will do it. But if you want us to do more we must have relief. We cannot continue to ride the backs of these great young Marines and sailors that support us by trying to be in both places, both Iraq and Afghanistan." He's got that. 24 MEU will leave soon, I don't think that they will be replaced by Marines. 2-7, 2nd Battalion 7th Marines, that decision is under discussion as we're here today, but I would only hope and I believe that if they are replaced that there will a commensurate draw down of our forces in Iraq.

Let's change for just a moment and talk if we can about the status of the force. The problem that we have is that the war has gone on now for I guess the better part of five years, and what has evolved for our Corps is what we call a deployment-to-dwell ratio. That is, the amount of time you're deployed versus the amount of time that you're home of about seven months and seven months. For the headquarters units it's a year, but the rotating units are seven months home and seven months gone. That hurts. I talk to Marines routinely with the Sergeant Major that now are on their fourth and fifth deployments, and that's simply a lot of time away from your family when the old rotation used to be six and eighteen. Now we are at war. We accept that. But it is still quite the effort that I'm sure you can understand as you are service members yourselves. We think we need seven months deployed, and fourteen months home. That would give us the opportunity to do a lot. I think it will lessen the difficulty that our families are experiencing, and we think we can sustain that for a long, long time, as long as it takes to win this thing and come home. Our families are quick to remind us that in seven months you can't have a baby. You can be in the front end of it, or the back end of it, but you can't do both. So there is a need to do better, and we're working it hard.

One of the ways that you make your situation better is that you reduce the requirement for deployments or you increase the size of the force. Happily, the Secretary of Defense, and the President, and the Congress now has authorized the growth of some 27,000 additional Marines, and they are very much needed. We're in the process of growing those folks as we speak. Last year we needed 5,000 Marines. When we spoke to our manpower people and recruiters they said, "You know, if you want to keep the quality where it is, then you probably ought to spread it over about five years." By the way, the DOD standard for high school graduates is 90%. Our Marine Corps standard is 95%. Well last year, our recruiters didn't give us 5,000 Marines; they gave us 7,000, 96.2% high school graduates. This year, they are going to give us 9,000, and ladies and gentlemen, we're going to close out that growth in three years, not five, with some great young Americans who want to have the opportunity to fight for their country.

As an example of that, I'll tell you what one of them said. Not this last trip, but the time before in Iraq, I sat down at lunch with a young Marine, and I asked him, "Why did you join?" He said, "Sir, I'll be honest with you, I was ten years old when they attacked the towers. I couldn't believe that was happening to our country, and I will tell you

frankly that I was scared." He said, "By the time I got to be 13, I was mad." He said something else, but he said, "I was mad." He said, "Now I'm 18, and I'm doing something about it." I just want you to know, that's the quality of the young men and women that were joining, really to all the services out there again who want to have the opportunity to defend this great country.

You know, there was a time when at least in the Corps some of the guys like me with silver hair sat back and worried some about this young generation. We called them the "Joystick Generation." Too much time sitting in front of the tube, not enough time outside in outdoor activities or maybe team sports. We weren't sure that they would be good Marines and soldiers. I'll admit to you today, we could not have been more wrong. I have seen these young people in combat. The raw courage of these young men and women, their sense of sacrifice, their sense of team play, is absolutely eye watering, and I can assure you, our Marine Corps, our services and our country are going to be in a great shape for a long time to come as these people reach increasing levels of responsibility.

We do concern ourselves with the resiliency of our Corps as we stay engaged in this long war. At the headquarters we monitor maybe a dozen what we call metrics on a monthly basis, just to see, you know, how we are doing, are we starting to reach a breaking point. I want to again report to you today is that there is an amazing resiliency out there in these young people for doing what they do. We check such things as UA [**Unexcused Absence**] rates, desertion rates, divorces, child abuse, alcohol abuse. And ladies and gentlemen, I can tell you that those figures are as good today as they were in 2001. Our Captains are staying beyond what they were staying, today, to stay in this fight beyond what they were doing in 2001.

Now to be honest, there are a couple of trend lines that concern me, suicides are up significantly this year, although only about 50% suicides are people who have deployed. And our divorce rates, although well below the national average, are creeping up, but again, I'm happy to report to you that the resiliency of these young men and women is just astounding.

There is a brittle part to the equation though, and that's our families. Our families are very proud of their contribution to this long war, but frankly they are getting tired. They need more time with their service members at home. They are raising children in about 40% of the cases. We visited a young lady down on the east coast, and she said, "You know Sergeant Sasquatch over there, gets tested for PTSD [Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder] four times during every deployment. Pretty soon somebody is going to have to counsel my children, and sooner or later, they're going to talk to me, because this is getting tiresome." So, we're doing what we can, we're trying to enhance a quality of life, make it as good as we can for those families out there that suffer in silence, and do such a magnificent job keeping things together while the service member is deployed.

Switching to the third area that the organizers asked me to talk about and those are my concerns as the Commandant. I've got three that I'll share with you this morning. First of all, our Corps has turned into a very much a second land army, based upon what we're doing in Iraq. We are heavier, than we've ever been, out of necessity because we've got to defeat the weapons that are being deployed on us on the battle field-- we have 48,000-pound MRAPs, mine resistance ambush-protected vehicles. We have many more pieces of rolling stock in the battalions than we ever had before, heavier weapons, more communication equipment. The problem is, what we offer to the nation is the ability to get out of town quick, be agile and hit hard when we get there. Right now, we're too big, we're too heavy in order to be able to do that, and we've got to go through some filters, some screens, to get us back to what we were, in a previous period, as the United States Marine Corps.

Secondly, I think that we've got to get back to developing an expeditionary mindset on the part of our troops and our officers. Today, if you were to ask a young Marine what does expeditionary mean? He might say to you, "Well, it's living on a forward-operating base, sleeping on a cot, and three squares a day." By the way you might get Häagen-Dazs for dessert in the evening. Ladies and gentlemen, that is not expeditionary. Expeditionary, to me, means you step off the plank of a ship, or you step off a helicopter, and it's a moonscape, and the Sergeant says, "Guys, this is home sweet home. Let's start making something of it." That's the mindset that we've got to have and, given time, we'll get back to doing that.

The third thing is that again, we've offered to the nation a Corps that is always ready to go, to whatever environment. Quite frankly, today, we are probably the best if not one of the best counterinsurgency forces in the world. The problem is we're not doing cold-weather training, jungle training, only by exception, with the increase in troops going to Afghanistan, do we do mountain-warfare training. We are spending precious little time doing amphibious exercise with our brothers in the United States Navy aboard ship. And perhaps most disconcerting is that we used to do ten live-fire combined-arms maneuvers a year at Twentynine Palms, California. What that means is you've got maneuver battalions operating under live-fire artillery and bombs. When we got on the objectives, the shrapnel was still smoking. That ladies and gentlemen, is great training. We're not doing that anymore. We're not as ready today, as we were in 2003, and we've got to get back to doing that. That's the importance again of this one-to-two, deployment-to-dwell, seven months gone, and fourteen months home, more time with the family and more time training. Those are my concerns.

So, what about the future Marine Corps, what's it going to look like? Well, we've asked a study group at our base at Quantico, Virginia to examine that for us, and a bunch of smart guys and gals have talked to think tanks, they've talked to respected experts in the field, they've talked to retired generals and colonels, and they've come away with a set of observations for us, which I will share with you this morning about the world, during the periods 2020 to 2025. We think if you get too far out in advance of that, you're crystal-balling it. If you're short of that, you're not affecting some of these expensive programs that have to be spread out over time. So, we think that's a sweet spot, about 2025. What they tell us I think is interesting, first of all they say the world as we know it, the world as we learned it coming up in school is changing dramatically from a demographics perspective. There is a silent invasion of sorts that is taking place in Europe. The developed countries are gaining an older and older population while the underdeveloped countries have a more youthful population, and in a lot of cases no jobs. That's an incendiary kind of composition.

Secondly, they tell us, that increasingly the worlds' population is headed towards seacoasts, and that by 2025 about 70% of the worlds' population will live within about thirty miles of a sea coast. We think that supposes a lot of activity, a lot of potential for our Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard team. They say that, although we will continue to develop alternative sources of energy by that period in time that we will still be heavily reliant on oil, as a major means of energy and the grease that runs our machines. But they also say that by that point in time, that water, fresh water will be as important as oil to most nations on earth. The burgeoning populations, the paucity of fresh water supply, and increasing need could cause nations to go to war simply to be to be able to provide water to a thirsty population. They tell us that the threats in that period could be peers -- we could go to war against a Soviet Union or a China, but the more likely scenario is that we will see something like we saw when the Israelis fought the Hezbollah in 2006. A non-state actor who nevertheless was very accomplished in their tactics and techniques, and using fourth- and fifth-generation weapons systems. They think that is the threat that's going to be out there now for some time to come, and one that we will most likely have to deal with by that period and time.

Lastly, for purposes of this discussion, they tell us that it will be a much more multi-polar world in 2025 than it is today. The position of the United States in that world will be competing with a resurgent Russia, with China, with a growing India, with a collective European union. And although our military, our diplomatic, our business will be very important, it will not be as important to the world as it is today. And we're going to have to learn to live in that environment. Those are the types of things that they tell us that we can expect in the next couple of decades.

So, how do we adjust? Well, we think we need to get back to being again that expeditionary capability for this great nation, between the Marine Corps and again our brothers in the Navy, we both believe in forwarding basing and forward deployment of forces. If there's a fight, we want it to be well off our shores, and the theatre commanders, the combatant commanders if you will, are very much today in favor of what they call simply, engagement practices. Where we would aid nations who are not yet as developed as they will be to try to make sure that they are strong enough to defeat and that their populations do not welcome extremism. In doing so, we can perhaps avoid

the scenario that we find ourselves facing today. Should that fail however, we believe that our Corps has to be what we call a two-fisted fighter, able to engage in that hybrid kind of warfare against a smaller non-state player, but also able to load up and roll if we have to against another major nation. We have to be able; we have to have the flexibility, again the training and techniques in place to be able to go either way. We think we can leverage new technologies. We're excited about something we call the seabase, which is essentially a gathering of ships at sea, different sizes, different platforms that will ramp together, that will give us an air base and a port at sea, for use both in humanitarian assistance in disaster relief; it avoids a foot print on another nation's shore; it provides force protection to our people while we ferry required supplies or support inland on a daily basis; or it gives us an extensive capability in time of war. Where we don't have to go immediately for a port and airfield ashore; we've got one operating out at sea. It gives our commanders ashore a tremendous flexibility. So, we're excited about that new concept, and lots of others that are going to do wonderful things out there for us. In the end, 2020, 2025 we will still be performing as your United States Marine Corps, however, our legislated mission, which is that of being most ready when the nation is least ready.

Ladies and gentleman, two closing thoughts, and I'll get off the stage. First of all, I was asked to come down again by our organizers today, and talk about these things that we've just discussed. I'm happy to do that, but my main reason for coming down is to thank you, for the absolute marvelous support that the Legion provides to all of our service members on active duty. Let me tell you, it is important, let me tell you the troops absolutely depend on it. In 2003, before we crossed the line of departure out of Kuwait and into Iraq, I went around as the commander to talk with all of our major troop formations. The most important question on the mind of our Marines and sailors wasn't is Saddam going to gas us? Does he have weapons of mass destruction? Are we going to see mass artillery strikes? It was, "Sir, we're watching the news, we're reading the papers; is the country behind us?" That was the most important question to be answered in 2003. Ladies and gentleman, based on what those great young Marines and soldiers, sailors, and airman have seen now over five years, the question is still out there, but the answer is too. They know you are behind them, and again they appreciate it, and I appreciate it. Thank you.

Lastly, there is what we call a Commandant's Reading List. It's where you provide a list each year to your great young Marines and ask them to stay engaged, advance their intellect, and read about things that are important to them. The premier book on that reading list, a Commandants' choice if you will, is a book by one of our retired, long retired Lieutenant Generals named Victor Krulak. It's called *First to Fight*. The essence of the book, the takeaway from the book, is that he says, "We don't have to have a Marine Corps; there's a Marine Corps because the nation loves her Marines. America has a love affair with her Marines, but that could change if one of two things were ever to happen. One would be that somehow as an institution, we would systematically abuse the sons and daughters of this great land. The other condition would be if the bell ever rang, and there was a need for us to go forward, and somehow we weren't ready, or we got there and got our butts kicked." Ladies and gentlemen of the Legion, let me assure you here this morning, neither one of those things are ever going to happen, in the case of your United States Marine Corps. Thank you. (*Applause and Cheering*)

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER DETTORI: Ladies and gentlemen, while we wait for our next guest, please remain seated. Maestro, some music perhaps?

Music being played: *This Is My Country*

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: Ladies and gentlemen. Our next guest is the senior senator from the great state of Arizona. He is also the Republican candidate for President of the United States. John S. McCain is a graduate of the United States Naval Academy, and a veteran of the Vietnam War. He survived a blast on the USS *Forrestal* on July 29, 1967 which killed 134 men. Three months later, while flying on his twenty-third bombing mission over Vietnam, a missile struck his plane, which led him to be captured, and held prisoner for more than five years. As the son of an admiral, John

McCain was offered early release by the Vietnamese. He turned it down so he could stay with his fellow POWs. He was also refused to meet with the anti-war groups who wanted to use the POWs for propaganda purposes. In 1982 he was elected to the United States House of Representatives. He has served in the United States Senate since 1987. Ladies and gentlemen, please give a warm welcome to a member of American Legion Post 2, from the Department of Arizona, Senator John McCain.

Music playing: *Anchors Aweigh*

Special Address: Honorable John McCain
United States Senate, Arizona

Thank you. Thank you all very much. Thank you, National Commander Marty Conatser. Thank you for the kind introduction. National Adjutant Bob Spanogle, Auxiliary President, Jan Pulvermacher-Ryan, and Auxiliary Secretary, Pam Gilley thank you all. And if I may speak for the gang at Tempe Post #2. There they are. We're honored to be in the company of our fellow members of The American Legion. Apparently, it falls to me as well to offer an official welcome to the great state of Arizona--and it's a dry heat. Our governor is out of town, up in Denver for some big party they are throwing there. I guess my invitation got lost in the mail. But anyway.

My friends, all of take pride in being members of this great organization. After its founding in 1919, the Legion served many of the more than four million American veterans of the First World War. Today just one of those veterans survives, a man of 107 years, named Frank Buckles. Frank lives in West Virginia, and last week in Orlando the folks at the VFW convention gave him a standing ovation. I have a feeling that you too will want to join in a round of applause the last Dough Boy.

In the years since, the men and women of the Legion have stayed faithful to their mission of service to one another, and to country. In Europe, Asia, the Middle East, and elsewhere, America's veterans have faced different enemies, but they've always found the same friend and ally in the Legion, the VFW, and other veteran service organizations.

All of us return from war with a few experiences we'd gladly forget, but the friendship and camaraderie we brought home are forever. For keeping us all together and helping those most in need, we are all in the debt of The American Legion. The men and women of the Legion believe in their country's cause in the world, and have served and sacrificed for it. You know that when our leaders speak of this nation's history and purposes in the affairs of the world, they should do so with confidence, gratitude, and above all, with moral clarity.

There are those who say that our day as the world's leader has passed, that our moment is waning. They point to the anti-Americanism that is sometimes heard in Europe and elsewhere, and take this as a sign that America no longer has the strength or the moral credibility to lead. The criticisms tend to pass, or quiet down when global threats and dangers appear. In times of trouble, free nations of the world still look to America for leadership, because they know the strength of America remains the greatest force for good on earth.

My opponent had the chance to express such confidence in America, when he delivered a much anticipated address in Berlin. He was the picture of confidence, but in some ways confidence itself and confidence in one's country are not the same. And in that speech, Senator Obama left an important point unclear. He suggested that the end of the Cold War proved that, quote, "No challenge was too great for a world that stands as one," unquote. Now, I missed a few years of the Cold War, as a guest of one of our adversaries. But as I recall, the world was deeply divided during the Cold War, between the side of freedom and the side of tyranny. The Cold War ended, not because the world stood as one, but because the great democracies came together, bound together by sustained and decisive American leadership.

All of this is more than an academic debate. For the sake of our own security, and the defense of our values in the world, American leadership is critical. While we have our share of critics around the world, when people in the oppressed nations of the world need support and solidarity and hope, they look to America. When they talk about our country,

it's not with distrust or disdain, but with respect and affection. They don't resist or resent America's democratic influence in the world, they thank God for it.

Just days after the Russian invasion of Georgia, Senator Obama had this to say about the crisis. Quote, "We've got to send a clear message to Russia and unify our allies. They can't charge into other countries. Of course it helps if we're leading by example on that point." End of quote. I guess we're left to figure out the rest for ourselves. It's unlikely he was alluding to Afghanistan, the nation we liberated after 9/11, and continue to help despite Russian complaints about our related deployments in Central Asia. And he probably didn't have Kosovo in mind either, although Russia didn't care much for that military action either. We and our NATO allies had to end the Serbian slaughter of civilians in Kosovo, without UN approval because the Russians blocked the effort in the Security Council. If I catch Senator Obama's drift, then our failure to quote, "Lead by example," is the liberation of Iraq. And if he really thinks that by liberating Iraq from a dangerous tyrant, America somehow set a bad example that invited Russia to invade a small peaceful and democratic nation, then he should state it outright, because that is a debate I welcome. In the end, confusion about such questions only invites more trouble, violence, and aggression. To promote stability and peace, America must stand firmly on the side of freedom and justice.

The next President of the United States must bring to office a clear-eyed view of our nation's role in the world as the defender of the oppressed and a force for peace. Through decades of struggle, free nations prevailed over tyranny in large measure because of the sacrifices of the men and women of the United States armed forces. And it will fall to the next commander in chief to make good on the obligation our government accepts, every time any man or woman enters the military, and again when they receive their DD-214. Those we depend on as troops should know that when they become veterans they can depend on us, thanks to you.

Honoring this obligation will require leadership, and I pledge to you, that as President, I will lead from the front to reform our VA system and make sure that veterans receive the respect and care that they have earned. The Walter Reed Scandal was a disgrace, unworthy of this nation, and I intend to make sure that nothing like it is ever repeated. There are other problems as well, that have not received as much media attention, and my administration will do the hard and necessary work of fixing them, even when the press and the public aren't watching. Reform begins with appointing a Secretary of Veterans Affairs who is a leader of the highest caliber, and who listens to veterans and veterans service organizations. My VA Secretary must be a forceful advocate for veterans and a forth right advisor to me, so we can make the right choices about budgeting, health care, and other veterans' benefit issues. He or she will also need to be a high energy leader, too, because we'll have a lot of work to do in improving service to veterans. Veterans must be treated fairly and expeditiously as they seek compensation for disability or illness. We owe them compassion and hands-on care in their transition to civilian life. We owe them training, rehabilitation, and education. We owe their families, parents, and care givers, our concern, and our support and our love. Veterans should never be deprived of quality medical care and mental health coverage for illness or injury incurred as a result of their service to our country.

As President, I will do all that is in my power to ensure that those who serve today, and those who have served in the past, have access to the highest quality health, mental health, and rehabilitative care in the world, and I will not accept a situation in which veterans are denied access to care on account of travel distances, back logs of appointments, and years of pending disability evaluation and claims.

My fellow veterans, we should no longer tolerate requiring a veteran to make an appointment to stand in line for a ticket to stand in another. I'm not here to tell you that there is a cost that is too high to be paid in the care of our nation's veterans. I'll make sure that Congress funds the VA health-care budget in a sufficient, timely, and predictable manner. But I will say, every increase in funding must be matched by increases in accountability, both at the VA and in Congress. My friends, this requires an end to certain practices and abuses that serve neither our veterans, our country, nor the reputation of Congress itself. Exactly because funding VA programs commend bipartisan support, some in the Congress like to attach unrelated pork barrel earmark appropriations to VA bills. The result is to mix vital national priorities with wasteful and often worthless

political pork. Earmarks show up in bills of every kind, and not just VA Bills. I'm going to make them famous. I'm going to veto every one of those bills, and you'll know their names, and we'll stop it, and we'll spend the money for our veterans--that needs to be spent for veterans, not for bridges to nowhere. And we'll stop budgeting those hundreds of millions of dollars for other wasteful projects, projects that don't serve the public interest. The principle here is simple, public money should serve the public good, and if it's me sitting in the Oval Office at the *Resolute* Desk, as I said, those wasteful spending bills are going the way of all the earmarks, and they're going right back to Congress. And by the way, let's call them back to town and solve the energy crisis while we're at it. Two things they never miss, a pay raise or a recess.

When we make it clear to Congress that no earmark bill will be signed into law, my friends, that will save many billions of dollars that can be applied to essential priorities, and above all take care of our veterans. But reform doesn't end there, we've got to modernize our disability system to make sure that eligible service members receive benefits quickly, based on clear predictable and fair standards. We must address the problems of capacity and access within our VA health care system. This will involve a wide range of initiatives. I believe there is a simple and direct reform that we should make right away. My administration will create a veterans' care access card to be used by veterans with illness or injury incurred during their military service, and by those with lower incomes. This card will provide those without timely access to VA facilities, the option of using the high quality health care providers near their homes. For many veterans, especially in this state, and other large states in America, the closest VA facility isn't close enough, and many of their local providers are already familiar with the most common needs of veterans. Often, all that prevents them from receiving local care is a system for sharing medical records among VA, DOD, and civilian hospitals and doctors. My reform will improve care, reduce risks, and broaden access all at the same time. This card is not intended to either replace the VA or privatize veterans' health care as some have wrongly charged. I will never agree to privatization of any of the VA system. I believe the VA should always be there to provide top quality care for our veterans, and I believe that the VA should continue to provide broad spectrum health care to eligible veterans, in addition to specialized care in areas such as prosthetics, spinal injuries, and blindness, services in which the VA sets the standard in medical care. Even so, there are veterans eligible for care who are not currently able to receive it on account of distance, wait times, or the absence of certain specialties. And for this group the new card I propose will offer better alternatives to provide the benefits they have earned. Reform must also recognize that greater care is needed, greater care is needed for certain types of injuries. In the Senate, I coauthored the Wounded Warrior Act which was the first major legislative initiative to address Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and Traumatic Brain Injury, as you know. As President, I will build on this legislation to improve screening and treatment for these severe injuries suffered by many in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The VA must also broaden its care for the women who are entering the armed forces in greater numbers than ever, and who are suffering from the same war wounds, visible and invisible, suffered by other veterans. The American Legion was founded just one year before the women of America received the right to vote, in a Constitutional amendment that became law 88 years ago today. Among the many wrongs that have been righted in that time, women are now welcomed and respected as equals in the ranks of the Armed Forces of the United States of America. Yet the growing ranks of women veterans have left the VA lagging behind in the services it provides. As rapidly as possible, we must improve the VA system so that it can fully assess and treat conditions that predominantly or exclusively affect women. And here the veterans' care access card will prove especially valuable, affording women medical options while the VA improves capacity and expands services. These are among the elements of my reform agenda for the VA system, and today as on other occasions, I have stated in the plainest, most straightforward terms, that the veterans' health care access card will expand existing benefits. I don't expect this will deter the Obama campaign from misrepresenting my proposals, but lest there be any doubt, you have my pledge, my reforms would not force anyone to a non-VA facility and do not signal any privatization of the VA.

Use of the card would be optional. Only high quality health care providers would be used; participating veterans would incur no additional charges. My reforms will not

replace any scheduled expansion of the VA network, including those facilities designed to serve veterans living in rural and remote areas. This is very simply an effort to expand care to a group of eligible veterans who are not now receiving care. I suppose from my opponent's vantage point veterans concerns are just one more issue to be spun or worked to advantage. This would explain why he's also taken liberties with my position on the G.I. Bill. In its initial version, that Bill failed to address the number one education request that I've heard from career service members and their families: The freedom to transfer their benefits to a spouse or a child. The bill also did nothing to retain the young officer and the enlisted leaders who form the backbone of our all volunteer force. As a political proposition it would have been much easier for me to have just signed on to what I considered flawed legislation. The people of Arizona and of all America expect more from their representatives than that, and instead I sought a better bill. And I'm proud to say, that the result is a law that better serves our military, better serves military families, and better serves the interest of our country.

No one who has worn the uniform of his or her country can ever take these matters lightly. We all learned an ethic in the service of looking after one another, of leaving no one behind, and this commitment didn't end when we left the service. As a matter of duty and of honor, whatever our commitments to veterans cost, if I'm President those commitments will be kept.

The next President of the United States will have many responsibilities to the American people, and I take them all seriously. But if I'm elected, I will have one responsibility that outweighs all the others, and that is to use whatever talents I possess, and every resource God has granted me, to protect the security of this great and good nation from all enemies foreign and domestic. It is every veteran's hope that if their children be called upon to answer a call to arms, the battle will be necessary and the field well-chosen. But that is not their responsibility. It belongs to the government that called them, as it once was for us. Their honor will be in their answer, not their summons. Whatever we think about how and why we went to war in Iraq, we're all humbled by and grateful for their example. They now deserve the distinction of the best Americans, and we owe them a debt we can never fully repay. We can only offer the small tribute of our humility and our commitment to do all we can do, in less trying and costly circumstances, to help keep this nation worthy of their sacrifice. Many of them have served multiple tours in Iraq and Afghanistan. Many had their tours extended. Many returned to combat sooner than they had been led to expect. It was a sad and hard thing to ask so much more of Americans who've already given more than their fair share to the defense of our country. A few of them and their families will have received the news about additional and longer deployments without aiming a few appropriate complaints in the general direction of people like me, who helped make the decision to send them there. And then they shouldered a weapon, or climbed in a cockpit, and risked everything--everything--to accomplish their mission, to protect another peoples' freedom, and our own country from harm. It's a privilege beyond measure to live in a country that's served by them.

I've had the good fortune to know personally a great many brave and selfless patriots who sacrificed and shed blood to defend America, but I have known none braver or better than those who do so today. They are our inspiration, as I suspect all of you were once theirs, and I pray to a loving God, that He bless and protect them. Thank you and God bless. God bless America. (*Applause)*

Music playing: *Anchors Aweigh*

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: At this time, I'd like to introduce my family. If they will rise, we'll go down the line here. I have with me my wife Sharon. My mother Ruth. My son Richard. My granddaughter Kayla. My daughter-in-law Patsy. My son Rick. His son Tanner. My granddaughter Addison. My daughter-in-law Michelle. My brother-in-law Harl Ray. My sister-in-law Pam Ray. My mother-in-law Irene Lofton. And my father-in-law Clay Lofton.

It's been my pleasure to serve side-by-side with our next guest. Elected as our National President of The American Legion Auxiliary, she led a massive fund-raising campaign to raise money for The Auxiliary National President's Scholarship, funding scholarship for the children of our warriors. A lifetime member of Unit 360 in Waunakee,

Wisconsin, she is eligible for Auxiliary membership through the Korean War service of her late husband, Sylvester C. Pulvermacher. She has held many offices over the years as a volunteer for the Auxiliary. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome the leader of the nation's largest patriotic women's organization, Jan Pulvermacher-Ryan.

Greetings: Jan Pulvermacher-Ryan, Wisconsin, National President American Legion Auxiliary

Thank you so much. Good morning. Commander Marty, and the members of the wonderful American Legion family, it is a privilege to be with you at your 90th Annual Convention. How wonderful is it to gather in a city like Phoenix, Arizona, where we know that we're going to be safe and secure. And why is that? Because we have had military members through the years, our veterans sitting here today, who have secured those very freedoms for us, and we all of The American Legion Auxiliary salute you, and applaud you. Without your dedicated service, and those military men and women who are serving today, we would not be able to be at a gathering like this where we can renew old friendships, and make new ones, and carry out the wonderful programs of The American Legion family. It has certainly been my privilege to travel this year as the National President, and to see firsthand the wonderful work that our organizations do to help our communities, our states, and this glorious nation we call America.

I know that the hearts of our members are truly in the mission of this organization, because I have witnessed all this wonderful work that's being done in our VA hospitals and homes, children's hospitals and homes, and for the communities that we all live in and care deeply about. As I've attended the Girls State sessions this year, and then had the wonderful privilege of going to the Boys Nation and the Girls Nation Program, it is truly wonderful to see the future leaders of this nation and what we are doing for them. Many volunteer service organizations and veterans service organizations do many of the same things that we do as an organization. However, the Girls State, Boys State, Girls Nation, and Boys Nation programs are unique just to this organization, and we touch the lives of many of our young people constantly through that very one simple, but great program. And then we have so many other programs that support the youth of the nation, and you saw those wonderful young people this morning talking about those very wonderful programs that we all enhance and enjoy. And the one other program that we are particularly proud of, at The American Legion Auxiliary, is our Freedoms Foundation for young people at Valley Forge, where they too learn about the Constitution and the Bill of Rights.

As I said, it has been a unique privilege to travel this year to the Far East and to Europe, and to be there on the very special days, like Pearl Harbor Day and then to be in Normandy on D-Day, and to really see firsthand in those foreign countries how respected and revered our service members are and still continue to be. And it gives you a different flavor for the people of the world when the media constantly tells us how they hate Americans, and while we were there, we were truly loved and so were all those wonderful people that served there to protect those freedoms in those countries far away from home. And so again, I compliment all of you. It's with genuine respect that I stand here and thank you also for the privilege of serving as your National President, but especially privileged to serve with your wonderful National Commander Marty Conatser and his family. We have truly forged a bond of friendship that will last us a lifetime, and I know that previous National Presidents and National Commanders who have served together have formed that same bond. And while we always say, and I do as well, it's an Auxiliary year, I happen to be the National President and we don't talk about my or our, this is my Commander.

So thank you again, for all that you continue to do, that you've previously done for this nation, but what you continue to do for the mission of our organization. I am very proud to stand here today and tell you that our Educating Children of Warriors Scholarship Fund has touched the hearts of our members, and to date we have collected $763,000 from our wonderful heartfelt members. And I'm also going to tell you, and I'm probably giving a little bit away of our incoming National President's programs, but she's going to continue that as an ongoing project of The American Legion Auxiliary. Because we do recognize that there is a need for our continuing help to educate the children of our

nation, and certainly your Legacy Scholarship Fund is also one of those great, great opportunities for the kids of this nation to get an education for the future of this entire world. So, once again, I thank you for all you do. I thank you for the privilege of serving as your National President. God bless all of you, and God continue to bless the United States of America. Thank you. (*Applause)*

Special Presentation: The Patriot Award
Landstuhl Regional Medical Center Clinical Pastoral Division
Colonel James R. Griffith

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: Our American Legion Patriot Award is going to a unit this year. If one needs a definition for devotion, they need only to read the March 2008 *American Legion Magazine* featuring an article about the Chaplains at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany. An example of this devotion to our wounded warriors was exemplified by Navy Chaplain Ronald Pettigrew. When a severely wounded soldier used hand signals to communicate to the chaplain that his wedding ring was gone Chaplain Pettigrew made it his mission in life to locate that ring, which was removed during an earlier surgery. The chaplain cried when he called his own wife later that night because, and I quote, "I see how much we take life for granted." But Chaplain Pettigrew was one of many chaplains and chaplain assistants who serve our wounded heroes every day at Landstuhl. These men and women council our heroes, pray with them, and comfort them during times of great sorrow, challenge, and tribulation. We have one such man here today, the chief of the Landstuhl Regional Medical Center Pastoral Division. Ladies and Gentleman, please give a warm welcome to Col. James R. Griffith.

ANNOUNCER: The award reads: "For your unswerving devotion to our military personnel wounded in the war on terror. The Chaplains and Staff of the LRMC Clinical Pastoral Division provide spiritual and emotional support to these heroes and their families during times of great pain and suffering. By living up to the motto of the Chaplains Corps, 'Pro Deo et Patria, For God and Country,' the Chaplaincy has provided a beacon of hope to those who suffered the ravages of war. On behalf of the 2.7 million wartime veterans of The American Legion, thank you for your devotion to our nation's wounded warriors and their families. Presented this 26th day of August, 2008 at the 90th National Convention."

COLONEL JAMES R. GRIFFITH: Thank you, thank you very much. On behalf of Brigadier General Keith Gallagher, Commander of the Europe Regional Medical Command, Colonel Bryan Line, Commander of Landstuhl Regional Medical Center, I am honored and humbled to receive your Patriot Award.

Yesterday, I went to a movie entitled, *Hancock,* about superheroes, and as we all know, superheroes are figments of our imagination. Heroes, however, do exist, and they serve our nation and they fight our wars. When the heroes are injured they come to Landstuhl Regional Medical Center, for we are the initial medical portal for the larger military medical system. And since the start of Operation Enduring Freedom in October of 2001, we have cared for 40,000 military personnel, DOD civilians, U.S. contractors, and the allied soldiers from over 81 nations joined in the global war on terrorism.

Last year you gave us a gift of nearly $400,000, in support of the work of the Wounded Warrior Ministry Center, which provides humanitarian aid to our wounded soldiers. Everyday wounded and ill personnel arrive at Landstuhl. They're bussed from Ramstein Air Force Base to the hospital, and there they are greeted by a Chaplain. That's the second person on the left there, bending down over the soldier, and they are also greeted by the best medical staff in the whole world.

Now while at Landstuhl, their unit liaison representatives come to the Wounded Warrior Ministry Center to receive at no cost sweat suits, coats, athletic shoes, underwear, comfort and hygiene items, anything necessary to make their stay at the hospital a little more comfortable, a little more dignified, and these items are provided by you, the generosity of the American people. They are not items of military issue or supply. Your gift has made it possible for us to extend that basic humanitarian mission to provide items that are a little bit more in the luxury area, but very, very much

appreciated. For example, iPod Shuffles given to seriously and various injured wounded soldiers.

This is Chaplain Steve Savoy who is one of our Navy reservists on active duty for one year at Landstuhl. Here's another soldier helped by him. This is Chaplain Robert Berry, an Air National Guardsman giving an iPod made possible by your generosity.

The deployed Warrior Medical Movement Center tracks our medical evacuees from the time they are injured until they arrive back in hospitals in the United States, and your gift made possible this mission clock that helps them better track our wounded. You provided refrigerators and microwaves in the break room, a TV in the patient lounge. The Medical Transient Attachment is Landstuhl's resident outpatient housing unit. This is a picture of it. Your gift has provided most of the equipment that goes in this building, everything from computers, TVs in the dorm-like rooms, home entertainment centers in the collective break rooms, ping pong tables, TVs in the briefing reception areas. This is where the soldiers come when they first get their briefing about the services offered there at Landstuhl, where they get their housing assignment, and also where they are told about their appointments. Your gift has also made it possible to provide equipment to the Warrior Transition Units that are scattered throughout Belgium, Germany, and Italy. These units are for soldiers whose medical care takes up to 180 days, and who are awaiting medical separation from the service, and you've helped to equip six of these WTU's to use in Baumholder, Germany, in Wiesbaden, in Landstuhl, in Vehinsa, Italy, in Vilseck, Grafenwoehr, and Heidelberg, and we thank you very, very much for that.

You've provided break room home entertainment equipment. You've provided TVs in each two-person room. You've provided common area pool tables and game equipment, and when it's completed, this is a picture of the site that the Landstuhl Warrior USO will go into, and the equipment that goes into there will also be provided, by The American Legion. In short, your gift, your generosity, your remembrance of those who serve and to have borne the cost of battle have made all this possible. You've provided us with this, and just recently with two new motorized wheelchairs that will be used for our wounded warriors. So on behalf of Landstuhl, thank you. Thank you American Legion. (*Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: At this time I call Past National Commander Paul Morin forward. Paul and his Auxiliary President did a lot of the work, and did a lot of the pushing for this Landstuhl project. So, I think it only appropriate we do a picture.

As Secretary of Veterans Affairs, our next guest is our government's principal advocate for veterans, ensuring that they receive the care, support, recognition, and dignity worthy of the sacrifice and service they have rendered to this great country. A surgeon, Dr. James B. Peake, leads the Department of Veterans Affairs which is responsible for the nationwide system of health care services, benefit programs, and national cemeteries for Americas' veterans and their families. A West Point graduate and a Vietnam veteran of the United States Army, Dr. Peake earned the Silver Star, a Bronze Star with "V" device, and the Purple Heart with oak leaf cluster. Please join me in welcoming the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Dr. James Peake. (*Applause)*

Address: Honorable Dr. James B. Peake
Secretary, Department of Veterans Affairs

I love that music. Marty, thank you very much for the introduction, and thank you all very much for the welcome. It is an honor to be here as your Secretary of Veterans Affairs. And I say, your Secretary of Veterans Affairs, because it is you who I feel the need to serve, and I will tell you that it's an important time to be the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, because in fact we are a nation at war. We live in ambiguous and challenging times with the global environment that we're facing now. And as you put all those pieces together, I just think that it absolutely underscores the importance of the legacy of sacrifice and service that you and this organization represent. The American Legion has been around for a long time, 1919, and what you do today in service is absolutely extraordinary. From the money that is raised by the Riders, to the things that you do with that money, to the support for Boy Scouts, to the support for Boys State,

Girls State, and Girls Nation and Boys Nation, to the department service officers that support our veterans across this nation, to the advocacy that you do in the Washington, D.C. area, and it's just great to work with John Sommer and his team there on a regular basis. But that advocacy is important. You all know it, just by your presence here today. You understand the importance of it and by just who you have drawn to come and talk to you, to have a dialog with The American Legion here.

So, I want to take some time and share some of my ideas of what I think the priorities are and the important issues that we are facing as your Department of Veterans Affairs. The first, I guess I would say, the first on the plate, is as a nation at war, is this issue of transition. And I talk all the time about these two great systems, the DOD system and the VA system. Not in competition, but with two missions that really support the service member moving back and forth and across that needs to be a seamless and smooth and effective transition. One of the things that get in the way of that sometimes is just what people don't know about your VA, what many of you in this room absolutely know, and that is the unbelievable quality journey that our health system has been on, really since the early '90s. You can go to any creditable journal to look at Congressional Budget Office to what they have to say. You can look at articles in *Lancet,* which is a British medical journal that says if you want to see a quality system, go to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and look at their health care system. This idea that the *Life* magazine article still exists could be nothing further from the truth. That was 1970, I rotated in that hospital. I've been back to that hospital, and I know that that is absolutely farthest from the truth. And I want you to also know that we have the resources available to do the job. If you look at what our budget request is for 2009, it's 93.7 billion dollars. What that means is that since 2001, our budget has nearly doubled. This is both the discretionary line and the entitlement line. The health care budget has more than doubled in that same period. I credit you, I credit Congress, I can credit the Administration for making sure that happens. What we are seeing, is from both sides of the House an indication that they will increase that request by about 3 billion dollars.

But you know, it really is more than money that's important here. It is the quality of the people. And I've been in office for about eight months, and I have been all across your VA, and everywhere I go, I am blown away by the quality of the people that I run into. Thirty-one percent of us are veterans, that are serving our veterans, and when you talk to the others, it is well, you know, my dad was a veteran, or my granddad, or my grandma, or my mom was a veteran, and I'm giving back now. This is my chance to share. And when you look at quotes like this that I got from someone that I had known before who was in the VA system when I finally got there, he says, "You know, it's honestly the best job." He talks about taking care of the WWII Ranger who had been at Pointe du Hoc, and talks about the honor that it is to serve people like that. And so this notion of what we do is amplified by resources and by people.

And then you look at what we have in terms of the competencies within the VA. This issue of spinal cord injury is one that we have led the way in, and we need to continue to look to the 21st century and to apply all the aspects of modern medicine to be able to stay on the leading edge in being able to take care of these kinds of injuries. Just as we are doing right now with the issue of amputee care. This is Miami VA, and I was talking with an active duty soldier who had been taken care of at Walter Reed, and then had further care down at the Miami VA, was back at Walter Reed for additional surgery. I asked him, "How are we doing, to be able to take care of this high-speed, high-tech leg that you have?" He says, "Oh, the Miami VA could do it just great," he says, "but what is really cool, is some of those old guys," that would be me and some of you, "are getting these kind of legs as well." So, what I'm telling you, the message here is that an opportunity in what we're doing is raising the bar of health care across the VA. Do we have the resources? We're going to spend about $1.3 billion in the area of prosthetics, and include the other aspects of prosthetics besides just amputee legs and so forth. But the fact is, it is a significant investment and the money is there to do that. And who manages that kind of program for us? Well, this is Fred Downs, and if you'll notice that left hand is a hook. He lost that arm in Vietnam, in a land mine, so we have people that absolutely understand veterans, that care about veterans, and it is their calling to take care of veterans.

Blind rehab is the best in the world for blind and low vision injuries and illness and diseases. And what we are doing with this is expanding it across the country with a continuum of care model that allows us to do not only in-patient but ambulatory support of these significant injuries, and provide the kinds of tools that allow people to be more independent, not more dependent; that gives them a GPS to help them navigate their cities; that gives them a camera that you can put over a menu, take a picture, and it reads the menu to you. We are leading the way, and we need to continue to move forward as we are doing with 55 new continuing care clinics out there.

Women are now 14% of our active duty force. Somewhere between 11 and 12% of the force in Operation Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom are women. It is a significant issue for us. We are moving forward to provide them the portals of care that give them not only the kind of care for their injuries which they are sustaining, but also the support for mental health, gynecological care, primary care, and a portal that allows them to be comfortable in a system that really, in many ways, has over time been largely an older men's network.

We are leveraging our computerized patient record, for which we have won significant honors. We are working further to increase our interface with the Department of Defense so that information is available, not just for health care, but to those who need to rate our claims, and make those service connections. I was in Iraq about two weeks ago, and had a chance to go from level one to level two, to level three, to all the way back to Landstuhl where I saw the chaplains who just received the award and his great operation. But at level one, and level two, they're inputting health care information right there into an electronic record that ultimately will be visible by our folks. We're trying to take this electronic record and extend it to you, to the veterans, so that you own that record and you can follow your own progress, ultimately to be able to share that information across the continuum of health care providers that you might see, either inside or outside the VA.

Rural health care is significant, 38% of our veterans live in rural areas. There's about 1.7% that live in highly rural areas, and I've been some places where there is not even roads to get there. What we are leveraging is home telehealth. We have 34,000 people who have home telehealth so that data from their home is provided to the health care professional that's taking care of them, and then they've got somebody else on the phone to be able to talk to them, and to interpret that data. Very powerful to allow people not to have to travel those long distances.

We are expanding our mobile outreach, 50 new vans for our vet centers, and I'm a big fan of vet centers, to reach out into the rural communities. We have a pilot project, where we're having four mobile mental health and primary care combined clinics that are going to serve 24 rural counties in six different states. We are leveraging telemedicine in our community-based out-patient clinics so that you can be seen in your primary care clinic near your home, but still be able to be in contact with a specialist back at one of our medical centers.

We do have two great systems. And sometimes there is what I've been referring to as a no-man's land in between. Some of it comes from the perceptions that I've asked you to help me with, as we start telling the story about this great VA health care system. In other cases, it's issues of bureaucracy that we are trying to find ways to help bust. We have a pilot program in the Washington, D.C. the National Capital region, where if a soldier is being separated for medical purposes, it is the military that makes the decision if they are fit or they are unfit. It is the VA that does the comp and pension examination, and does the rating that allows the military to use our rating for the unfitting condition to determine retirement or separation. But at the time the patient, the soldier, sailor, airman, or Marine separates, they know what their rating will be from the VA so they'll be able to do their planning. It cuts down ambiguity, and it offers the opportunity for a rapid check when that check is due. But that doesn't solve the problem of the notion that we have a 1945 benefit around a 1945 unit that is really administered largely with 1945 processes. We need to change that.

I will tell you I was pleased to see this *Vanguard* magazine, our VA magazine, that talks about the issue of electronic claims, and paperless records. I was a little dismayed to notice it was 1999. We've got to move forward on this so that we don't lose records, so that we can turn a paper procedure into an electronic piece of data that can be in

somebody's electronic work queue, and doesn't get lost, and we can move it around the system to be able to make sure the best claim is done with all the right consistency that you have an absolute right to expect.

We're further trying to break down that no-man's land by working with our National Guard, whose members come back not to post camps and stations around the country, but as members come back to their home towns, where we are as the VA. And so what we are doing is working with DVA, with VHA, and with our vet centers when they have their events, such as after-the-yellow-ribbon kinds of events that are now being spread across the country. We're there with them, so that we can deal not just with the veteran, but with the veteran's family. Sometimes that's when you have the teachable moment, when that veteran has been around his family members, and says, you know, I could use a little help here, and the veteran's spouse says, yes, you can, and we are there to say, we can take care of you.

Our Reserves are really important to us. They're extremely busy now. They have some of the same kinds of issues of multiple rotations to the combat zone that you heard General Conway talk about earlier this morning. And so, we are really trying to reach out to them, and to all who have separated from the military that have not yet come to see us.

With a call center, we're attempting to reach about 500,000 separated servicemen and women, to let them know that since January of '08, we have been able to see them without going through all the adjudication process, but to see them if they've been to OIF and OEF for service-related issues, and we will see them in our system for up to five years. So, we are working that aspect of it. We are providing information to them about their benefits. We are providing information about their health care, and we are finding some of them in need of case management, and we are assigning those case managers.

We are also going to all the demobe sites, so that we are right there and doing more now than just briefing. We're providing them the opportunity to get that DD-214 when we can grab it, to fill in that 1010 EZ, and then we can actually enroll them in the medical center near their home wherever they happen to be going. Why is that important? Because we want to be in touch with our veterans. We want them to understand the full panoply of services that we have to offer, and that we welcome them into our system.

You know, this whole issue of suicides is something of concern. You heard the General talk about that this morning. It's of concern to us too, we are watching all the numbers, but you know you can get lost in all the numbers and the data and we're linked in with the National Death Index and all of those kinds of things. But you know when you see one soldier that has committed suicide, a sailor, airman, Marine, a veteran, that's one too many, and so this soldier represents that to me. I mean, he's a combat medic who took his life at age 31, and it is a tragedy. So what we are doing is doubling our efforts to make sure that we are moving forward to be able to provide the mental health support to try to prevent even that one suicide. I will tell you, the suicide hotline that is in place is absolutely suburb, 24/7 coverage. We've expanded the staffing for it, manned by mental health professionals. 25,000 veterans have called in. We have had more than 700 active duty people have called in. We have had a 1,400 plus rescues of folks who were truly in danger of committing suicide, talked off of that issue and gotten into our health care system. It is linked with our suicide prevention coordinators that we have just gotten into the process of doubling across our VA system, because we want every one of those folks who might be at a high risk to have a personalized case manager that is keeping track of them and making sure they are keeping their appointments and so forth.

Across the system, we have hired more than 4,000 mental health professionals in addition, adding to our staff over the last two and a half years. We have about 17,000 who are serving mental health issues across the VA. I invited in a blue ribbon panel to try to help us to get a sense of where we should be going. They've made recommendations, 14 things to consider. We're acting on all of them, but their bottom line was, congratulations, you are moving forward strategically in being able to try to work the issue of preventing suicide. We have a comprehensive strategic plan with uniform mental health package that's going to be across the VA. If you come to the VA with a mental health issue you're going to be seen within 24 hours, and you're going to have a treatment plan within 14 days. We're expanding our vet centers to be able to provide that comfortable environment. I've been to a lot of vet centers, and universally, someone there

will say, you know, I feel comfortable here. I feel safe. I'm being taken care of by people that understand me. So, we're expanding 23 in 2008, I approved another 39 for 2009.

In our primary care centers, what we are doing is incorporating mental health in with primary care. That cuts down stigma, and also increases the understanding by our primary care physicians because they have that one-on-one consultation right there in the hallway. We're doing the same thing as I mentioned before with women, because they need that same single kind of portal to reduce their stigma and make them comfortable in our system.

Recently, I lifted the ban on paid advertising, and so we have a pilot program, because I want to use whatever means we need to let our veterans know what is available to them, and that we care about them, and we want them to use our services. So, we have a three month pilot going on in the Washington, D.C. area with the Metro buses and in the subways to try to see exactly how to do that better. When we understand it, we will roll it across the country.

This issue of PTSD is an important one. We've been at it for a long time. We have arguably the best research ongoing with PTSD across the country. There is a DOD VA center that's going to be at the new Walter Reed Military Medical Center. I've provided a VA Deputy to General Loree Sutton who's going to head that center up for the Department of Defense. It does lead to the issue of TBI. You know there is a spectrum of traumatic brain injury, and I will tell you that those with severe traumatic brain injury, penetrating trauma, you can see those. You can understand that. It is easy to get your hands around. And then try to make sure we have the right case management and wrap around for the caregiver, for the family member, for the service member. But what we're trying to learn now, more, is about the other part of the spectrum, the issue of mild traumatic brain injury. So we have been actively screening, as is the military. Of people who have come into our system, 191,000, about 37,000 have gone through that initial screen, screen positive that says, yes, potentially I was exposed to a blast or something that could have given me a traumatic brain injury. Then we go onto a secondary screen. About 34,000 of those 37,000 say, yes, I'll take a secondary screen. The others say, we're fine, nothing wrong, we're okay. So we are actively screening them now 21,000 of those and we're scheduling the appointments for the rest. We don't have all the data in, but we are going to make sure that we follow through on that, and we'll understand then, that piece of the spectrum of the Traumatic Brain Injury and what we need to do about it and what we need to do to plan for the future.

I do want to comment on research. We have an absolute uncompromising responsibility to ensure, first, that our veterans who participate in research are absolutely protected, and have the best information available to be able to be a part of that research. The other thing we have an uncompromising responsibility to do is to make sure that our research focuses on the issues that are relevant to our veterans. And I will tell you that we are increasing our scrutiny. We're increasing our oversight. And I am really proud of the about $1.8 billion worth of research that is done across the VA focusing on veterans' issues.

I want you to know that I've service-connected ALS, Lou Gehrig's Disease, Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis. I'll tell you why, because the evidence suggest that there's nearly a two times incidence of folks who have served in the military. I don't understand why. The science doesn't tell us why, but it may be that a study will be done that will define sometime in the future. But right now with the Institute of Medicine information and with the studies I've read I don't want to deny a veteran. I want to err on the side of our veterans.

I want to talk about voting here. I spent 38 years in the Army, you know. I was a Voting Registration Officer a lot of times. I believe that people ought to vote. They have a right to vote, and that's part of our responsibility. I do believe that the VA should be proactive, encourage, and educate and assist our veterans to be able to vote. This *New York Times* was taken to task, what's the Secretary thinking? You know what I'm thinking is if you're a veteran, you're coming to my hospital for your health care, you shouldn't be bombarded by an avalanche of newspaper reporters, and a microphone thrust in your face or the circus that goes along with some of that. What I want to be able to do is make sure that the veterans that come into our system, that are in our domiciliary, that are in our nursing homes, have all the information they need. And I have a system

within the VA, our volunteer service system, that can oversee that aspect of it. If we need outside help to do it, we'll get it. If we need to bring in a nonpartisan, and again we're going to be a nonpartisan, if we bring in a nonpartisan organization to help us do that, it's going to be of high quality, and we're anxious to make sure our veterans absolutely have the opportunity to exercise their right and obligation to vote.

Another thing that I want to talk about is this issue that some have said, that we're paying maybe too much attention to the OIF and the OEF cohort of veterans. You know, we are a nation at war. They're, obviously, they're high on everybody's mind, on your mind, just from what we've seen today. They're high on the nation's mind, their mom's and dad's, and so forth's minds. But I will tell you, I want you to understand that we fully, absolutely understand our uncompromising obligation of all eras of veterans. I mean, I'm a Vietnam veteran. You look at that cohort, and I understand that we are now, many of you in this audience come into this stage of your life where you are about ready to do something other than work. And maybe you're starting to realize that help that you didn't need before, but that you had earned, should be available to you. Or that you have some issue that needs help and assistance that you hadn't recognized before, and we need to be there to be able to provide that, and to provide that support and to provide those earned benefits.

And then on the left-hand side of the screen, that greatest generation, our World War II, our Korea veterans. They're at the point where many cases they need geriatric care, hospice care, and that kind of support even to the nature of our cemeteries. But you know, they were soldiers and sailors once and young, like the book says. But the ones there on the right are soldiers, and sailors, and airmen who are young now. And they are at the stage where they need to go back to their families, and be in the employment, and part of our great work force and our communities, and be that absolute next greatest generation. And so, we need to meet all of the needs when they need it, in the way they need it. And so I don't think it's a multitier system that we're trying to do. We're trying to do the right thing for every one of our veterans. The question comes, well, is that going to overwhelm you, is that going to push the others out? Let me just put things in perspective. In World War II, we demobilized 16 million men, largely men. In OIF and OEF there have been about 1.7, just under that, deployed to OIF and OEF. There have been about 850,000 who have separated from the military, and that's in the six or seven years that we've been at this. And then there have been about 350,000 who have actually come to the VA. When you start breaking it down further, there have only been about 522 that have come to our polytrauma centers. So the idea that we are overwhelmed, given the budget we have and given this picture, is wrong. What we need to do is continue to modify to make sure that we are meeting the needs of every soldier, sailor, airman, and Marine, the way that they need that need met.

Which leads to the next point that I'd like to bring up, and that is the issue of looking at the VA over the horizon. What do we need as the VA moves forward to the 21st century? What is it that you want. How do you want your care when you need it, where you need it, by those who you need it from? Veterans centric care as opposed to a facility centric care, where we can leverage home health, where we can leverage ambulatory care, where we can find the absolute best partners and use them effectively and efficiently, and linking them with electronic health record, making it accessible. What I really want is our VA to have a lifelong relationship. What we have here is an expansion of our community-based outpatient clinics. We're going to go up 44 in 2009.

I was in Columbus about two weeks ago, and visited this clinic. It's going to be an ambulatory-care/outpatient health center which has four OR's, a CAT scanner, an MRI, 13 dental operatories. It is the way of the future, and we'll be able to do 95% of the care right there in the Columbus area, in this absolutely state-of-the-art health care center. Again, part of this lifelong relationship, so that even when, no matter where you are in your career as a veteran you know that we're there. We're there for you. And that we absolutely care about you like these cards tell everyone single soldiers at Walter Reed, when our VA representatives come by, and they're not there. That we want you to be all you can be. Like Dave Rozell here, you can see he's missing his right leg. He not only took his child to the ski slope, he took his troops back into Iraq. You know there have been 30,000 plus Purple Hearts in OIF and OEF. And so you know, clearly, making this VA system so that it can support this next generation of veterans into the 21st century

while we meet our obligations to the older veterans is absolutely the right thing to do. But with a volunteer force, I think you've got to go back to what George Washington said. He talked about the willingness with which our young people are likely to serve in any war no matter how justified, shall be directly proportional as to how they perceive the veterans of earlier wars were treated, and appreciated by their country. Applicable today. And so, as those who have borne the battle, let me thank you for your service. Let me tell you what an honor it is to serve you. God bless you. God bless this country. I'll see you on the high ground. (*Applause*)

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER HAYDEN: Good morning. It gives me great pleasure to introduce our next guest, and give his history. Derek Blumke enlisted in the United States Air Force after graduating from high school in northern Michigan during the fall of 1999. He served six years as an Aircraft Electrical Systems Technician and Aircraft Maintenance Supervisor. While on active duty, Derek was assigned to the AC-130H Specter Gunships, and 16th Special Operations Wing, Hurlburt Field, Florida. Derek deployed three times to Afghanistan and the surrounding regions in support of Operation Enduring Freedom during his tenure with the 16th SOW. Upon completion of active duty service in the fall of 2005, Derek transitioned into the Michigan Air Guard and started classes at a community college. He completed his associate's degree in the fall of 2006, transferred to the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and is currently a senior double majoring in Psychology and Political Science. In the spring of 2007, Derek founded the Student Veterans Association at the University of Michigan, where he was successful in developing a veterans' resource center on campus. In January of 2008, Derek co-founded the 80-plus chapter organization, the Student Veterans of America, and serves as the organization's first president. In their mere eight months of existence, Student Veterans of America has successfully lobbied alongside the other veteran service organizations, and passing Senator Jim Webb's 21st Century GI Bill through Congress and have been working with students, veterans, and state governments across the country to create resources for veterans on college campuses. I present to you Derek Blumke.

Address: Derek Blumke
President, Student Veterans of America

Vice Commander, National Commander Conatser, thank you for giving me the honor of addressing The American Legion's general assembly today. Veterans, members of The American Legion family, my grandfather was on the beach in Normandy, my other grandfather, who has passed, served in the Navy during World War II, and all but one of my uncles served in the war in Vietnam. I am truly privileged and honored to be standing here in front of you, our nation's true heroes, today.

The Spartan King quoted by Thucydides said that, "The nation that makes a great distinction between its warriors and its scholars will have its thinking done by cowards, and its fighting done by fools." This quote is no more true today than it was when Thucydides spoke of his ancient Greek society more than 2,500 years ago. For more than 40 years our nation has ignored the leadership abilities inherent in our country's veterans. For far too long we've been letting an incredible resource go to waste, and for far too long, we've ignored the leadership abilities, the dedication to country, the integrity, and the courage our veterans have learned from military service. But today we have an incredible opportunity to put these men and women in the positions in which they belong.

After a more than a year and a half of hard fighting, Senator Jim Webb, with the help of Senator Chuck Hagel and the combined efforts of the Student Veterans of America, The American Legion, the VFW, and all the other veterans service organizations we've passed the 21st Century GI Bill through Congress. As a result of your efforts and the moral fortitude by Congress, an entire generation of veterans will now be given access to a first class education that will propel them into the leadership positions to which they belong. No longer will our nation's young veterans, my friends, be forced to choose between feeding their families and going to school. Through the opportunity of an education, veterans everywhere will now be placed on a direct course to leadership positions in business, the arts and sciences, and where they are most desperately needed, in government. As a result of Senator Webb's determination,

veterans will now be able to afford college, and just as they served in combat, they will soon have the honor of leading our nation through what is shaping to be some of the most difficult times of the 21st century.

Although the costs of college are now covered another obstacle is looming on the horizon. Our country is proud of its service members, but there is a huge disconnect which exists between those who are serving and those who are not. We live in a country whose freedom is protected by less than 1% of its population. As a result, the majority of our citizens do not know what the life of a service member is like. They do not understand what's it's like to kiss your wife good-bye, and not know if you will ever see her again. They do not know the pain of calling your parents and telling them that everything is okay, and that you are safe, even though your truck was just blown up in an IED attack earlier that day. Beyond that, they do not know what it means to be a veteran. In fact, I did not know. When I completed my service with the United States Air Force, I was talking to another student and I mentioned that I had served in Afghanistan. Their response was, "Oh, so you're a veteran." I didn't even know how to respond. I was almost caught in awe. I was thinking, why did this person call me a veteran. I was 24 years old. I didn't wear a cap. I didn't march in the parades, and as difficult as it was for me to accept at first, I came to grips with the fact that I am a veteran, and today I've come to be proud of it. I found I have a family that goes far beyond blood, color, creed, and even branch of service. I have a family that which extends to millions, and I have come to grasp that I have the honor of representing many members of this young generation of veterans, and I have the responsibility to ensure that they are given every opportunity to succeed with an education.

Though I've come to understand what it means to be a veteran, our country has not. More importantly the majority of the college campuses across our country have not. From the students who feel that asking a veteran if they have killed someone is appropriate, to the lack of preparedness by the university system for a new demographic of their student body which they hadn't thought to consider. College campuses across the country have barriers that exist, though unintentional, barriers which make the seemingly simple task of attending college extremely difficult.

When I first called my college campus, the University of Michigan, I was transferred around about six or seven times until they told me they couldn't talk to me. When I finally did arrive to campus, I wandered around campus for about an hour trying to find out where to drop off my paperwork to start my GI Bill. After that, I walked back to my single apartment. I went to class every day, day after day, feeling nothing short of an alien. After a few weeks of this, I developed depression. Thankfully as being a psychology major, and ingenious service-member veteran, I knew kind of how to medicate. So, it kind of worked itself out I suppose. My experience is not the exception, but is rather the rule. Many veterans arriving to campus today are facing many of the same issues, from PTSD, Traumatic Brain Injury, just the social climate of coming to school being a 26 year-old combat veteran with a classroom full of 18 and 19 year-olds is a tough thing to grasp.

As a result of our student veterans group's advocacy on the campus of the University of Michigan, and the support of our local American Legion post, the University of Michigan has made sweeping reforms which will make U of M one of the most veteran friendly campuses in the country. These changes are happening at schools across the country. They're happening everywhere, the problem is, they are not happening quickly enough. In these few days you'll hear great men tell you incredible things they've done for our country and what they will continue to do. Rather than tell you what I'm doing, what I've done, or what I plan to do, I instead ask you to go home, and make an impact on the lives of our returning service members. I ask you to go to your local campus and work with them in making their school a veteran friendly university. I ask you, rather than try to start a Legion post on campus, help the veterans on that campus start a student veterans group. Support them. Help them with barbeques. Help them in getting in contact with other peers. Help them make the transition from service member to student. Help them become our nation's future leaders. As a result, you'll find a generation of veterans who just as they were loyal to their comrades in combat, they'll be a loyal, dedicated members of The American Legion for the rest of their lives.

Finally, I ask you to help Student Veterans of America help our young veterans in their transition to college. We are a young organization. We're 9 months old. We are an organization that is run completely and entirely by volunteers. We do not as of yet have a professional staff. I am wearing the one and only suit that I own, and it is held together by Scotch Tape. I've maxed out my credit card. I've unknowingly sacrificed relationships because I knew what I was doing was doing the right thing for my friends getting out. My dedication is not alone. The members of Student Veterans of America are sacrificing and suffering to ensure that those who follow us won't have to face the hardships we had to face. As a new veterans' organization, we need your support by any donation you are able to help us out with. Please go to StudentVeterans.org to learn more about who we are, what we do, and how we can all work together in ensuring all veterans are provided every opportunity to succeed when they leave the military service.

Also take a look to see if there is a student veterans group in your area. If there's not, see if you can possibly help get one started on your campus. Help the university. Help the administration see what issues are on their campus, and what they might be willing to do, and what you might be able to help out with. If there is nothing that's done on these college campuses in the near future, a lot of veterans are going to face a lot of extreme difficulties, which they would not have had otherwise to face. Please go to the college campuses around you. Please reach out, and please help these young veterans returning. As a result, as I said, they're going to be extremely dedicated, extremely loyal members of The American Legion, because The American Legion was there for them when they left the service. Our veterans need your help and our country needs your help. As a young Air Force veteran, President of the Student Veterans of America, and a member of our own Erwin Prieskorn American Legion Post 46, I humbly thank you for your time, and for your service. (*Applause*)

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: We want to thank Derek for coming and sharing that information with us.

On September 11, 2001 the United States suffered the greatest attack on its homeland in the history of our nation. Americans were resigned to the fact that we were going to be hit again and again, as there seemed to be no way to stop suicidal Islamic terrorists from taking innocent lives. Fortunately, our nation's Commander in Chief refused to be swayed. Despite relentless criticism by the media and by some in Congress, our President remained committed to taking the war to the terrorists. He restructured the federal government by creating the Department of Homeland Security. He led the effort to overthrow the barbaric Taliban regime in Afghanistan. Despite enormous pressure he refused to cut and run in Iraq, and the world is seeing the successful results of last year's military surge. During his tenure, the terrorists have been unable to strike our homeland again despite numerous attempts. Ladies and gentlemen, it's my pleasure to announce that The American Legion is presenting its Distinguished Service Medal to the Honorable George W. Bush. Because of his long standing tradition that the President of the United States does not make public speeches during either political party's convention, President Bush has elected to send video greetings and thanks. Please turn your attention to our screen for a taped message from the President of the United States.

…At this time the Delegates viewed the following video.

Presentation: The American Legion Distinguished Service Medal
George W. Bush
President of the United States

I'm pleased to address my fellow members of The American Legion for your 90th Annual Convention. I send greetings to you National Commander, Marty Conatser, and all the proud veterans gathered in Phoenix this week. I'm honored to accept The American Legion's Distinguished Service Medal. For decades The American Legion has stood firm in its devotion to God and our country. Members of this organization know what a special place America is, and you've risked your lives to defend it. You have protected our way of life on battlefields across the world, and your courage has made it possible for generations of our citizens to live in liberty. Members of The American

Legion have worn our nation's uniform during times of war, so you understand the sacrifices our troops are making in today's war on terror.

I thank you for all you do to support our military families while their loved ones are overseas, and I thank you for your tireless commitment to ensure our veterans receive the care and compassion they deserve. My administration shares your determination to stand behind our Nations' veterans. Since I took office we have nearly doubled funding for the Department of Veterans Affairs, we have improved the quality of medical care that our veterans receive, and we're working to ensure that veterans returning from the battlefield have the resources and support they need to transition back into civilian life.

My administration also stands with you, in defending the flag our troops have carried into battle. I appreciate your leadership on this issue, and I'm proud to join you and the elected legislatures of all 50 states, and urging congress to provide the flag with the constitutional protection it deserves.

Over the last eight years, I've addressed this convention many times, and I have met with many of you personally. I will always be grateful for your encouragement and support during this critical time for our country. May God bless The American Legion, and may God continue to bless the United States of America. (*Applause*)

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: At this time I'll call on National Adjutant Robert Spanogle for some announcements.

Announcements
Robert W. Spanogle, National Adjutant

Thank you Mr. Commander. We have a distinguished guest appearing here tomorrow before this 90th Annual National Convention; the Vice President of the United States. As with guests like the President, the Vice President, or presidential candidates, we need to be aware of the security. So tomorrow, the doors of the Convention Center, the magnetometers will open at 6:30 a.m. But tomorrow, after that, at the start of the National Convention, at 8:30 a.m. the doors to the convention center, the outside doors, will be locked at 8:30 a.m. after the Vice President's address.

You'll note on your agenda that The American Legion Riders will present the money that they have raised for the Legacy Scholarship Fund at 1:25 p.m. today. 15 minutes before, the Legion Riders who have ridden from Indianapolis to Phoenix on the Legacy Run, who are in the audience, they'd like them to participate, so please meet Billy Johnson, our Director of Membership & Post Activities, backstage. The Sergeant-at-Arms will escort them. Also, any departments wishing to make a contribution to the Legacy Fund can join that group and make their presentations on stage. Thank you Mr. Commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: It is my great honor to present to you the newly elected National Commander of the Sons of The American Legion. Tommie Cisna is a member of Lawrence Riddle Squadron 88, located in Mattoon, Illinois. Over the years he has taught flag etiquette at grade schools, and at Boy Scout gatherings. Tommie has distributed poppies and volunteered at the Illiana Veterans Hospital for their super bingos and Christmas gift wraps. As a high school student Tommie was often called upon by The American Legion to play trumpet at veterans' funerals. He earned the rank of Eagle Scout with Bronze Palm; he strongly supports the Children's Miracle Network, and other organizations that benefit our youth. Please welcome to our stage, National Commander of The Sons of The American Legion, Tommie Cisna of Illinois.

Address: Tommie Cisna, Illinois
Newly Elected National Commander
Sons of The American Legion

Thank you, thank you very much. I appreciate the welcome. Commander Marty, Officers, PNCs and Delegates, Legionnaires and veterans, I want to thank you very much for your service for your service from the bottom of my heart. My dad earned my eligibility for the Sons of The American Legion by his service when he proudly served in the United States Air Force. I brought with me my friend and my wife, Cathy Cisna.

The early part of my life was an involvement in the post. My dad took me to the post at an early age, and it is what has shaped my life, and my view of veterans' care. To me, the post was the center of the community, all things revolved around the post. But when I joined the Sons, I learned just how important membership is. I learned about the value of my membership. I also learned about the power of volunteers. It lit a fire and a passion in me, that I, we, the Sons can make a difference, and are making a difference in a veteran's life. Your National Sons are making a difference in a veteran's life. We feel very important and very special to be part of The American Legion family, the Legion, the Auxiliary, the Juniors, the Sons, and the Legion Riders, a true American family.

Membership is the life blood of any organization, and the Sons continue to get their 100% membership every year. This year you're going to hear a lot about VA&R, veterans' care for dependents, veterans and their dependents is going to be top priority under my administration. Also CMN. We have partnered with CMN and Josh Dodd in particular. We can bring in a ray of sunshine to a child's life that needs it. And of course, the crown jewel of the Sons of The American Legion, the Child Welfare Foundation. We have a goal this year of $4 million to date to be donated, and I have a challenge for the president of the Child Welfare Foundation, Dennis, for a little supper.

Marty, I must say it is pretty cool being on the national stage with you. It's a testament to what a Son can do coming from the 19th District. And I also want to say, that sharing the road with Marty this year, he was a very gracious host. There were a couple of times I preceded Marty and didn't try to take away some of his thunder, but invariably it does happen. I also want to say a special thank you to the members of South Carolina, Columbia, South Carolina. You sent a farewell to my brother-in-law that is stationed now in Djibouti, in the Horn of Africa. You sent him away not knowing my family, but went out for a veteran, and he is there now.

Looking to the future, there's another friend of mine that I'm looking forward to sharing some road time with, and that's the leading candidate, Dave Rehbein. Dave and Ann have been friends of Cathy and I for several years, and I look forward to serving Dave and the organization next year. And always remember, Sons, S-O-N-S, Serving Our Nation's Soldiers.

If I may, Ray Giehll, Jr., the National Commander, sent a letter with me, and wishes me to read this to the Delegation, and to you Marty.

"To my National American Legion. Hello to the Delegates of the National Convention. I'm sorry that I could not be here myself, but I'm doing better, and will be out and about soon. I want to take this time to thank Commander Marty for allowing me to serve with him this past year. Wow, what a Commander you elected one year ago. Every time I heard Commander Marty speak he has always had a great message, and he has always had a new way to deliver that message. I know I was impressed. I think together with President Jan we really made a difference this past year. I also want to thank all the departments that I was able to visit this past year. I was treated with great respect in every department I went to. The American Legion family is alive and well, and it is great to see what we can do.

"Commander Marty, thank you for everything this year. Be it with The American Legion family, or on a personal basis, you and Sharon treated Debbie and I like a part of your family. We do have a gift for you, and we'll try to get it to you at the fall meeting. Thank you again, Commander Marty. I hope you have a great convention and everyone is enjoying Phoenix. Hey Bill, I made good on all those outfits for Debbie, but now she wasn't able to wear them here. I'm sure I will see you again when I'm back in business. Raymond Giehll, Jr., National Commander, Sons of The American Legion." (*Applause*)

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: There can be very few things more disheartening than working all year, and then not being able to be here at your own National Convention, as our National SAL Commander. Our thoughts are with him.

I now call on National Adjutant Robert W. Spanogle of the Department of Michigan to issue the Call for Convention.

Call for Convention
Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan, National Adjutant

Thank you Mr. Commander. The Call for the 90th Annual National Convention of The American Legion. By the authority of the National Executive Committee, the 90th Annual National Convention of The American Legion is hereby called to meet in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26-28, 2008.

The Convention business sessions will be held in the Phoenix Convention Center Exhibit Halls F and G, South Building, Street Level.

Purpose

The Annual National Convention is the legislative body of The American Legion. The Convention is called for the purpose of setting the programs of The American Legion for the ensuing year, amending the National Constitution and By-laws, and for the transaction of such other business as may be brought before it. At 12:00 o'clock (noon) of the final session or at the conclusion of all other business of the National Convention, whichever first occurs on Thursday, August 28, 2008, officers for the ensuing year will be elected. These being the National Commander and the five National Vice Commanders in that sequence.

Representation

Representation in the national convention shall be by Department and in accordance with the provisions of the national Constitution. (Section 3, Article V)

"…Each department shall be entitled to five delegates and one additional delegate for each 1,000 members or major fraction thereof whose current dues have been received by the National Treasure 30 days prior to the meeting of said Convention July 28, 2008, and whose registration fees are fixed by the National Executive Committee for its total authorized delegate strength have been paid and one alternate for each delegate." (Section 3, Article V)

In addition to the above, members of the National Executive Committee are delegates to the National Convention with vote which shall be exercised with the respected Department except that the vote of the National Commander shall be exercised only in his capacity as Chairman of the national Convention. (Section 3, Article VII)

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

Delegates to the national Convention shall be accredited in writing to the National Adjutant in the number of and the manner prescribed by Article V of the National Constitution. The rights of the Departments to make accredited substitutes for absentee delegates or alternate delegates shall be recognized by the National Adjutant provided that said substitution shall be officially certified by the Department Commander and Department Adjutant at the time of the certification required by the National Constitution or any time prior to the adjournment of the first session of the National Convention.

Alternates

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

National Executive Committee

A meeting of the new National Executive Committee will be held at the call of the National Commander within 24 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 I the Convention except as a guests of their respective delegates.

Convention Committees

Each Department is entitled to one delegate for each of the following committees:
Americanism
Children & Youth
Constitutional Amendments and By-Laws
Credentials and Internal Affairs
    Credentials and other Internal Matters (Section I & II)
    Membership (Section III)
Economic
    Employments and Veterans Preference
    Other Economic Matters
Finance
Foreign Relations
Legislation & Rules
National Security Committee: Joint Meeting (Includes
Aerospace, Homeland Security and Civil Preparedness, Law & Order,
Merchant Marine, Military Affairs, Naval Affairs)
Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation
    Claims and Rating
    Hospital and Medical Services

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: Mr. Commander that completes the Call for the National Convention.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: Thank you very much, Mr. Adjutant. We will now attend the Post Everlasting.

Post Everlasting Ceremony
Eulogy: Past National Commanders
William J. Rogers, Maine
and
James P. Dean, Mississippi
By National Commander Marty Conatser

Former President George H. W. Bush once said, "We have within our reach the promise of a renewed America. We can find meaning and reward by serving some purpose higher than ourselves -- a shining purpose, the illumination of a thousand points of light." Sadly, The American Legion lost two points of light in April. Past National Commanders William J. Rogers of Maine, and James P. Dean of Mississippi made careers out of serving purposes higher than themselves.

Bill Rogers led this organization during tumultuous times in American history. Elected at our 1976 National Convention in Seattle, Commander Bill had to deal with the aftermath of an unpopular war in which those who nobly answered our nation's call were slandered as war criminals and baby killers. Bill Rogers strongly opposed the blanket pardon that President Carter gave to Vietnam draft dodgers. As a World War II Naval Aviator who flew 30 combat missions in the Pacific, Bill knew the meaning of sacrifice. "The blanket pardon of thousands of men who placed their own interest above their country's call does not erase our contempt for their actions," Commander Bill Rogers said. This was vintage Bill—the fighter, the boxer, the Syracuse University football and baseball player. Bill was a New England gentlemen, but he let you know where you stood, and he always fought for what was right. He continued to voice his disapproval over the United States government's giveaway of the Panama Canal and proposals to convert VA Hospitals into community health centers. To his lovely wife Connie and their family, we send our deepest condolences. We loved Bill, and we will miss him.

Another man who we will sorely miss is Past National Commander Jimmy Dean. A 53 year member of The American Legion, Commander Dean led this organization with a dignified tenacity from 1986 to 1987. Even if not for his considerable American Legion accomplishments, Jimmy would still have left a remarkable legacy. He was the youngest representative elected to the Mississippi State House while he was still in law school. He served as a municipal court judge, and held executive level positions in the Corinth

March of Dimes and Red Cross. As National Commander, Jimmy strongly supported the freedom fighters in Nicaragua, and provided a special report to President Reagan. Under his leadership, The American Legion reached a 30 year high mark for membership and stepped up support for youth, and that was near and dear to Jimmy.

Commander Dean pledged every available resource to help President Reagan's drug awareness campaign. Helping others came natural to Jimmy, whether he was serving as a soldier during the Korean War or directing the Endowment Fund. Jimmy was preceded in death by his beloved Carolyn. Our thoughts and prayers go to their family. The American Legion salutes these two great commanders. We will miss them.

Our next speaker will be addressing us through a pre-recorded video message. She was elected the 21st Governor of Arizona. Chosen by *Time* magazine as one of America's top five governors, she was the first governor to call for the federal government to pay for the National Guard to protect the boarders from illegal entry. This governor previously served as United States Attorney for Arizona, as Arizona's first female Attorney General. Please turn your attention to the monitor for a message from Arizona Governor, Janet Napolitano.

…At this time the Delegates viewed the following video.

Greetings: Honorable Janet Napolitano
Governor of Arizona

Hi, I'm Governor Janet Napolitano. I want to welcome everyone attending American Legion's 90th Convention to Arizona, a state where The American Legion has strong roots. In 1919, John C. Greenway, an Arizona business leader who was a former Rough Rider, was instrumental in forming the Legion. Since then, the Legion has time and again shown its dedication to our veterans, our current service members, and their families. There are more than 600,000 veterans living in Arizona, and The American Legion has been critical in providing support to all of them.

In 1943, The American Legion was behind the initial drafts of the GI Bill that helped more than 2 million men and women go to college. 65 years later, on June 30th of this year, the President signed a much needed new GI Bill that you strongly supported and lobbied for. This new measure provides much needed support for veterans and their families. We truly owe those in our armed forces no less. Again, I want to thank you for your dedication to our nation's military families, and for your service to our country. I wish you a great convention, and I offer you a warm welcome to Arizona. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: Our next guest has held several American Legion offices and appointments here in the Grand Canyon State. He served as the Arizona Department Commander during the last year, and is a Vice Chairman of the National Americanism Council. Ladies and gentlemen, please join me in welcoming Past Department Commander of Arizona, Bruce Conklin.

Greetings: Bruce A. Conklin
2007-2008 Department Commander of Arizona

Welcome to Phoenix, Arizona, the Valley of the Sun. We promised you a warm welcome, and that's exactly what you're going to get. And we really do mean warm, don't we. It's been 17 years since Arizona hosted the last National Convention, and we're excited about hosting it again. To those of you, who were here back in 1991, welcome back. There have been many changes that we hope you enjoy. We hope that during your visit you will take the time to explore the sights and sounds of our scenic Grand Canyon State. Classic western deserts, high alpine meadows, Native American culture, echoes of the wild west, high tech museums, golf courses, beautiful mountains, and breath taking natural wonder, they're all here. We wish everyone a productive, successful, and most enjoyable visit with us. On behalf of The American Legion family of Arizona, we want to thank you for choosing us to host your 90th National Convention. Have a great time and thank you very much. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: Thank you Bruce. He has served for 20 years on the Arizona State Veterans Council, has received high level appointments by

two Democrat and two Republican Governors. He has served as the National Historian for The American Legion from 1980 to 1981, and has had numerous national and department offices. Please welcome a true friend of veterans, the President of The National Convention Corporation of Arizona, Neal S. Sundeen.

Greetings: Neal S. Sundeen, President
The American Legion National Convention Corporation of Arizona

Welcome. It is an enormous pleasure to come before you today on behalf of the National Convention Corporation of Arizona and members of the Arizona Legion family. We are honored to be your host for this convention. Welcome to Arizona, the Grand Canyon State and your host city of Phoenix. Phoenix has over 1.5 million people, making it the fifth largest city in the United States. Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport, where many of you flew into, is the 8th busiest airport in the world for passenger traffic.

Maricopa County is one of the few counties in the United States where we can enjoy watching four major teams, including the Arizona Diamondbacks baseball team that many of us had the opportunity to see on Friday, the Phoenix Suns basketball team, the Phoenix Coyotes hockey team, and the Arizona Cardinals football team. The Convention Corporation has worked hard to secure rooms at hotels and resorts in the Phoenix area so you will be comfortable during your stay. I would like to thank all of the Arizona Legion volunteers for their hard work to make this convention a memorable one for all of you to enjoy. If you need any help while you are a guest of ours in Arizona, please ask an Arizona Legionnaire for information or go to the information desk in the lobby. The Arizona Legionnaires would like to wish all of you the best for a successful and rewarding convention. We hope you enjoy your stay in Arizona, and then have a safe trip home. Commander, thank you for coming to Phoenix, Arizona, and we hope this convention is everything you wanted it to be. (*Applause*)

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: Thank you Neal. The American Legion is blessed to have partners around the world who share our love of freedom, and our dedication to veterans and their families. Years ago, the Republic of China, that is Taiwan, established the Veterans Affairs Commission with the aim of serving all of our fellow veterans. They assist them in seeking and successfully obtaining medical care, home care, employment, and educational assistance. We are most fortunate to have with us a retired lieutenant general, a man who has dedicated his life to defending his homeland, and to caring for veterans and their families. Please welcome the Secretary General of the Veterans Affairs Commission of the Republic of China, Cha Tai-chen.

Greetings: Lt. General Cha Tai-chen (Ret.), Secretary General
Veterans Affairs Commission, Republic of China

National Commander Conatser, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon. I'm greatly honored to bring greeting to your 2008 National Convention on behalf of General Kao Hua-chu, the Minister of Veterans Affairs Commission of the Republic of China in Taiwan.

Minister Kao was once invited to speak to your National Convention in Hawaii, in 2005. This year because of the reshuffle of the cabinet in Taiwan, he has to answer of course for the new Congressional inauguration during your National Convention. Consequently, so he asked me to come to meet the VACs and other friends in The American Legion on his behalf.

The American Legion and the VAC have enjoyed very strong relations for near 50 years, and in the past 30 some years our two organizations have maintained and exchanged top level visits. We in VAC arrange for your visiting leadership to visit with the President of our country, and we take them to eyewitness how we serve our veterans and how our country has accomplished in politics and in economy. In return, you in The American Legion never fail to invite us to participate in your annual National Convention. What is more, you pass resolution in support of our country, and the Republic of China in Taiwan every year. We appreciate your support, and we cherish this interactive relationship. We shall put in all our efforts to make this relationship even sounder year after year. On March 22 of this year, we in Taiwan held a presidential

election, Dr. Ma Ying-jeou, the PhD from Harvard University of your country won the election and took office on May 20. He vowed to bring better economic and dignity to his fellow countrymen, and he tells the American congratulatory and vowed that he will lead in government toward a much better relationship with the United States of America.

The people in Taiwan, the Republic of China, have been pursuing a life of peace, democracy, and freedom just like America. As compliment by President W. Bush, Taiwan has become a beacon of democracy to Asia and the world. The Republic of China is now a democracy respected by the international community. With the inauguration of the new administration led by President Ma, Taiwan, the Republic of China will remain a faithful ally of the United States. Much of the administration will regionalize its defense budget and acquire necessary defensive weapons for a solid national defense force.

Our dear friends in The American Legion, the Veterans Affairs Commission of the Republic of China in Taiwan very much cherishes your friendship. You have always passed resolutions in support of the Republic of China during your annual convention, and the VAC truly appreciates it. The VAC will certainly look forward to your continuous friendship and support for Taiwan to self defend herself and engage in more activity of international organization. Thank you again for allowing me to speak before you, and I wish you all a successful convention and good health. And before I leave the podium, I'd like to take an honor to present of National Commander Conatser, a medal from Dr. Ma Ying-jeou, the President of my country, the Republic of China, and a plaque from my organization, the Veterans Affairs Commission, to expression our gratitude to him for his efforts in strengthening our mutual relationship. I will ask my colleague to read the citation. Thank you.

INTERPRETER: It is my honor to read a citation accompanying the award of the Order of Cloud and Banner with Cravat, August 26, 2008.

"Mr. Marty Conatser, National Commander of The American Legion, has distinguished himself by his outstanding contributions to the promotion of friendly relations and cooperation between the United States of America and the Republic of China. In appreciation of his meritorious assistance, National Commander Marty Conatser is presented the Medal of Cloud and Banner with Cravat, Number 3654, by the government of the Republic of China, in according with the Article 11 of the Armed Forces Declaration Regulations. Signed by Ma Ying-jeou, President; Liu Chao-shiuan Premier; Chen Ta-ching, Minister of National Defense. (*Applause*)

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: The Army, Navy and Air Force Veterans in Canada Association, or ANAVets, is Canada's oldest veteran and community service organization, with more than 27,000 members in 74 units throughout Canada. There is one unit in the U.S., referred to as ANAVICUS. Today we are most fortunate to have with us a gentleman who has dedicated his life to Canada's veterans and their families. Legionnaires please join me in a warm welcome for Gordon Marsh, the acting Dominion President of the Army, Navy, and Air Force Veterans in Canada.

Greetings: Gordon Marsh, Acting Dominion President
Army, Navy, and Air Force Veterans in Canada

Thank you Commander. Commander Conatser, ANAVICUS President Comer, National Adjutant Robert Spanogle, honored guests, ladies and gentlemen. It gives me great pleasure to address you today at your 90th Convention. On behalf of the Executive and all members of the Army, Navy, and Air Force Veterans in Canada, it gives me great pleasure to bring greetings and friendship. This friendship was expressed to me in a very, very fine way when I arrived in Phoenix. My luggage didn't. A few of you know what it's like then, but I had to do a installation breakfast for the ANAVICUS, and all I had was a golf shirt, a pair of shorts, and sandals. But two very, very nice comrades, Keith and Peter Baker supplied with us clothes. They literally gave us the clothes off their back, and I just want to extend my appreciation to them. Thank you very much.

Last year, as some of you are aware, our Dominion President, John Thompson, fell ill at your convention, and spent over two months in a Reno hospital. He was airlifted

back home where he passed away a few days later, unfortunately. John was a great man and he will be sorely missed by all who knew him.

At your convention two years ago in Salt Lake City, our Dominion President at the time, comrade Ken Henderson, spoke to you about the bonds that tie veterans together, due to their shared experiences. In many cases shared experiences are the most extreme nature. We are brothers in arms, we are family. As family, our comrades and units in Canada followed along with John's health situation as it evolved. With Lorraine, his companion, who remained at his side in the hospital and phoned in daily reports to our Dominion office. We were struck with the generosity and help that your organization, and you as individuals, provided to support this most difficult situation. Lorraine has asked me to read you the follow message of thanks for your help and comradeship.

"To you all. Thank you for your kindness and financial assistance extended to me during John's illness. Without your generosity it would not have been possible for me to stay in Reno with John, which would have been devastating for us both. I would be remiss if I did not thank Jake Comer, Dan Ludwig, and his niece for all they did for me. To the Tetz family, where Tim is an executive director with the Nevada Office of Veterans Services, and his family Jean, Brayton and Zoe, who welcomed me into their home, a total stranger, provided me with home cooked meals as well as spiritual support. Also, the many visits to John offering encouragement, as well as the beautiful artwork by Zoe and Brayton. Those who had the pleasure of meeting John, knew of his dedication to ANAVets and ANAVICUS, his community and family. John Thompson was unique, a beautiful gentleman with a valiant heart, loved and respected by all." Lorraine says, "Thank you again, God bless you all."

Thank you all and I hope you have a wonderful convention. (*Applause*)

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: There are many veterans' organizations in Canada, but the largest by far is the Royal Canadian Legion, with more than 400,000 members and affiliates. From the time of its formation, the Royal Canadian Legion has focused its effort on securing adequate pensions and other well-earned benefits for veterans and their dependents. Acting as an advocacy agency on pensioners' behalf the Royal Canadian Legion works hard to ensure ex-military personnel and their families are treated fairly. Please welcome, Dominion President Elect of The Royal Canadian Legion, Mr. Wilfred Edmonds. (*Applause*)

Greetings: Wilfred Edmonds, Dominion President Elect
The Royal Canadian Legion

National Commander Marty, distinguished guests and members of The American Legion. I'm most pleased to bring you greetings from your friends to the north, the Royal Canadian Legion, and its 400,000 members from coast to coast, here in the United States and in Europe. As the Dominion President of The Royal Canadian Legion I bring you these greetings as you deliberate on American Legion business in this beautiful and dry Phoenix, Arizona. The well known country and western singer, Willie Nelson wrote about the valley of the sun in his song titled "Seven Spanish Angels," and he is so right. This is the valley of the sun, but as a true-blue Canadian, I cannot help but note that it has become a little better place because here in beautiful Phoenix they actually have the great Canadian sport, hockey. And the coach of the team here is no less than Wayne Gretzky, otherwise known in Canada as "The Great One," because of his skills on the ice. Well, our loss is truly your gain in that venue. But did you know that he was one of the first athletes to compete in the track and field program run by the Royal Canadian Legion in Canada, and that the program still exists today? Now there's an example of one of our youth who went on to greatness, and is now here in Phoenix. But enough about our national sport and this great city.

Let's talk about our Legion for a few minutes, and it should be noted that we all represent the same contingency, our veterans. And we face many of the same problems. Like you, we want to ensure that those who donned the uniform and those who are wearing it now get the care they deserve from a government that asked them to serve in their military forces.

There are debates ranging in both our countries as to whether we should be partaking in certain missions. But in Canada where we have not done this type of thing for some time, our entry into Afghanistan has changed the thinking pattern of many and has brought home the need for the Legion and its operations in support of those serving, and those who have served, young and old. While the support for our forces started to decline in the decades following the Korean War, there's been an incredible regrowth in that area in the past six years, and it has become quite evident to our citizens that our sailors, soldiers, and Air Force men and women need the total commitment support of our nation in order for them to achieve their goals.

But one thing is sure, as the troops return home; they know that the Royal Canadian Legion is there for them. They also know that many services now available to them didn't just happen. They came because of the Legion, which has fought relentlessly with the federal government to remind them of their responsibilities. This is what we are all about since we were formed in 1926. This is our job in Canada, as we know that it is yours here in the United States. And the fallen also need to be remembered. In Canada, we reinforce that message on the 11th of November, and we promote it as a Canadian idea through our Poppy and Remembrance Campaign. We ask all Canadians to wear blood red poppy to renew as a remembrance period, the 1st to the 11th of November, to symbolize the sacrifice made. And the funds raised through this annual distribution of poppies go to help those who have served and their families. More than 117,000 Canadians have made the ultimate sacrifice for the freedoms we enjoy today, and more of our citizens will in the future, just as will yours. Because there can be no price set on freedom. It's all or nothing, and in this game we have to give our all. And when I say, "all," I mean all, and that includes the government who send our men and women to fight. They owe them for every survival and we will not let them forget it. That is our duty. There's lots to be done and much business to be handled before the next few days, and I know it's important, so I'll leave you to that business, with the best wishes of your friends and comrades of the north. From the Royal Canadian Legion, to The American Legion, you have our respect for what you do, and our best wishes for your continued success. I thank you for the opportunity of addressing you today. (*Applause*)

Certificate of Appreciation
National Chaplain

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: The man who has served as our National Chaplain this year is a true man of faith who lives by our motto, "For God and Country." Reverend Elliott L. Foss is a retired U.S. Navy Command Master Chief and Hospital Corpsman, with service during the Vietnam through the Gulf Wars. Chaplain Foss attended the Candler Seminary School of Ministry at Emory University. He's also served as a pastor to churches in Maine, Virginia, Connecticut, Florida, and Georgia. He is an ordained Southern Baptist Minister and Chaplain. Reverend Foss is a member of Post 317 in Coastal, Georgia. It is an honor for me to present a Certificate of Appreciation marking his year of service as National Chaplain to Reverend Foss, but that doesn't tell you the story. He always tells a story, and throughout this year, on the days when I was down just a little bit, he always sent me little emails, one-liners, and stories, and they always came on a day when I needed somebody to pick me up a little bit. He's a great guy. I call on him, Ray—and where's your wife at—to come forward, please.

ANNOUNCER: The certificate reads: "Certificate of Appreciation, presented to Reverend Elliott Foss, appointed and served as National Chaplain of The American Legion, 2007-2008. Given in recognition of faithful and honorable service to The American Legion."

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN FOSS: It's been truly a pleasure to serve as your National Chaplain. It seems like I've been with veterans all my life, since that's what my family was. Today, I proudly wear on my lapel four stars, four blue stars, for my son and three grandsons, and oh yes, three nieces and nephews, and who knows how many more. It truly has been an honor to follow the National Commander and watch him at work with membership and telling people all the stories. And I hope that when you go from this

place this week, that you too will take with you opportunities to reach out and touch people's lives as many of us have been touched.

I wish to thank the Georgia Delegation, especially, for encouraging me and helping me in all I've done, and for Ray Hendrix our NECman to help me get up here. But most importantly, I want to thank my wife who this past year has kept packing my bags and making sure my ties matched my shirts because it's hard for me to do, having been in the military 25 years. They always told me what to wear, and I didn't color coordinate very well. But thank you all for this great pleasure. Thank you, Commander. (*Applause*)

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: I can commiserate with his story about wearing the same color clothes. My wife use to get mad when I said I was going to wear my green outfit. At this point and time, I call on Past National Commander, Paul Morin of Chicopee, Massachusetts, to present the Plaque of Appreciation to the city of Reno for hosting the 2007 National Convention.

Presentation: Plaque to the City of Reno, Nevada
For the 2007 National Convention
Past National Commander, Paul A. Morin, Massachusetts

Thank you very much Commander. It's a pleasure to be in front of this delegation once again and a happy honor to present to the city of Reno and to our Convention Corporation President for the 89th Convention held in Reno, Nevada.

In appreciation of the city of Reno for their kind hostility, The American Legion Department of Nevada, and to all that took the extra time so that each and every one of us could have an enjoyable convention in Reno, an outstanding parade, and an outstanding convention to attend. So at this time, it is our pleasure to present to the city of Reno and its citizens this plaque of recognition for an outstanding 89th Convention.

DALE "TINY" SALMEN: They're already giving me instructions back here. I would also like to thank all of you for attending the Reno Convention, especially the Nevada Legionnaires who made it all possible for you to have a great time in Reno. And I hope we might do it again. Thank you again. (*Applause*)

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: Phil Gordon was elected Mayor of Phoenix on September 9, 2003. He has taught school, owned his own businesses, and served on the school board. Mayor Gordon lists his three priorities for the city as public safety, education, and jobs. He's been a leader in the movement to revitalize, preserve, and redevelop central Phoenix. Please give an American Legion family welcome to Phoenix Mayor Phil Gordon.

Greetings: Honorable Phil Gordon
Mayor of the City of Phoenix, Arizona

Well thank you very, very much. I'm truly honored, sincerely honored to be in the company of heroes, individuals that have given their time for our country and for our city. I want you to know from the deepest part of my heart how grateful I sincerely am. While I've never had the privilege or the honor to serve our country in uniform, I'm the son of a World War II veteran, and a father of a Coast Guard veteran. Who, may I add, my son is a Phoenix police officer who was helping watch over my good friend, Senator McCain when he was here before you this morning. So, he's serving our city together with our 3,000 other heroes, Phoenix police officers.

I want you to know about our city, how much it does care about you and your service. All too often the words are easy to come out of individuals' mouths, and ignoring the wives and the children of the families, but not this city. Seven days after 9/11 our city adopted an ordinance that any city employee called up onto active duty to serve his or her country would receive the differential in pay between the city of Phoenix pay and armed service pay, and that's still in effect today, and to our knowledge the only city in the country that does that.

My first action five years ago when I was sworn in as Mayor was to appoint and approve a Veterans Commission, never having been done in any city in Arizona. First

action that very moment after being sworn in on our Bible. That Commission, I'm proud to say, has put forth so many great initiatives to help our active service personnel and our veterans throughout the valley. Whether it's the stand-downs for the homeless, whether it's that most beautiful piece of work of art in our city building, the largest American Flag, 20 feet by 40 feet in a city government building in the state that everyone passes through every day, or whether it's the veterans and military lounge at our airport, where we set aside a first class lounge so that those service personnel leaving to defend our country or their families waiting for their loved ones to come home could be with them in a quiet, beautiful setting without a little more stress.

I could go on and on because this city does care about our veterans. I could go on about the day during city work day, not a holiday, when we take the afternoon off and honor our veterans in the city, and then honor a particular branch or generation of veterans, that particular year. April 18th of each year. I could tell you about the million and a half citizens of our city that believe and have voted with their beliefs to help support our military personnel and veterans. And I may add for my friends that are out there in Philadelphia, we are the fifth largest city now in the United States, sorry.

I would also like to close by saying that my city is your city. We're honored that you chose our city this year. As you can see, a couple of days ago we're a desert city. This morning we were a tropical city. In fact, my grandmother would always say Phoenix is so hot she wouldn't visit. I would say as a little child it's hot, but it's a dry heat. Well, today I would have lost that discussion, and even back then, my grandmother would say, from Chicago, "So is sticking your head in an oven."

But in all seriousness, to each and every one of you, and those that came before you, and those that will come after you, and your families, let me emphasize and your families, have made the sacrifice. Too many of your friends, the ultimate sacrifice. This is a city that doesn't forget. This is a mayor that teaches his 9-year-old the sacrifices, and can talk about the World War II battles or Vietnam or Desert Storm because of the cost. And nothing I can ever show him or I've ever read or watched could make up for some of the experiences or show the reality of what you all have gone through. So, the only thing that I can pledge to you, and then honor it with words and deeds, is that this city doesn't forget, and won't forget long after my passing. Thank you so very, very much. If you need anything, you call. I'm in the phone book. I don't think you'll need it, it's a friendly city. It's a city with a heart, enjoy it. For those of you that are outside, I guess a few are outside of the city of Phoenix, make sure you spend your money here in the city of Phoenix, we need the sales tax. God bless, enjoy. Thank you very much. (*Applause*)

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: The Mayor said if there was anything I needed, I need him to fill out this application for Sons of The American Legion. And leave it with the guy right back there.

MAYOR PHIL GORDON: It will be my honor. I promise I won't leave. How much does this cost?

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: 25 bucks.

MAYOR PHIL GORDON: It's a bargain. Right? Thank you very, very much, I will.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: I had the privilege of spending some time on the Legacy Run, and at this time I'd call forward Terry Woodburn for a presentation to the Commander. But we left Indianapolis and I stayed with them for three and a half days, had a great time, and met some great people. It was a real experience.

Presentation: Terry Woodburn, Illinois Department Adjutant
Representing The American Legion Riders

Thank you Mr. Commander. This is the second year I've been asked to give some remarks to open up the Riders portion of the presentation. And it's not bad to do that, the only thing is you have to kind of come up with something that is similar, talking about the same subject, but in a different way. So, I was expressing my concern about that to a fellow rider while over having a bottle of soda, and he said well let me tell you a story. Maybe you can get something to go with this that might help get some remarks to change

it a little bit. This was a rider from California named Frank, and he said he was going down the Pacific Coast Highway and he heard a noise. Now, any rider, anybody that has ever ridden knows that for any amount of time, you know every sound your machine makes, no matter what speed you are going. And any differentiation in that sound will cause you to be concerned, especially if you are going at a high rate of speed. So he pulled himself over, let it idle and he didn't hear anything, didn't hear the sound anymore. So he was just getting ready to get back going again when he heard this voice that said, "Frank, this is God, you've done so well, you've been so faithful that I need to grant you a favor. Let me know what you want to do."

So Frank said, "Well, I'm afraid to fly. I can't swim so I won't take a boat. But I want to go to Hawaii. Is there any possible way you could build me a bridge to Hawaii?"

God said, "Well," he said, "that's a tall order even for me." He said, "It's really going to get into your natural resources. It's going to be an endeavor of magnanimous proportion. Is there any type of a second favor that you might wish to have that I can grant a little easier?"

And he says, "Well, now that you mention it, there is one." He said, "I came home the other night and my wife was crying. She couldn't tell me why." He said, "I just don't understand. Is there any way you could perhaps give me a better understanding of my wife, or females in general, emotional attitudes?"

And very quickly God responded, "You want that bridge two lanes or four?"

I would like to open up this segment with a quote from a young lady who was a great civic advocate. Along with her husband, they sang a little bit. Johnny Cash and June Carter. In an interview many years ago, and why this stuck with me I'm not real sure, it's just one of those little things that pop out now and then. In an interview they asked June Carter how she was doing, and her response was, "Oh, I'm just here trying to matter." And I got to thinking about that, and it kind of helped me put a few words together for being up here to introduce this segment. I'm just trying to matter, and how much that applies to our National Commander's theme of "The Value of Our Membership," that we matter.

The millions of dollars given through the Child Welfare Foundation. Millions of dollars from the Endowment Fund Corporation going to temporary financial assistance that puts food on tables, pays mortgages, keeps utilities turned on so that kids can have a chance to develop with a normal form of life until they can get their feet back on the ground again. The value of that membership, working with vets' homes, vets assistant centers, helping our men and women at arms and their families while they are away. Yes, we matter, we matter in all that we do. And now the Legacy Scholarship Fund, which is a program that the brothers and sisters of the Riders have jumped on literally with both wheels. In the past three years, riders have gone over 12,000 miles, Salt Lake City, Reno, and now Phoenix, to bring funds available for this scholarship. Those miles though don't count. That number of miles doesn't count when you think about Mr. Commander. The number, that by the time we're finished with our presentations of what's going to happen today, in the last three years the Riders will have eclipsed the $1 million mark. When somebody sticks a microphone in your face out here or in your communities, tell them that story. Those are things, we matter, we matter in everything we do, and that's something to get excited about. We're a tremendous giving organization, and I submit to you that that is really more and above the value of our membership. That is now, and always has been, and always will be, our very heritage and legacy from this organization to the greatest nation on earth. That's what we do for it.

Now in closing, before we get into the contribution part, those of you who have been around our National Commander very long will have heard this saying at least once or more, I guarantee you. Let there be no doubt in your mind. Ladies and gentlemen of The American Legion family, we do matter everyday in what we do. Now, please, before we get to the contribution portion, sit back and enjoy about a three minute video of the ride that took place between Indy and Phoenix this year.

…At this time the Delegates viewed a video.

DEPARTMENT ADJUTANT WOODBURN (IL): That's what we do. There's no finer feeling than wind in your hair and bugs in your teeth. At this time, I'd like to

introduce for the first presentation our immediate Past Department Commander from the state of Illinois, and our Delegation Chairman, Mr. Myron Kirby.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN KIRBY (IL): Thank you Terry. The Department of Illinois would like to donate $2,500.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN CALANDRILLO (NJ): From Bayonne, New Jersey, Bayonne Post 19.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN BARYLSKI, JR. (CT): Andy Barylski, the Department Commander of Connecticut, a check for $4,100.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN ELSON (HI): Aloha from Hawaii, $250 cash.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN CASPER (GA): Fae Casper, Department of Georgia. We already donated $12,178 when the motorcycles arrived here in Phoenix. Today, we have an additional $3,350 for a total of $15,528.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN MAHON (IA): American Legion Riders Post 29, Washington, Iowa, check for $500.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN NEVILLE (NC): Richard Neville and Department Commander from North Carolina Jim Mayhew proud to present $2,710.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN (MA): On behalf of the Department of Massachusetts family, it's Past Commander Lee Plummer, and its present Commander George Gonzales. It's our honor to present $5,000.

NECMAN CHERRY (TX): 12th District, Legion Riders of Post 60 and Legion Riders of Post 624 of the great state of Texas, $8,800.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN COPHER (MN): From the Department of Minnesota and we raised $800 of this yesterday in our caucus, $3,510.

NECMAN NEYLON (NH): John Neylon, NEC Department of New Hampshire. $5,068.

COMMANDER ENDIKOT (PA): Barbara Endikot, who is Commander of Post 317 from the great state of Pennsylvania, Yardley and we have $1,500 from our fund-raiser.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN SANDELL (PA): Sandy Sandell, Commander, Department of Pennsylvania. We're very proud to present this check to the Legacy Fund for $2,752.25.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER (OH): From the Riders of Akron, Ohio; Streetsboro, Ohio and Massillon, Ohio, and the great 14th District in Ohio, checks totaling $3,946.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER (OH): The Legion Riders of Chapter 83 in the state of Ohio, $1,000.

NECMAN MARSHALL (FR): Bill Marshall, NEC from the Department of France. First I'd like to recognize the posts that have sent in direct donations to the Legacy Run to National which totaled $602. And today I have a check for $700 from the Department of France, and a check from Bob Fueling for $150 for the Legacy Run. And my partner post, he doesn't have the check, but he's going to tell you what and we'll have to hold him to it.

DEPUTY COMMANDER BROWN (Saudi Arabia): I'm bringing a promise. My name is Tim Brown, Post 1, Deputy Commander. Our Memorial Division and Don Arm, Saudi Arabia, has contributed a check for $5,200.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN HAGGAN (FR): From the Department of France we also got, as The American Legion Pony Express messenger, people were passing me money and checks, haven't gotten very many of them, some of them came straight in, but I do have a check from Post 5 for $220. I stopped a few gentlemen that were eating with their uniform caps on. I'm not going to say Daniel and Lloyd from Maine, a couple of other people, Raymond from Georgia, thank you very much, it's coming in here too, and another check from me, so a total at the end of $52.00.

RAY HENDRIX (GA): Thank you very much, that's coming in here, too. I have another check from me, so a total of $352.

JAMES HOLLAND (SC): James Holland from the great state of South Carolina, American Legion Department of South Carolina is contributing $9,500.

RICHARD LENNAN (KY): I'm Richard Lennan from Kentucky, here with my senior Vice Commander from our state. I've made this run every year, and I intend on making it every year. I have a check here for $2,285, another check for $500. We donated $1,200 on the run, and $1,030 previously, for a total of $5,015. And I'd like to thank my post, it's the largest contributor of $1,530. Thank you.

DEPARTMENT COMMANDER ROBERTSON (VA): My name is Andy Robertson, I'm the first, actually still the only Department Commander to have ever ridden as a rider for the Legacy Run. Marty, on behalf of the Riders, I do want to thank you personally. And there are a lot of things you can do on your last full week, I'm sure as National Commander. But he came out to be with us, and I know a lot of the guys are already headed for home. On their behalf, I want to say thank you. In addition to the funds that have already been delivered to Marty, on behalf of the Department of Virginia, I wanted to add another $6,865 brining the Department of Virginia total to over $20,000 this year.

NECMAN HOWE (VT): I'm Les Howe, Vermont NECman, and a couple of days before coming out here, Rutland Region Chamber of Commerce gave me a check for 250 bucks for the Legacy Fund. Thank you.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER (NE): From Hartman Post 84, Columbus, Nebraska. Legion Riders, we have a check for $4,270.77.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN INGRAM (NE): Mr. Commander, from the Legion Riders of Omaha, Nebraska, Post #1, I have a check here for $5,232.50.

DON SIEGER (TX): I'm Don Sieger from District 18, Amarillo, Texas. I have a check here from the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers and my personal donation.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN PETERSON (ND): Harvey Peterson, Department of North Dakota, proud to present you a check for $4,593 and change from our program headed up by our marvelous riders.

JUDY BICHEL (AZ): Judy Bichel, Post 58, Fountain Hills, Arizona from our Legion, Auxiliary, Sons, and Chapter 58, we have $2,000.

DEPARTMENT COMMANDER L'HEUREUX (ME): Commander Paul L'Heureux, Legion Director, state of Maine. This past week you were handed a check for $5,700 from two Riders that rode out here. This past weekend two Riders also rode out to my room to hand me a check on behalf of all the Riders in the state of Maine for an additional $10,932.

ALTERNATE NECMAN GOUGH (WI): David Gough, Wisconsin. We have numerous checks here in total amount of $12,349.52, and I just want to say that $6,550 of that was raised through the 3rd District American Legion Riders. And the four of us here rode the whole 1,800 miles.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: I'm going to cut in here. I was handed a note that said, "The Past Department Commanders' Club donated $4,000 to the Legacy Scholarship."

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER (TX): Commander, on behalf of the Converse Post 593. Anybody that doesn't know where Converse is, we have a little suburb called San Antonio near us. On behalf of the 593 Riders and Post 2 partnered with us in sponsoring the Legacy Dinner this year, our little post is pleased to present a check for $30,007.27.

COMMANDER HOTAMIO (NM): Commander, I'm Robert Hotamio, American Legion Post 69, Alameda, New Mexico. Our post is donating $5,000.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN BURNETT (NY): Mr. Commander, on behalf of the Department of New York, it is my privilege to present to you this check for $30,000.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER (KY): Commander, on behalf of The American Legion Post 6, Madisonville, Kentucky, I'd like to give you this check for $1,925.

COMMANDER BANNON (TX): Commander, George Bannon, Post 305 in Texas. We don't have Riders and we don't even have a post home, but we do want to make a contribution of $100 for the scholarship.

DEPARTMENT COMMANDER FERGUSON, JR. (AL): Commander, Wild Bill Department Commander of Alabama. We've have a little excuse, you know, we've had a couple of hurricanes and my wife asked me today if I knew how to build an ark down there because of Fay, so we had a rough time. Our first year was $400, our second year was about $6,000, and sir, I'd like to present you a check for $15,629.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN MORMAN (OH): Mr. Commander, Mike Morman, Delegation Chairman for the Department of Ohio. On stage with me is our National Executive Committeeman Carl Swisher, our Department Judge Advocate Art Lustig, and Past Department Commander Jim Morris and Glenn Hickman. On behalf of the

Department of Ohio, it gives us great pride to present to The American Legion Legacy Scholarship Fund this check in the amount of $50,000.

JERRY LAIRD (OH): One more from Jerry Laird, Post 144 in Columbus, Ohio. Our post has donated $5,000 for this Legacy Fund.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: Last year and I jokingly said that I thought the Riders did an outstanding job, last year and I just expected them to do better for me, and they did. Grand total for the 2008 Legacy Run as of right now is $515,346.23.

On the short video that was shown the young lady from Missouri that said her husband was killed in Afghanistan, we got to that post and they had a nice venue set up to speak at, and they said, "Commander, we really want you to get them fired up." And just before I was getting ready to speak, they said, "This young lady would like to talk," and so without any ado they just shuffled her right to the mic, and she took her two children with her, and she tried to tell us how much it meant that The American Legion family was doing this for her children. The tape didn't do it justice. You had about 200 burly bikers hanging around, and about 2/3 of them didn't have a dry eye when she got done. So when it came my turn to talk, I just said, "It has all been said. This is why we do it." Thank you so much. (*Applause*)

Well, let's keep the calculator going. I'd like to introduce Les Clevinger and the Department Commander from Virginia.

DEPARTMENT COMMANDER CLEVINGER (VA): Thank you Commander. On behalf of the Department of Virginia and its 60,000 members our Service Officer Program is one of the best in the country, we think. And an individual by name of Paul Laskey, Post 146 out of Hopewell, Virginia, he went out and started asking for donations for these prepaid telephone cards. These cards are good for forty minutes overseas. They are prepaid and he set out a goal and said, "Lets get them for the troops, we're here to support our troops, and the Department of Virginia will support them." And with that I'm going to ask Andy Babic, Andy is one of our instructors for our Service Officers School, for a little total and a challenge.

ANDY BABIC: Paul went out and got, I think 4,000 and gave them to Walter Reed. And then we got to talking and he went out and got some more, and he gave them to me, and I gave them to Les. And then we got to thinking that the class in July, so Bob Spanogle once told me at the Legion College, "Just ask, just ask, and they will come." Well, the total came to 10,256 prepaid phone cards which we would like to donate to The American Legion to be distributed to our troops that are deployed overseas so they'll be able to stay in touch with their families, because that's what the Legion stands for, our support. And we are making a challenge to every department to either match or exceed the 10,256. Thank you. (*Applause*)

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: I appreciate that great presentation, and they delivered the cards to us this morning. This morning when we had the opening, you'll notice that the 76th Combat Team are the ones, with General Lally, who spoke to us from Iraq. We made the decision with the Department of Virginia, the first bunch of those phone cards go to those troops that you saw this morning.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: Two things before I start my report. With the turn-in and the things that we just did, our technical group, who are behind all of this and make all of this happen were so inspired by the Legion Riders that they took up a collection of 90 additional dollars for us. Thank them. And if someone from Arizona wants to come see me, I've got the Mayor's application done.

National Commander's Report to Convention
Martin 'Marty' Conatser, Illinois

This is your Commander's Report to the Convention. Ladies and gentlemen, the state of The American Legion is strong, just for the things you just saw. We're strong because people know that The American Legion is good for America. Thanks to you, The American Legion family, Congress just passed and the President has signed the most significant veterans' education benefit since The American Legion authored the first GI Bill in 1944. Representative Chet Edwards recently was quoted, "Passing the historic new GI Bill into law could not have happened without the dedicated efforts of The American

Legion." Could not have happened. He said it, and he said it because it's true, because of your phone calls you made, the letters you wrote, the emails you sent. When the White House hemmed and hawed, The American Legion roared and soon both parties in Congress overwhelming passed a bill that will cover the college cost of our military heroes, and in some cases their families. Something else that could not have happened with some of the people in this room, and the grassroots support from Legionnaires and their communities is the record VA budget that passed this year. Congress has finally funded the VA budget at the level recommended by The American Legion. Congress cares about The American Legion's opinions, not because we are veterans, because we are non-partisan and we are straight shooters with the facts. We focus on policies, not personalities. We do not endorse political candidates or political parties. We do engage in the process and that's how we are able to get the most effective voice for veterans in Washington. We study the issue, ask the candidates where they stand, and tell them where we stand, and then vote accordingly. There are some important issues at stake in the coming election. America's response to the war on terror, illegal immigration, veterans' health care, protecting the American flag, and the education of our youth are going to be decided in large part by the people we put in office. Where does The American Legion stand on these issues? It's easy. The American Legion always stands for what's good for America.

The American Legion has staff members working full-time at Walter Reed Army Medical Center serving our heroes and their families any way possible. We do this because it's good for America. When some say veterans' benefits cost too much, I say, visit Walter Reed, and you'll see what the real cost of war is. War is expensive, indeed, but the benefits are just a small, small part of it. We fight for veterans' benefits because caring for our veterans is good for America. The American Legion knows that war is horrible, but we proudly support the war on terror. We did not declare this war, the enemy did, and America's very existence is at stake. The American Legion passed Resolution 169 because we don't believe this myth that you can support the troops but not the war. We heard this nonsense before, during the Vietnam War, when both the war and the warriors were disrespected. We passed Resolution 169 because it's good for America that no veteran will be disrespected. I visited Iraq and I know the outstanding caliber of the men and women defending us today. Ladies and gentlemen, the surge is working. The American Legion supported this strategy as soon as it was unveiled because, again, we knew it was good for America. In the last 11 months The American Legion has processed more than 900 Heroes To Hometown applications because we know that supporting the troops requires action, not just words. What may seem like a small task to an organization as large as The American Legion, we can make a major difference to a family in need.

When a young Army specialist was shot in the neck and suffered a traumatic brain injury in Iraq, he returned home to Kansas where his house was leveled by an F-4 tornado. His vehicle was also heavily damaged. He was living in temporary lodging with his wife and five children when the Heroes to Hometown and The American Legion's Department of Kansas entered the picture. Department Adjutant Chuck Yunker mobilized The American Legion who took the family to Wal-Mart, purchasing clothes and toys for the kids. Legion family members repaired the car, and are now pooling together resources to rebuild the house. Again, taking care of our troops is good for America.

Our National Emergency Fund is there for Legionnaires of any war era when a natural disaster strikes. While Government agencies can sometimes be slow to react the NEF can usually get a check to the disaster victims in two to three days. The American Legion has awarded more than $6.5 million in NEF Grants since the program was created. This too is good for America. Do you know what else is good for America? Bringing home our heroes. As your National Commander, I visited Vietnam. I met with Vietnamese government officials, not to revisit history, but to discuss unfinished business. The war there may have ended, but our job in that country is not complete until every American who served there has been returned home or accounted for. Bringing home our heroes is good for America.

Now, let's discuss something that's not good for America. Frivolous lawsuits. When an atheist gets offended because there's a religious symbol on a veterans memorial, the first course of action is usually to sue. Groups like the ALCU encourage these lawsuits

because they know they would have no shot of success at the ballot box or in the true court, the court of public opinion. The American Legion knows that if those radical groups are not stopped now, military chaplains, religious symbols, and veterans' cemeteries, and even the words "In God We Trust" can be taken away. The American Legion believes that legislative protection, the Public Expression of Religion Act, is good for America. Need I say that protecting Old Glory from desecration is also good for America? It's been a long, uphill fight, but just as we do not leave our heroes behind in war, we will not give up fighting for the flag, because it's good for America. Nor will we give up fighting for our borders. American maybe a nation of immigrants, but it is also a nation of laws. What part of "illegal" doesn't the federal government understand? If an illegal farm worker can enter the United States unchecked, so can the terrorists who want to kill Americans. The American Legion believes border security is good for America.

Children and Youth is one of the Four Pillars of The American Legion. When children lose their parents to war there will always be a void in their hearts. The American Legion can never replace the heroes who have made the ultimate sacrifice, but we can certainly give their families love and support.

The American Legion Legacy Scholarship Fund ensures that the children of our heroes who have fallen since 9/11 will be able to attend college. You have noticed the unusually high amount of motorcycles and the great turn-in we just had this week in Phoenix. The American Legion Riders have once again raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for the Legacy Fund by riding to our National Convention, all the way from Indianapolis. Many have also participated in honor guards for military funerals. A lot of our riders attend Rolling Thunder, a rally that brings awareness to POW and MIA issues. Ladies and gentlemen, The American Legion Riders are good for America. Something else that's good for America is The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation. The CWF has awarded more than $9 million in grants since its creation in 1954. Child Welfare Foundation grants have been used to educate the public about juvenile diabetes and shaken baby syndrome. Children with autism and cancer have all benefited through the Child Welfare Foundation. The American Legion provides the overhead costs for the foundation, meaning 100% of the Child Welfare Foundation contributions go directly to helping children. That's good for America.

Legionnaires show their support for children with many other outstanding programs as well. This morning you met our youth champions who represent the best in The American Legion Baseball, Boys Nation, Oratoricals, Shooting Sports, and Scouting. These bright young people are good for America. You can sometimes judge the character of an organization by looking at its critics. Though the Boy Scouts of America is under attack by the ALCU and others that share its values, The America Legion's support for the Boy Scouts is unwavering. The Boy Scouts are also good for America.

Since 1919, The American Legion Service Officer Corps has emerged as the country's premier force in obtaining benefits and compensation for qualified veterans. We assist all veterans regardless of their Legion membership or eligibility status. Our highly trained American Legion service officers are good for America.

I've spoken about membership enough this year for you to know where I stand. I do not wish to dwell on it. Ladies and gentlemen, we need to grow The American Legion and all of our programs that make us so good for America. I've only got one question. Are you telling anybody? (*Delegates reply, Yes*) All right! The American Legion's commitment to a strong national defense, patriotism, children and youth, and our veterans is second to none. It's because of the Four Pillars and the work of the Legionnaires everywhere that a strong and growing American Legion is truly good for America.

Ladies and gentlemen, I've had one heck of a ride this year. Meeting many of you at your Legion posts, visiting our military units overseas, and touring VA Centers, has made me prouder than ever to be a Legionnaire. I never forget that the national leaders like President Bush, Speaker Pelosi, Secretary of State Rice, and many others, don't meet with me because they simply like Marty Conatser. They meet with me because I represent you, members of the greatest veterans service organization in the world. None of these programs and services that I've mentioned today would exist without your dedication, your vision, and your support. Ladies and gentlemen, every one of you in this room right now, every one of posts around the world, are all good for America. Thank you so much. (*Applause*)

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: I now declare the 90th Annual National Convention of The American Legion to be regularly convened. Isn't that great?

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

Report: Convention Committee on Credentials and Other Internal Matters
(Section I of Convention Committee on Credentials and Other Internal Affairs)
Larry J. Besson, Illinois, Chairman

To the 90th Annual National Convention of The American Legion, Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008.

The section on Credentials and Other Internal Affairs met at 9:00 a.m., August 24, 2008, in Phoenix Ballroom East, 2nd Floor in the Hyatt Regency, Phoenix.

Larry J. Besson of Illinois was elected Chairman, and George West of New Hampshire was elected Secretary.

It was regularly moved, seconded and carried to accept the Delegate Strength Report as reported by the National Adjutant certifying membership 30 days prior to National Convention. It was regularly moved, seconded and carried that the report be based upon the provisions of Section 3, Article V, of the National Constitution: Five delegates for each Department, plus one additional delegate for each 1,000 members or major fraction thereof, whose current dues have been received by the National Treasurer thirty (30) days prior to the opening of the Convention (July 29, 2008); and one alternate for each delegate. In addition, in accordance with Section 3, Article VII, members of the National Executive Committee which committee includes the National Commander, who exercises his vote only in his capacity as Chairman of the National Convention, and five (5) National Vice Commanders are delegates to the National Convention.

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

Motion was adopted by majority vote that the Committee Chairman and Secretary be authorized to sign the Committee report on behalf of the Committee.

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

In accordance with the membership report certified to the Convention Committee on Credentials and Internal Affairs by the National Adjutant on July 29, 2008 and in accordance with Article V of the National Constitution, the voting strength of the 55 Departments is 2,945 allocated as follows:

Alabama	31	Montana	19
Alaska	15	Nebraska	53
Arizona	55	Nevada	17
Arkansas	26	New Hampshire	29
California	143	New Jersey	74
Colorado	33	New Mexico	21
Connecticut	34	New York	165
Delaware	19	North Carolina	57
District of Columbia	9	North Dakota	27
Florida	150	Ohio	141
France	10	Oklahoma	33
Georgia	59	Oregon	31
Hawaii	10	Pennsylvania	225
Idaho	19	Philippines	7
Illinois	130	Puerto Rico	13
Indiana	116	Rhode Island	14
Iowa	70	South Carolina	36
Kansas	49	South Dakota	31
Kentucky	38	Tennessee	39

Louisiana	39	Texas	100
Maine	32	Utah	16
Maryland	81	Vermont	22
Massachusetts	63	Virginia	67
Mexico	7	Washington	45
Michigan	96	West Virginia	32
Minnesota	112	Wisconsin	81
Mississippi	26	Wyoming	14
Missouri	64		

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

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN BESSON: Mr. Commander, as a duly elected and registered delegate from the Department of Illinois, I move the adoption of my report.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: Do I hear a second?

…Second.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: Duly moved and seconded. Any discussion? Hearing none. All those in favor by the normal sign of "aye." Opposed? Same sign. Adopted. Thank you Larry.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: The Chair now recognizes Jimmie Foster from Alaska, Chairman of the National Convention Committee on Legislation and Rules for the purpose of making a report.

Report: Convention Committee on Legislation and Rules
Jimmie L. Foster, Alaska, Chairman

The Convention Committee on Legislation and Rules met on Sunday, August 24, 2008 in the Convention Center in Phoenix, Arizona.

Following the preliminary activities to officially organize the Committee, the Permanent Chairman and Secretary were duly elected. I, Jimmie L. Foster, a delegate from the Department of Alaska, was elected Permanent Chairman. Russell H. Hanseter, a delegate from the Department of Wisconsin, was elected Permanent 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.

A unanimously approved motion allowed the Permanent Chairman and Permanent Secretary to make technical corrections to the Committee Report, as necessary and appropriate.

The final unanimously approved motion authorized the Chairman and Secretary to sign the report on behalf of the Convention Committee on Legislation and Rules.

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

The Committee heard remarks from Jon Towers, Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee. Mr. Towers discussed a number of legislative issues and held a question and answer session.

Please pay close attention to the Commission reports as they address the aggressive lobbying efforts of The American Legion family on such issues as funding for the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Defense; immigration reform; and the Global War on Terror.

Although Congress is now in recess, the annual Federal appropriations process seems to be once again off-track for the Department of Veterans Affairs. There is not much optimism that the VA budget FY 09 will be enacted before the start of the new Fiscal Year.

The congressional leadership of the 110th Congress deserves praise for its timely actions in addressing a number of veterans' issues, especially those returning from Iraq and Afghanistan, but the appropriations process remains broken.

Congress deserves praise for its passage of newly revised GI Bill educational benefits scheduled to become effective in August 2009. Not only does it provide more money to cover actual college costs, but it also allows benefits to be passed on to spouses or children of eligible veterans.

However, The American Legion has taken exception to legislative efforts of both the Administration and some congressional leaders on such issues as amnesty for illegal immigrants. The American Legion also continues to oppose legislative attempts to establish troop withdrawal timelines.

On September 11, Legionnaires from across the country will accompany the newly-elected National Commander to Capitol Hill. The purpose of this visit will be to discuss the legislative mandates adopted by the delegates at this National Convention. This hearing will be held on a Thursday; therefore, members of The American Legion family attending this event should have an opportunity for face-to-face meetings with their elected officials.

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN FOSTER: National Commander Conatser, as a duly authorized Delegate to this Convention from the Department of Alaska, I move the adoption of this report and the adoption of the Standing Rules of the Convention as they appear in the Uniform Code of Procedures for Organizing National Conventions of The American Legion.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: I've got a motion and a second.

…Second.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: Any discussion? Hearing none. All those in favor by the normal sign of "aye." Opposed? Same sign. Thank you Jimmie.

The Report of Legislation and Rules is adopted. The Chair now recognizes Kenneth D. Danilson of Iowa, Chairman of The National Convention Committee on Finance for the purpose of a report.

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

Forty-two members met at the Hyatt Regency, Curtis Rooms A & B, 2nd floor at 9 a.m. on Sunday, August 24, 2008 in Phoenix, Arizona. Paul M. Allen (Minnesota), National Finance Director, opened the meeting as staff liaison and made general announcements concerning convention activities. He then informed the committee that nominations were in order for Chairman and Secretary. Kenneth D. Danilson (Iowa) was elected chairman, and Carl E. Levi (Tennessee) was elected secretary, by unanimous vote.

The Chairman introduced the National Treasurer, George A. Buskirk, Jr. (Indiana), who updated the committee on the status of the U. S. economy. The Treasurer stated there is a sense of pessimism that dominates the economy based primarily on the belief that oil prices are going to continue to adversely impact performance of business nationwide. A number of sectors are responding to the situation and caution is the key to maintaining the viability of our client's personal portfolios. GDP is not expected to grow above 2% next year and could be as low as 1%. Inflation will probably achieve a rate of 5% over the next several months caused substantially by the increase in gasoline and food prices that have virtually eroded the hoped for positive impact of President Bush's $120 billion in tax rebates. Job growth will be meager over 2008. Unemployment will therefore continue to grow to an expected level of 6.3% by 2009. Consumers, who are heavy with personal indebtedness will find it difficult to find new jobs or to receive a raise in their current job positions because of this overall cutback in job opportunities.

For these reasons, economic recovery from the recession of 2008 will be slow. Sluggish growth in profits and concerns about an improvement in the performance of the economy in the second half of 2008 will cause American business to use caution throughout the balance of the year. Indications of a major slowdown are evident in recently published durable goods orders with three months of declines. The weakening of

the economy involves more than housing and automobiles, and also includes many retail products. However, energy, aircraft, computers and agriculture are showing great promise in their recent performance.

The American public remains concerned about the overall direction of the economy. Fewer jobs are sure to make consumers tighten spending, acknowledging the fact that the country is in the middle of a recession. The slump in housing and automotive manufacturing continues to hurt GNP. The tax rebate checks now in the mail will help loosen purse strings, although we expect consumer spending to increase only 2% during 2008. Overall, the U.S. economy will expand approximately 1% this year compared to 2.2% in 2007.

Longer term, we remain optimistic that larger U.S. companies will make a commitment to invest in growing their companies after cutting their inventories to a level requiring replacement to respond to customer orders for goods. We believe that investors should maintain broad diversification in their stock and bond portfolios recognizing that the economic factors facing the marketplace may rotate to out of favor sectors that are currently under-valued.

Treasurer Buskirk then recommended that the national dues be set at $13.50. A motion from Rodger Bennett (IL) was made that the 2009 per capita dues remain at $13.50. John Reish (OR) seconded the motion, and it was adopted by unanimous vote.

The Chairman then recognized Dennis Henkemeyer (MN), Chairman of The American Legion Magazine Commission for a report on the Magazine. He first introduced Jeff Stoffer, Editor of the Magazine. Mr. Henkemeyer reported that the Magazine with five months of expenses and revenues fully booked, stood to return a surplus of $807,776 to the general fund, compared to a budgeted figure of $1,075,276. Costs will be carefully managed through the remainder of the year in an effort to achieve the year-end budget surplus of $2.5 million. Seven issues of advertising sales had been accounted for by mid-July. The magazine had $5,202,776 in actual sales compared to $6,154,720 in budgeted sales, a 15% difference. The 2008 budget, it is important to note, was based on all-time record performances in 2007 when we hit $10.8 million and 2006 when we hit $9.55 million. The year 2008 stands likely to finish with about a million dollar surplus.

The magazine has been able to stay within budget on manufacturing and distribution, thanks largely to page-count reductions, despite a 2.7% increase May 12 in the cost of mailing through the U.S. Postal Service and quarterly price increases of $1 per hundred weigh for paper, with the potential for at least one more before the end of the year. Only one of these increases was budgeted. The rising cost of fuel to produce and ship the paper is primary reason for these increases. Printing costs have been stable.

National Finance Director Paul M. Allen presented to each delegate and discussed a nine-page seven-year financial review and forecast. He informed the committee that we had a $2,926,304 deficit for the year 2007 and that from our first run projection reports, we are anticipating a 2008 surplus around $3,000,000. Mr. Allen then informed the committee our first run 2009 surplus budget is $4,393,383 which will be approved during the October Fall NEC meetings.

Chairman Danilson reported that the 2007 Crowe-Chizek certified annual audit, which was distributed to each delegate prior to the convention, and published in the convention program, shows our total assets were at $139,646,297. He also informed the committee that our 2007 year-end deficit was $2,926,304.

Resolution #225 (CA) entitled "Transparency in Operation" was rejected.

Louise Hoover (PA) moved to empower the Chairman and Secretary to write and/or amend the report on behalf of the Convention Committee on Finance. Gary Gifford (MD) seconded the motion, which was adopted by unanimous vote.

As there was no further business, the meeting adjourned at 9:32 a.m.

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN DANILSON: Mr. Chairman, as a duly elected delegate from the great state of Iowa, I move for the adoption of this report.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: I've got a motion and a second for the Finance Committee Report. Any discussion? Hearing none. All those in favor by the normal sign of "aye." Opposed? Same sign. Motion carries the report of Finance is adopted. I will now call on the National Adjutant for announcements.

Announcements
Robert W. Spanogle, National Adjutant

Thank you Mr. Commander. The Vice President of the United States will speak to the National Convention tomorrow morning, which requires the security of magnetometers. The building will be open at 6:30 a.m. Everyone must go through the mags, and as the Vice President assumes the podium the outside doors to this building will be locked down. Thank you.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: Legionnaires. Please join me in a salute to the Flag of the United States. One! Two!

The time is now 1:50 p.m. The Convention will stand in recess until 8:30 tomorrow morning.

…At 1:50 p.m., the Convention recessed to reconvene the following day, Wednesday, August 27, 2008 at 8:30 a.m.

PROCEEDINGS
SECOND DAY

Wednesday, August 27, 2008

…At 8:00 a.m., the Delegates were entertained by Mr. Peter Ole, our organist.

…At 8:25 a.m., the Delegates assembled for the second day of the 90th Annual National Convention, and the following proceedings were conducted.

Call to Order
Martin 'Marty' Conatser, Illinois, National Commander

Ladies and gentleman, as we begin our convention, please join me in a round of applause of Mr. Maestro, Peter Ole. The Convention will come to order.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Delegates will stand and render a hand salute to the flag of the United States of America, by the numbers.

…At this time the Delegates saluted the flag and remained standing for the singing of the National Anthem.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: For the Invocation, I call upon our National Chaplain, Elliott L. Foss of Kingsland, Georgia, for the Invocation. Ladies and Gentlemen please uncover.

Invocation
Elliott L. Foss, Georgia, National Chaplain

Let us pray. God, bless this great country. Bless those that lead us. May they ever be looking to you for wisdom and for strength. Bless our soldiers, our sailors, our airmen, Marines, Coast Guard, National Guard and reserve units stationed throughout this world, many in harm's way. Watch over them today. And be with their families, that comfort and aid might be available even through us as members of The American Legion family.

Be with us today in spirit and in truth as we seek to do business and recognize those, Father, who have given so much for their country. May we honor you in all that we do, for we pray it for God and for country. Amen.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: Thank you, Chaplain Foss.

Ladies and gentlemen, please remain uncovered and join me in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States.

...At this time the Delegation recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: Our next speaker has a long record of public service. A Freedom Rider during the 1960s, he championed civil rights for minorities. A former history professor at San Diego State University, he has served the people of Southern California in Congress since 1992, compiling an impressive record of achievement. He has served on the House of Representatives Committee on Veterans' Affairs and was elected Chairman of the Committee by his colleagues in the 110th Congress. He is truly committed to a well-funded VA and has called special attention to mental health issues among veterans. Give a warm American Legion welcome to Rep. Bob Filner.

Address: The Honorable Bob Filner
Chairman, House Committee on Veterans' Affairs

Good morning. Thank you, Commander. Thank you Legionnaires. I've never been a warm-up act for a Vice President before, so we'll see how this goes.

As the Commander said, I have been honored to be the Chairman of the Veterans' Affairs Committee since last January. It's been a very humbling experience. And I get to talk to all you heroes that gave us this nation and gave us our freedom, and to talk to the brave young men and women who are serving today, and try to make sure that we

continue to honor them when they come home. So it's been very humbling. And we've got a big job to do.

I'm glad to see, by the way, it looks like the Democratic Convention, Delaware, is right up front here. These people will know what I mean. The rest of you probably don't. But I'm the only congressman besides the next Vice President who is a Blue Hen. Now, I don't know why the mascot of the University of Delaware is a blue hen. You would think we would be cougars or tigers or lions or something. But that's our mascot at the University of Delaware. And as the only other alumnus besides Joe Biden, I'm glad you're up front here. So thank you, it's good to see you guys.

You know, we are in a very tough time in our nation with regard to our veterans. When I became Chair just at the beginning of last year I think the VA was actually strained to its breaking point. You have now literally hundreds of thousands of new veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan. I spent some time over there, by the way. These young men and women just blow you away with their competence and their expertise and their morale and their concern for their buddies. It's been an incredible experience to be able to see them and try to make sure that we continue to take care of them when they get home.

But we have this war going on. At the same time we have older veterans, whether it's World War II and Vietnam, Korea, or Persian Gulf I. Their needs are getting more and more, so you have this dual kind of pressure on the VA, and we've got to deal with all of them. That's what America has to do. We have to make sure that all our veterans are taken care of. All of them.

And that's my job. You know, just when I became Chair this so-called Walter Reed scandal broke. Now, Walter Reed is a military hospital and not a VA hospital, but most people didn't distinguish, and reporters all over the country did some horror stories on what was going on in their VA hospital or whatever. And everybody in America because of that situation—which became well-known around the country—it became clear to the American people that what they thought was happening—that is, we were actually taking care of these young men and women who came home, was not happening.

You had guys and gals wandering around Walter Reed not knowing where their appointments were, they were living in quarters that apparently were rat infested, and America said this is not right. So those of us who saw and who knew that we had to do better were able to convince both political parties. Somehow neither one is necessarily right there all the time with the money, but we were able to get, partially because of Walter Reed, partially because of the pressure of The American Legion—I mean, you guys, you know, you do a great job each and every day. And I thank the Commander and his Washington staff.

I know John Sommer is here. I was looking for Steve Robertson, head of legislative. He's out in Denver I think. You guys did a great job and helped us. We put in, in the last year and-a-half, $17 billion worth of new money for the health care of our veterans. $17 billion. That's a 40 percent increase. Unprecedented in VA history and it's because the American people said we've got to do better. Now, our job in the VA committee is to make sure they spend that money right. And you are our front line to making us aware of whether they're doing it right or not. And they don't always do it as well as we would like them to do it.

There are great, incredible people in the VA, and some of the best medical care in the world committed to veterans, but there is a bureaucracy around there that doesn't always make it so easy to get inside and get the care that is needed. In fact, some people think VA means veterans' adversary, and not Veterans' Advocate. And our job is to say, hey, we've got to be responsive. And when you ask a big bureaucracy like the VA to do more and more with less and less, you know, the morale suffers and they're not as responsive, they're not as welcoming as you would like them to be. So we've got to make sure that that occurs.

And the young people coming back from Iraq and Afghanistan, as you know, have injuries that in previous wars we wouldn't have to worry about because they would have died on the battlefield. This war, greater than any war in history, has a survival rate—if you survive the battlefield of Iraq or Afghanistan, and I have been on the Medevac helicopters to get those wounded warriors off the battlefield to their forward base hospitals, to regional hospitals and to Landstuhl, Germany, where the surgical center is—

I mean, it's an incredible job that we do, and there is a 95 percent chance of survival, unheard of from previous wars.

But they are coming back with injuries that are very deep, long-lasting, whether they are physical or mental, and its part of the cost of war. We've got to take care of each and every one of them. I want to assure you, all of you American Legionnaires. I want to assure you that although this war is a very divisive thing in America and the Congress—you know, part of the presidential campaign—we are committed to making sure that every young man and woman that comes back from that war gets all the care, the love, the attention, the honor, dignity, that this nation can bestow. And we have got to do this. I don't care where we are in the war; we have got to make that happen. And we know what happens if you don't do it right. I can't see you all with the lights, but how many here are from the Vietnam era, who served in Vietnam? Probably the majority. We didn't do it right for you, all of you. Those people who were against war, and that was including myself, did not distinguish between the war and the warrior, and we did not honor those who came home the way they should have been.

I mean, we have to apologize as a nation, we have to apologize as individuals, but words aren't good enough. We have to deal with honoring that and apologizing with our deeds. You know, half of the homeless on the street tonight, nearly half, are—may be from Vietnam, Vietnam vets. That's a tragedy that this nation should never have allowed to happen. It's just a disgrace to a country as great as ours that we have honored, or dishonored, our veterans in that way.

And a statistic that might floor you: There have been now more suicides by Vietnam veterans than there were combat deaths in the original war. I mean, that's over 58,000. That means we have not done our job as a nation to care for these men and women who have served our nation, our heroes. And we have to get this right, because if we don't we already know what happens. We should not forget, even though we did not do the job right for our Vietnam vets.

You know, there are tens of thousands of Agent Orange claims pending. It's been 30, maybe even 40 years since some people have been fighting for that. We ought to honor all those Agent Orange claims today. Just honor them today. If you were there, we should care. And I don't care if your boots were on the ground, I don't care if you were on the blue waters off Vietnam, I don't care if you were in the blue skies above Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, Guam, you have been affected by Agent Orange, and we should take care of that today.

That's what we should say to our veterans who we did not adequately take care of when they came home. And of course that would slightly reduce this 800,000 backlog of claims that the VA has. So we have to get this right. And we have already had reports of Iraqi veterans on the street homeless. The suicide rates are back where they were before.

I asked the VA secretary in open hearing—I know he was here yesterday, I know of his great service to this nation. But I asked him, after the VA, who had been denying suicide statistics for a long time I finally said, you know, there are 15 or 18 deaths per day by suicide of American veterans. They get on their hot line now 1,000 suicide attempts per month. 1,000 per month. And these are the veterans that are under the care of the VA. That's only about a fifth of all veterans. And I said, aren't you worried about this, don't we have to do better? We can't save every single person, but we've got to do a better job here. This is an epidemic, this is an emergency. And he said, well, it's consistent with the literature. That is, it's the same as non-veterans, so we don't worry about it. Now, that's not the way to deal with our heroes of this nation. We've got to have the resources to take care of them. We just have to do it. It's part of the cost of war. We just have to do better.

And we try to put the mental health resources in place. We still have difficulties around the country. We have young men and women showing up at VA health care centers saying I think I got this PTSD thing and I got suicidal thoughts, and whoever was there to receive them said, you know, we don't have an appointment for five or six weeks, come back. And that young man or woman went home and committed suicide. I mean, that should not happen in America, and we are trying to make sure that we try not to allow that to happen.

So we have a big job to do. You know, virtually everybody in Iraq and Afghanistan gets several concussions from the blasts while they're there. I saw one study that said the

average tour of duty might produce seven concussions. Now, I'm a layman in this, but that rattles the brain even if you didn't get shrapnel in your arm or leg—I guess the Vice President has arrived. I know it's an old joke, but I'm worried that he might shoot me. You know what I mean? But I'm not through with him yet.

The resources have got to be in place. You know, we have tens of thousands of our young men and women leaving the service. The National Guard and reserves are doing an incredible job, doing half the fighting, and they are not adequately diagnosed for either PTSD or brain injury. We've got literally tens of thousands of young men and women who have not been diagnosed. That's going to lead to lots and lots of problems, some of which you have already read about and know about, heard about. This is not right.

You know, there is a dynamic in our society, and especially in the military—it's changing, but it's still there, suck it up, soldier, you're a tough Marine, you're a tough soldier, you can't admit mental illness, it's going to hurt your promotion or you may not get a job in law enforcement. Don't admit it. So we have a denial, self-denial. These things are not easy to diagnose in some cases. Your comrades may make fun of you if you go to the wizard over there at the pink house, as they say. But this is absolutely necessary to face.

We know what happens. Again, you guys from Vietnam, many of you have gone through it. There is a protocol that we can predict. There is going to be domestic violence, there are going to be problems at home, and there are going to be problems on the job. There are going to be drug and alcohol abuse, loss of family, loss of job, homelessness, and suicide.

So we have got to get this right. We have got to get this right. And I don't care what it costs. I don't care what it costs. We're spending $1 billion every two days in Iraq. $1 billion every two days. Surely we have the money as a nation to deal with the heroes who come back, and the heroes who have been back and need our support. We have got to do this.

So we have been trying to do the job right. I argued for a long time the need for a new GI Bill for the 21st century. We all know how important the GI Bill was back in 1944. I'm here because my dad got some education on the GI Bill, but he was able to buy us a house for the first time in my family's history for a few thousand dollars. We had always lived with relatives and in apartments. We got our own house. We were middle class. 8,000,000 veterans took advantage of that. And yet in recent years, you know, we never did for all of you what we did for veterans from World War II. We just passed an educational benefits package that brings us up to the 21st century.

My good friend, Senator McCain, he probably didn't say this yesterday, but he thought it was too generous, too generous a benefit. How can you say that about anything for veterans? I don't know. But we finally brought up the benefit to what it cost to go to college. We made it more flexible for short-term courses. We made the Guard and reserves eligible for benefits in a way they never were before, and we made it flexible. And Senator McCain was pushing for this, that if the benefits are not used by the veteran they can be passed on to the spouse or children. That's a great, great benefit, and we're glad that we were able to do that.

The other half of the job, the other half of the GI Bill which I wanted to get passed, and hopefully we will, either at the end of this session or early next year, was a housing part. The housing—the Veterans Loan Program was a big part of the original GI Bill, but it's almost irrelevant in today's market. There is a cap on refinancing that is about $144,000, with a four or five percent fee. Nobody could use that. We ought to take the cap off and the fees off and make it a real benefit. The value of a loan that could be guaranteed was for $100,000. I'm from California. It won't buy you a shack there, so you've got to raise those values.

So I want to complete the GI Bill for the 21st century by making the Veterans Home Loan Program a real benefit for our nation's veterans. Especially in this time of crisis veterans should be able to turn to the VA for some help if they are facing a problem with their foreclosure. I've had calls from Iraq, by the way, active duty troops facing foreclosure. And, you know, we were able to pass legislation that said you can't do that for at least a year after they come home. So we did make some progress. My other two aims for the next year: Number one, solve this disability claims backlog. I mean, this is a disgrace. This is an insult to you. 800,000 claims pending. Just disgraceful.

You know, I hate to use the IRS as an example. Many of you remember the IRS was a dysfunctional agency a couple of decades ago. But if you filed your tax return this April—Marty, did you do that? I want to make sure the Commander is up-to-date here. If you filed your return and had a refund coming, you get your check in three weeks, almost guaranteed. Three weeks, except it's subject to audit. That's to keep you honest.

Why don't we do that with our disability claims? I mean, first let's get those Agent Orange claims cleared off by honoring them, but then let's say if your claim was prepared by a veterans service officer or helped by a veterans service officer who is certified, and The American Legion has many of those, as you know, let's grant the claims subject to audit. Get the check out to the veterans. Get the check out. People are losing their homes; they may die before they get their first check. Subject to audit. If they happen to get a lower rating than the check was sent out for we won't take it away, but let's accept what the veteran and the veterans' organizations are doing. Let's take their service and honor them by assuming they are pretty honest about this. Subject to audit. That would clear us out of the claims process and get us started so we can really honor all of you who have served.

Lastly, I think we ought to make sure that we get—and I don't know what you're calling it these days, but mandatory funding, assured funding—real funding for the VA on-time so the VA can function as a real organization. As many of you know, the VA has been unfunded for three, four, five months into the fiscal year. How can you run an operation like that? You can't hire, you don't know what is going on. I know the Legion has been fighting. I hope we can get this on the agenda. The Legion is working with its partners on a compromised, sort of two year forward funding. But we've got to have not only adequate funding, but on-time funding, and make sure the VA can operate on your behalf for the most efficient rate. So, let us do that. When I talked about the GI Bill, I did not talk about privatization or outsourcing of the GI Bill benefits. I know some people are talking about that. General Peake is talking about it; the administration is talking about it. We cannot outsource this benefit.

The VA could do the job, should do the job, and we should give them the money to make sure they do it properly, so we don't go into this profit mode. People will be treating you as if they're not accountable. By the way, I think Senator McCain mentioned his credit card or something. We all know that there are problems with access, especially with rural veterans. We all know that there are specialties that are in a community that should be taken advantage of. We all know that there are some cases where you've got to go to the nearest facility and get the help that you need. But we cannot privatize the Veterans Administration Health System. We've got to make it better, but we can not privatize it. I think giving a credit card to everybody would do that and I know that the Legion is fighting against that. We will join that fight to make sure that does not occur.

I have had the great honor of working with all of you for 16 years now, the last year and-a-half as Chairman. It's been an incredible and humbling experience to know how much you have done for our nation. There are some tough issues that we've got to deal with and you have taken them on by being here. You have said it's not just my personal benefit I'm concerned with; it's the benefit of all my comrades, and all of those who have fought for this nation.

Now I know the Vice President is going to follow in a few minutes. I think you should ask him some questions if you have a chance. This is an administration that has every year tried to increase enrollment fees and pharmaceutical co-pays. Why are we doing that? I mean Congress has turned it down for every year, but they keep coming back for it. Their last budget literally cut the VA budget every year for the next five years. That's not honoring our servicemen when you cut the budget like this. But as I said, when we're spending a billion dollars every five years, I've got to ask them, why is the GI Bill that we passed considered too generous? Why are we cutting out the categories seven and eight? We've got to expand that. We should be taking veterans in, not kicking them out. When they argued for cutting back categories seven and eight, and increasing the enrollment fees, and the pharmaceutical co-pays, they argued that several hundred thousand veterans would leave the system. They said, "We'll save money when that happens." It's not about saving money, this is about honoring you, and we need to do it right. We got to get those 800,000 claims back to zero, and we've got to make sure that the pending claims, especially for Agent Orange, are satisfied.

You know your convention has heard from one, and is going to hear from the other presidential candidate. You're going to hear from the Vice President of the United States and the Secretary of the VA. Both parties want your vote; both parties need your vote. So you need to ask the tough questions of both parties. That's how we honor you. That's how you do the job for your comrades.

I'm constantly reminded about our first president, George Washington. He had it right 220 years ago or more. He said, "The best, the most important factor in the morale of our fighting troops is how we treat them when they come home." They know exactly what's going on, the kids in Iraq and Afghanistan. They know about the benefits. They know about the disabilities claims backlog. They know what we're doing for the GI Bill. They know exactly what they're doing. If we get this right, we'll be taking care of them also. So we help not only our active duty, we help all of you who have been our heroes if we do this job right. I am committed to working with you to do the job right and getting the care that honors you truly as our nation's heroes. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: Our next speaker has had a distinguished career as a businessman and public servant, serving in four presidential administrations. He was elected to the House of Representatives by the people of Wyoming and reelected five times. His colleagues elected him House Minority Whip. He served as the Secretary of Defense during the Gulf War and was twice elected Vice President of the United States. Please remember to silence your cell phones during today's proceedings, and we ask that you do not film any video during the Vice President's visit with us. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome the Vice President of the United States, Dick Cheney.

Special Address: The Honorable Richard B. Cheney
Vice President of the United States

Thank you. Thank you very much Ladies and gentlemen, friends, and fellow citizens. It's good to see all of you this morning. I notice I always get a warm welcome when I come to Arizona in August, but wherever you and I have met, whether it was in Indianapolis last fall or in other venues over the years, I've always received a warm welcome from The American Legion. And I appreciate it, and I'm honored to be with you once again.

Let me thank your National Commander, Marty Conatser for the invitation to join all of you today. And I also want to thank Robert Spanogle, National Adjutant; Jan Pulvermacher-Ryan, National President of the Auxiliary, and Pam Gilley, National Secretary of the Auxiliary. I also want to thank National Department Officers and Delegates, Legionnaires, Auxiliary Members, Sons of The American Legion, and guests who have come to Phoenix from all over the world. Your commitment to the Legion has made this 90th National Convention a huge success. It's great to be part of it, and I bring respect and good wishes to all of you from the President of the United States, George W. Bush.

This hall is filled with distinguished Americans. You answered the nation's call, and when you returned from duty you kept up the habit of service by joining The American Legion. The Legion serves America by leading on important issues from healthcare and education, to employment opportunities for veterans, to homeland security, to a better quality of life for our military families. You proudly wear an emblem that stands for God and country and the highest rights of man. You speak up for liberty and democracy because you know what those ideals mean, and because you know the price that's been paid for our freedoms. Members of The American Legion stand firm for protecting our country's flag, and for defending the right of every American to pledge allegiance to one nation under God.

We also count on The American Legion to be an advocate to the nation's veterans. Our administration has worked with you and has benefited greatly from your advice. President Bush and I came into office determined to raise the quality of veterans' health care, to get more money to the VA, and to trim the backlog in processing disability claims. Aided by your strong voice on Capitol Hill, we've been able to make a big difference for veterans and their families. The President's budget for this year asked for

nearly $94 billion for the VA, almost double what it was when we took office, and more than $5 billion has been committed to new and expanded VA facilities across the country.

To expand educational opportunities for veterans and their families, President Bush was proud this year to sign a GI Bill for the 21st century. To provide better care for wounded warriors we have implemented recommendations from Senator Bob Doyle and Secretary Donna Shalala, and the President fixed an old problem for combat injured and severely disabled veterans when he signed concurrent receipt legislation, making him the first President in more than 100 years to do so.

For all the progress that has been made for veterans over the last 7 and-a-half years, we're not easing up in the final months of our administration. We've got a fine leader at the VA, Dr. James Peak, who is the first physician and first general to serve as Secretary. We realize the bureaucracies always need to be pushed, and a retired three star is a good one for doing the pushing. President Bush said a long time ago, that he intended to sprint to the finish line, and all of us who work for him are going to stay hard at it until our last day in office.

I'll be putting on some miles myself next week with an international trip that includes a stop in Tbilisi, the capital city of Georgia. That young democracy has been subjected to an unjustified assault, and the international community has joined in condemning Russia's invasion of a sovereign, democratic neighbor and its recognition of Georgian regions of South Ossetia and of Abkhazia. America has sent in large amounts of humanitarian aide, along with a clear message to the people of Georgia. We support their democracy, and we'll work with our allies to insure Georgia's territorial integrity as a free and independent nation. The Georgian people won their freedom after years of tyranny, and they can count on the friendship of the United States.

Come January, President Bush and I will turn our duties over to others. I realize the Annual Convention of The American Legion is not a political event, and I will not speak about the presidential campaign. But in present company there's one thing that I have to say. I am proud and delighted that next week your fellow Legionnaire, Senator John McCain of Arizona will be nominated for President of the United States. On my final visit to The American Legion as Vice President, I also want to thank each of you for the support you are giving to the men and women serving in our military today. I know it means a lot to those serving far away, and to those you've welcomed home from their deployments. We are blessed with the finest military any nation has ever fielded, and may we never take them or their families for granted.

These are busy times for the nation's defenders because we're at war with an enemy that hit us first, hit us hard, and have ambitions to cause ever greater destruction inside our country. In two weeks we will mark another anniversary of September 11th, 2001, and we'll recall the attacks that took 3,000 lives and did such great harm to our nation. We'll be reminded once again of the kind of adversaries that we face in this war. These extremists don't wear a uniform or recognize any standard of warfare. They hate our country. They are determined to kill as many Americans as they can, and they are fully prepared to kill themselves in the process. Simply stated, an extremist cabal has turned its guns on the United States and the civilized world. For the sake of our freedom and security we must not relent until this enemy is destroyed.

In light of what happened in 2001, and considering what we've learned since about the enemies operations and intentions, it's all the more remarkable that America has not had another 9/11. The fact that we've been safe this long is not an accident of history or just a stroke of luck. It is an achievement. We've undertaken a broad-based, unyielding effort to protect this country, an effort set in motion and led by the President of the United States, and carried out by investigators, security professionals, intelligence operators, and military personnel. No one can guarantee the enemy won't make another strike on our homeland, indeed that is their objective, but one thing is certain, we will not sit and wait to be hit again.

There was a time when terrorist attacks were treated mainly as an issue of law enforcement, where you investigated the incident, arrest the bad guys, try them and put them in jail. The first attack on the World Trade Center back in 1993, resulted in indictments and prison terms for the major perpetrators, but that did not remove the danger to America. Terrorist attacks against American interest continued throughout the '90s, from the killing of the servicemen in Riyadh and Khobar Towers, to the destruction

of our embassies in Tanzania and Kenya, to the bombing of the USS *Cole* in 2000. Outside a few limited strikes, the terrorists never paid a real price for any of this. They believe they could strike us and get away with it, and they grew more confident that if they hit Americans hard enough the United States would change our policies, abandon our commitments, and run away. They took to the examples of Beirut in 1983 and Somalia in 1993, when terrorist killed Americans, and we thereafter withdrew our forces.

September 11th changed everything. We saw the kind of destruction that could be caused by 19 men armed with box cutters, and boarding passes. 19 men who were in fact part of an international network of terror. We had to contemplate as well their broader goals to acquire more deadly weapons, to gain new safe havens to wage further attacks, to spread ideology of hatred and resentment across the broader Middle East and beyond. After 9/11, it was clear that this mixture of ideology and violence operating across boarders and in secret added up to more than just a law enforcement problem. It was and is a strategic threat to the United States and must be dealt with systematically.

So President Bush made a decision to marshal all the elements of our national power to confront the extremists, to deny them safe haven, and above all to deny them the means to wage catastrophic attacks against the United States. He also made clear that in the post 9/11 era regimes that harbor terrorist and defy the demands of the civilized world should be held to account before it's too late. Having been attacked at home, we took decisive steps to make the country less vulnerable to attack, and to improve our ability to respond to the national emergency. We set up the Department of Homeland Security and a new counter terrorism center. We shifted the FBI's focus from investigating terrorist attacks to preventing. The President signed the Patriot Act, which took down the legal and bureaucratic wall that kept law enforcement and intelligence authorities from sharing vital information. We also stepped up intelligence operations to better figure out the movements of the enemy, the extent of their net work, the location of the cells, the plans they are making, the methods they use, the targets they want to hit. Information of this kid is the hardest to obtain, but it is worth the effort in terms of the plots that are averted, and the lives that have been saved. So our government has taken careful but urgent steps to monitor the communications of enemies at large, and to get information from the ones that we have apprehended. We instituted the Terrorist Surveillance Program to monitor international terrorist related communications. If somebody inside the United States is talking to a terrorist overseas we need to know about it so we can protect the American people.

To defend American lives we went to work getting information from the terrorists themselves. One way we've done that is through interrogations, and here it's important for Americans to understand what we are doing, why we are doing it, and what we are not doing. There's been a good deal of misinformation about the interrogation program run by the CIA. Many unfair and uninformed statements have been made about America's intentions, and about the conduct of our intelligence officers. A lot of details are understandably classified, yet the basic facts are these: A small number of high valued detainees have gone through a special program run by the CIA. The CIA program involves tough customers and tough investigations, but it is entirely legal and proper. The procedures are designed to be safe in full compliance with this nation's laws and treaty obligations. They've been carefully reviewed by the Department of Justice. The program is run by highly trained professionals who understand their obligations under the law, and as the President has made clear, the program has uncovered a wealth of information that has foiled specific attacks, information that has on numerous occasions made the difference between life and death. Intelligence personnel who have gathered that information have done a great service to our country. They are protecting Americans' lives and they deserve the nation's gratitude.

No nation in the world takes human rights more seriously than the United States. The policies of our country comply with our law, which prohibits torture. We're proud of our country and what it stands for. We expect all who serve America to conduct themselves with honor, and we enforce the rules. Some years ago abuses were committed at Abu Ghraib Prison, conduct that was not authorized and did violate the law. When those abuses came to light, Americans were rightly outraged. Those who violated the law were arrested, prosecuted, and punished as justice demanded. The misdeeds of a few

should never be used to slander the good and decent Americans who go to work everyday to keep this country safe.

All of these measures, Homeland Security, terrorist surveillance, and high value interrogation have been absolutely essential into confronting the strategic threat to our country, and the same is true for our on going military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. The war on terror is not a figure of speech. On two fields of battle it is a shooting war. The only way to win is by going on the offensive, and that's exactly what we're doing. In both countries we confronted tyrants and removed them from power, and we're keeping our promise to support these democracies and to help them build up their own defense forces to prevent terrorists from regaining a foothold in a critical region of the world. In Afghanistan, America leads a coalition that includes every member of the NATO alliance. The Taliban is still waging attacks against the Karzai government, and against our forces, but our coalition remains strong and our troops are facing the enemy with skill and toughness. Seven years ago we rescued the Afghan people and lifted their country out of the Dark Ages. Today they have an elected government, a rising economy, and schools that educate both boys and girls. Afghanistan is rebuilding itself and it's become an ally in the war on terror. The Afghan people stand with us, and we are standing with them.

We're standing with the Iraqi people as well, and I'm pleased to report that the troop surge we began last year has been an enormous success. Violence in the country is down dramatically compared to the first part of 2007. Sectarian killings and civilian deaths have fallen dramatically, and the casualty rate among American forces last month was the lowest in the history of that conflict. Thanks to our new strategy in Iraq, led by General Dave Petraeus, the Iraqi people now live in greater security than they have years. We're gathering better intelligence because the Iraqis are less afraid to pass along tips about where enemy fighters are hiding and where they keep their weapons. The surge has given Iraq's elected leaders the breathing room to pass new reforms, and they've stepped up to their responsibilities. At the same time we're continuing to train Iraq's security forces, and those forces are able to lead more and more operations on their own. And Al-Qaida, the main enemy in Iraq, is substantially degraded, running out of sanctuaries, losing the fight.

We're going to keep our commitments in Afghanistan and Iraq as we have pledged to do. The military aspect of the war on terror has been a hard fought, difficult, challenging enterprise. So difficult, in fact, that many politicians, including some who voted to send the troops into battle, have decided to quit. Last year, with the entire Iraqi operation in the balance, we had to fend off multiple threats from the Congress. There were threats to cut off all funding for the troops, threats to force an immediate withdrawal from Iraq, consequences be damned, and threats to mandate a pullout by strict, short, and completely arbitrary time lines.

The troop surge faced intense opposition from members of Congress who said it was doomed to fail. The Democratic leader of the Senate, an early supporter of the war, abandoned that support and even declared the cause to be lost. President Bush stood firm, along with a number of notably courageous members of Congress, some of them from Arizona. They knew a surge of operations was our big chance to get things right. They also knew that success in Iraq mattered greatly to the future prospects for peace in the Middle East, as well as having an enormous impact on our own security. For all these reasons they knew that tyranny in Iraq was worth defeating and democracy in Iraq worth defending. We could have quit a year and-a-half ago. Today Iraq would be in chaos. Al-Qaida would probably control large segments of the country, and probably be a major safe haven for terrorists, and its people would be suffering in ways we can scarcely imagine. America's credibility would be in tatters, and the terrorist would be newly embolden, and everybody in Washington would be wondering just how we were going to fix the problem in Iraq sometime down the road. Fortunately we prevented that nightmare scenario, and now it's clear that the opponents of the troop surge were dead wrong.

Success in Iraq has allowed us to continue the President's policy of return on success. We've reduced the length of combat tours from 15 months, back down to 12. We've brought home all five of the combat brigades and the three Marine units who were sent into Iraq as part of the surge. Further troop movements will as always depend on what is happening on the ground. We recognize there are still difficult challenges ahead

in Iraq and the rest of the Middle East, including the efforts by the radical regime in Iran to develop technologies that would give it the capability to produce nuclear weapons. No one should have any illusions about this. Iran is the world's leading states sponsor of terrorism. Its leaders have repeatedly called for the death of America and the extermination of Israel. A nuclear armed Iran would be a threat to our country's vital interests. The United States remains focused on mobilizing friends and allies to pressure the Iranian regime to accept a diplomatic solution, to comply with the UN Security Council Resolutions, and to abandon its efforts to develop a nuclear weapons capability.

Diplomacy will always be our preferred course, but Iran must know that the United States is determined to defend its interests and that all options remain on the table. Whether in Afghanistan, Iraq, or Iran the people of our military understand what is at stake in the broader Middle East and the consequences it holds for the war on terror. A few months ago during a stay at Balad Airbase in Iraq, I participated in an awards ceremony and was given the chance to address several thousand of our troops. The morale was high. You could feel it as you stood there with them and you could hear it as they cheered comrades receiving battle decorations. Most of all, I remember how strongly they applauded when I told them we were going to get the job done right so that another generation of Americans doesn't have to come back and do it again. At every stage, with all the changing fortunes of war, the members of our military have given their jobs all that is in them. They've seized the initiative. They have the guts and the determination to see the matter through. Last month in Iraq more than 1,200 Americans coming to the end of their service obligation made the decision to reenlist. On the 4th of July, General Petraeus swore them in during a ceremony at Camp Victory. According to the Sergeant Major in Baghdad it was the largest reenlistment ceremony since the advent of the all-volunteer force. Our nation is grateful to each and every one of them.

As many of you know, I had the honor of serving this country as Secretary of Defense during the administration of former President Bush. During those years, and in my current position, I've had no greater privilege than the chance to work with members of the American Armed Forces. I believe that if anyone lacks for inspiration in the war on terror, they need to look no farther than the men and women who do the fighting. Whether it's on cold mountain peaks in Afghanistan, or the hot dusty streets of Iraq, they have been magnificent. And a new generation of warriors is the next chapter in American ingenuity, bravery, and valor.

I recently attended a ceremony at the White House honoring one of our bravest, an Army Private named Ross McGinnis who was killed in Iraq in late 2006. Private McGinnis was in the gun turret of the Humvee patrolling Baghdad when an insurgent threw a grenade directly at the vehicle. The grenade fell through the gunners hatch and landed inside. Private McGinnis shouted a warning, but the four men inside had no way of escaping. Instead of leaping off the vehicle to save himself Private McGinnis dropped inside, covered the grenade with his body and absorbed the blast. In a split second he saved four lives and lost his own. The four soldiers he saved were there in June when President Bush presented to Mr. and Mrs. Tom McGinnis the Medal of Honor, earned by their son, who at age 19 proved himself to be one of the bravest men in our history. As President Bush said at that ceremony, "The day will come when the mission has been completed, and the fighting is over, and freedom and security have prevailed. America will never forget those who came forward to bear the battle."

With daily challenges confronting us and American boots on the ground 6,000 miles away, we know there will be more fighting and more sacrifice. But our men and women are serving in a cause that is noble, necessary, and in the finest tradition of America. The United States was founded on the principles of liberty, justice, and equality. We have served those principles and sacrificed for them to the far corners of the earth. We have thrown back tyrants, stood watch on the frontiers of freedom, and defended the weak against the violent. We have brought hope and relief to peoples who thought they had lost everything until the Americans arrived to save them. We've done all this not for glory or empire, but for freedom, because we know that the spread of freedom makes our world safer, and brings us closer to the peace we all desire.

In the process we've received more than our share of criticism, and we can take it. The fact is this world is a much better place because of the power, the influence, and the values of the United States of America. As citizens who have served in that cause, every

member of The America Legion can stand tall. You've earned a special place of respect in this country. I count it a privilege to be in your company, and I lack the words to express how much I've appreciated your friendship over these many years. I'm proud of you, and I'm most grateful for your hospitality this morning. Thank you. *(Applause and Music playing)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: With us today is the man who was the catalyst behind the most significant veterans education benefit since the original GI Bill. A 1968 graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy, he earned the Navy Cross, a Silver Star, two Bronze Stars and two Purple Hearts as the Commander of a Marine rifle platoon and a company in Vietnam. He served as Secretary of the Navy during the Reagan administration. The author of several best-selling novels, but his greatest work is not a book it's a piece of legislation. The Post-9/11 Veterans Education Assistance Act is truly a GI Bill worthy of its name. Please welcome from the Commonwealth of Virginia, Senator Jim Webb.

Address: The Honorable James Webb
United States Senator, Virginia

Good morning fellow Legionnaires. I'd like to first express my thanks to Commander Conatser, incoming National Commander David Rehbein, John Sommer, and Bob Spanogle from the National Headquarters offices, to Jan Pulvermacher-Ryan and Pam Gilley from the Auxiliary, and to all of you for the work that you have done on behalf of the America's veterans through your membership in this organization, and for inviting me to come down and spend a few minutes with you today. I have in my conference room in the Senate a plaque that I received in 1979 from The American Legion, which I've always treasured, the National Commander Public Relations Award, which I hear was awarded to Lou Dobbs this year. But I've always counted among the more cherished recognitions that I have received that The American Legion had reached out to me all those years ago when I was working on the House Veterans' Committee and writing and selected me for that award.

I am here after having spending a couple of days in Denver, at another convention, and I would say to you that there are many important things going on in this country in Denver, next week in Minnesota, but also right here. There can never be a more important time in our history than right now for us to come together and recognize the value of military service to the United States. Also, I couldn't help but notice that there was this transitional period before I came up to speak, where they had to remove a lot of different things from the podium area here, and I asked about that. As I was climbing up the steps I said, "Well what are you taking out?" And they said, "Kevlar." So the Vice President had all this Kevlar around him, and I maybe the only thing I can say is, "I'm going to assume I'm among good friends."

I come from a family like many, many people here that has a proud tradition of having served our country. My family came from this country, most of them in the Scotch-Irish migrations to the Application Mountains before the Revolutionary War. We began a tradition of serving the country during the Revolutionary War. I'm very proud of my father who was the first person to serve as a career military person in our family. He flew B-17s and B-29s in World War II. I think we still have many World War II veterans with us. Thank you so much for your service. He flew in the Berlin Airlift. He was one of the pioneers in the Atlas Missile program for the United States Air Force, and he was a great example to me. I'd like to say, for those of you who remember the movie I grew up with, *The Great Santini*, I can remember being eight years old on Saturday morning inspections, standing in front of my foot locker, my dad would walk in and I'd say, "Dad," and he'd say, "Shut up, you're a Corporal." I was proud to follow in his footsteps, and as I told him when I went into the Marine Corps, he said, "Why are you going into the Marine Corps?" I said, "I thought I'd join the military for a while." I'm very proud of having had the trust of the leadership of our country to be able to serve as a rifle platoon and company commander with the 5th Marines in Vietnam. I've very proud of my brother, who was a Marine helicopter pilot. I'd say, all three of us, my father, myself, and my brother are members of The American Legion, long-time members of The American

Legion. I'm prouder still, as so many of you also are, of my son's service. My son presently serves as an infantry sergeant in the United States Marine Corps. Did an extended tour in Ramadi during some of the hard fighting there. My son-in-law also is an infantry sergeant in the United States Marine. Did two hard tours in Fallujah. The tradition continues. We're all very proud of it, and I would say for those of you who have served in Korea, I had a great evening last Saturday night with a reunion from those who had fought in the Chosin Reservoir toward the end of 1950, which was truly one of the great moments in Marine Corps history. We use to call it, when I was a Marine, the frozen Chosin in the freezing season. We had 991 veterans and their families come for a dinner and again one of the things I was able to do, when you get into government, sometimes you can do small things that can have long-lasting implications, and I was able to name three major combatant ships when I was Secretary of the Navy, and one of them was the USS *Chosin*, in honor of those who had served in the Chosin Reservoir.

I started working in veterans' law and on veterans' issues more than 30 years ago. I was the first Vietnam veteran who served as a Full Committee Counsel in the United States Congress. I was on the House side for four years, 1977 to 1981, learning the veterans' programs inside and out, visiting VA hospitals, going into regional offices, trying to examine why, even then, we had back logs, and people not receiving treatment when they deserved it, learning that the most important factor in solving these sorts of problems, or minimizing them, is leadership, good leadership, trying to get good leaders into the veterans system. We worked, and Bob Spanogle is one who was working with us at that time, he and I go back a long time. We did some of the pioneering studies 30 years ago on Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. People didn't quite know how to deal with this situation that had come from long-term wars of attrition, such as we were then fighting and finishing up in fighting in Vietnam.

I counseled the major Agent Orange Hearings, when we trying to match scientific information with the data of those who had been serving on the ground in Vietnam, and trying to examine where the correlation should occur so that service connection should take place. We did a major study of prisoners of war of all eras, looking at the different types of treatment not only while people were prisoners of war, but in terms how they processed that experience when they came back home. And we did, just parenthetically for those of you who served during Vietnam, we did the first major study of attitudes toward Vietnam veterans and of Vietnam veterans. If you remember this period back in 1979-1980, there was a lot of misperceptions about who had served and what their attitude had been, and how the country valued their service. There were a lot of Vietnam veterans who had come back in that late '70s, particularly those who were going back to school, who had a very hard time even from their own peers. We did a $6 billion comprehensive survey of attitudes, and it was still, I think, the most important compilation of information we have had to really determine how people had felt. One of the parts of this was what they called a "Feelings Thermometer." They asked citizens in the country, "On a scale of zero to ten, how do you feel about oil company executives; how do you feel about members of Congress; how do you feel about those who opposed the war; how do you feel about those who served; how do you feel about those who served in Vietnam?" And the remarkable thing we can understand a little better now, but as we were struggling through this we couldn't, was those who served in Vietnam got a 9.8 out of 10 from the American people on the way that they looked at their service.

There was a lot of talk back then about the Vietnam veterans were mostly draftees, were very bitter about their service, etc. The data we compiled showed that 73% of those who died in Vietnam were volunteers, and that on their own view, those who had been in combat in Vietnam, 91% said, they were glad they served their country, 74% said they enjoyed their time in the military, and two out of three said, they would go again, even knowing the end result of the war. That is the way our veterans have always felt about service, and that is the way the country has always felt bout our veterans. And it's so important for organizations such as The American Legion to make sure that the American people remain aware of those attitudes.

I am very proud of this GI Bill that we just got through. I started talking about the need for a new war time GI Bill before I ever thought I would run for the Senate. I saw what was happening after 9/11 through my own family, through my friends, and through their friends. The operational tempo was going up so high, and the young people who

were coming out were not having the right kinds of shot at the future given the service that they had been giving. So, I made a vow when I was running for the Senate in '06, that the first piece of legislation I would drop if I were elected to the United States Senate would be a bill that gave those who had served since 9/11, those who have been serving since 9/11, the same educational benefits as those who served during World War II. We kept talking about this is the new greatest generation. Well it seemed to me a very simple concept. Let's give them what the greatest generation received. I wrote this bill before I was sworn in in the Senate. I had been a Committee Counsel in the House. I sat down with legislative Counsel during the period after the election and before I was sworn in, wrote the first draft of this bill, introduced it the first day, and looking back now, it's a little bit difficult to explain that there was a lot of skepticism in the Congress and elsewhere about the validity of this bill, about whether we could get it through from some quarters. But we persisted. We started out of our office. We grabbed the major veterans' organizations. The American Legion was a great player in this. We brought them in. We listened to their ideas and how we could improve this legislation from the way that it was originally drafted. We eventually received the strong support of all veterans' organizations. We worked across party lines. I did not want this to be political. We got major support from the Republican Party. I reached over into the House side, worked on getting co-sponsorship over on the House side. After 16 months, we reintroduced this bill with all the changes in it, and at that point I had 58 co-sponsors in the United States Senate, 11 of them strong Republican leadership. We had more than 300 sponsors in the House of Representatives, and this was not even a committee bill. This was a bill out of an individual office. It showed me what can be done in the United States Congress if you get a good concept, if you get people who are invested in that concept with you, if you listen to them, if you work across party lines, set politics aside and try to get something done.

There was a lot of opposition to this legislation, and I think it's fair to point that out. There were people who said that we were trying to do too much, that the scope of this was so large that we should wait and try to get it though a committee process. Maybe take a little piece of it now and try to get more later. There were a number of people, including this administration and including some other key members of the opposing party who said this was too costly. My reaction to that was, we didn't say it was too costly at the end of World War II. We didn't say when we put 8 million people through a GI Bill that paid their tuition, bought their books, and gave them a monthly stipend that it was going to cost too much. There are people who say it would be to difficult to administer. That was the strong comment from the administration. They were saying if you're paying tuition levels that are different levels at different schools the VA is going to have a hard time figuring out how to do that. I said, excuse me. In 1945, before there was a computer, they did it with a stubby pencil on the back of a memo pad. I think we can figure out how to do this. There were people who said that it would hurt career retention. I argued, and I still argue, as someone who has spent five years in the Pentagon, one as a Marine, and four as a defense official, this is not going to hurt retention. This is going to improve recruitment. You're going to have so many people who are thinking that maybe they would affiliate with the military, who will look at this as a clear reason to come in, and who knows, a lot of those could well end up staying.

There was a big push from people who had all those different concerns, at the very end when we started getting a lot of co-sponsors, to say that transferability was the key issue. The ability to transfer this benefit, if you are a career person, the ability to transfer this benefit to a spouse or a child would be sort of the tie breaker here. Our position early on was that transferability already existed. It existed since 2002 when Senator John Warner put it into the Defense Authorization bill. We saw data that it hadn't been used in more than maybe a couple of hundred cases, where the Secretary of the Army or the Secretary of the Navy, the service secretaries would be able to say for purposes of retention, which was the whole idea, we will allow you to transfer the benefit. It hadn't been used, but finally we just said, fine, if you want to put it in here, it's been used as a pilot program and hasn't been greatly used, but we're fine with that, we'll put it in the bill. We ended up with a final vote of more than 90 Senators on this piece of legislation. And even though there are people who would say that this cost too much or it's too generous, my strong feeling is that this is a deserved program.

Today in the United States, on educational grants based on need, we spend $19 billion a year. Just for grants based on need. This program is only one way that you can get this benefit and that's through honorable service to your country during a time of war. So, if people think this is too generous have them put a pack on and go out and earn the benefit.

But I want to say something to this group, because I hope that we can think about this because some of the resistance to this bill as it went forward was, more than anything else, a reflection of what you think today's military really is. And there are some very fine people that I have known for a long time, and whom I respect, who resisted this bill because of how they view, in their own mind, the volunteer military. It is not fair to say, it is not accurate to say, that the all-volunteer military is an all-career military. Too many people make that mistake. Why did I think this bill was so important? If you look at the data today under the all-volunteer military, 75% of those who enlist in the United States Army leave the Army at the end of their first enlistment or before. 70% of the United States Marine Corps leave the Marine Corps at the end of their first enlistment or before. That should surprise no one. We are an all-volunteer system. We have always been a citizen soldier military. Those are the people, whether it is one of the situations that we saw at Walter Reed, whether it is in the backlogs in getting care from the VA, or whether it is having a chance for our first class educational future, those are the people who most need our help. The Untied States military has done a good job of taking care of its active duty force. We, the Congress, the Pentagon, all of us, must do a better job in taking care of these citizen soldiers who come in for all the right reasons and then go back to their civilian lives.

I would close with just a few observations that are very personal to me from having been involved with veterans groups now more than half my life. First, history has taught us well. The people that I learned from, World War II people, in the Congress and in the veterans' organizations, that we do this best, we have our discussions about policy issues best when we leave party politics at the door. I learned from people like Sonny Montgomery, John Paul Hammerschmidt, Ray Roberts, both different parties, that when we went into the room, and I was a committee counsel, to talk about a piece of legislation or priorities of legislation, we not only, we were more than bipartisan, we were non-partisan. We didn't bring the political party in there in those debates. The number one question was the good of the country and the good of the veterans. And it's also very important for us to remember in this country, we have a very special tradition in this country, and it has served us well, and that is that very few people enlist in the United States military because of a political issue or even for political reasons. People enlist because they love their country, because they have a family tradition, or because they want to soldier, and that's a very precious thing in a nation that has the power and the reach and the multicultural background that we have. We check our politics at the door, we all have our political beliefs, but we don't come in for one political reason or another. We come in to serve our country, and it is the duty of the political process to ensure that their service is equal to the sacrifice that they may have to make. And it's also important that the benefits, and the protection, and the care that people who serve receive is equal and worthy of the sacrifices that we have asked them to make. This is more than a government obligation. It goes to the core of who we are as Americans. It's a moral bond that tells all of us a great deal of who we are and what our history is. And for all of you, I would say it is a great honor for me to be serving in the United States Senate, to be representing the people of Virginia, but also to be representing the veterans of this country, in all the areas where their issues are important, and we have an open door. Any of you who want assistance or who would like to express your opinions, and we get a lot of opinions, please feel free to do so. Thank you very much. It's good to be with you. *(Applause and Music playing)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: We certainly thank Senator Webb for spending some time with us today.

Our next speaker is addressing us with a prerecorded message because he is in the process this week of accepting the Democratic Party's nomination for the President of the United States. He is a graduate of Columbia University and Harvard Law School, where he edited the Harvard Law Review. He worked as a community organizer and civil rights

attorney. He served in the Illinois Senate from 1997 to 2004. He taught constitutional law at the University of Chicago Law School and was elected to the United States Senate in 2004 with 70 percent of the vote. Ladies and Gentlemen, please turn your attention to the video monitors and welcome the Honorable Senator Barack Obama.

...At this time the following video is played.

Special Address: The Honorable Barack Obama
United States Senator, Illinois

Hello everybody. I'm so sorry I can't be with you all in person today, but thank you for letting me say a few words. First and foremost, congratulations David Rehbein as incoming National Commander, and congratulations Marty Conatser for your steady leadership of the Legion. We are all proud of you in Illinois, and thank you all in The American Legion. It is a privilege to address so many who have given so much for our country.

As we speak, America is fighting two wars abroad. We honor the service of the men and women defending our security and our values in distant lands, and the sacrifice of their families back home who suffer their absence. Last month, I traveled to Iraq and Afghanistan, and the most important opportunity I had was the chance to thank the troops in person. They are paying a high price and bearing a heavy burden, but their strength of spirit is extraordinary. In each of them, I saw the true greatness and the core of decency of this country that we love. In Iraq our military has performed brilliantly in helping to lower the levels of violence. Iraqi Security Forces are more capable. Shia militias have general respected a cease fire, and Sunni tribes have taken the fight back to Al-Qaida. The result is a substantial improvement in the security situation on the ground. Those are facts, and every American welcomes them.

The political progress that was the purpose of the surge still lags though. Since the surge began, we have lost over 1,000 American lives, and spent $200 billion, but the Iraqi political leadership still hasn't made the hard compromises or substantial investments in rebuilding their country. Let me be clear, our troops have completed every mission they've been given. It's time to press the Iraqis to take responsibility for their future. The best way to do that is a responsible redeployment of our combat brigades, carried out in close consultation with commanders on the ground. According to military experts, we can safely redeploy at a pace that removes our combat brigades in 16 months. After this redeployment, we'll keep a residual force to target remnants of Al-Qaida, to protect our service members and diplomats, and to train Iraqi security forces if the Iraqis make political progress. Iraq's prime minister has embraced this time frame. Now it's time to succeed in Iraq by turning Iraq over to its sovereign government. Ending the war responsibly will allow us to invest in America, to strengthen our military, and to finish the fight against Al-Qaida and the Taliban in Afghanistan and the border region of Pakistan. This is the central front in the war on terrorism. This is where the Taliban is seizing territory. This is where Osama Bin Laden and the same terrorists who killed nearly 3,000 Americans on our own soil are hiding and plotting 7 years after 9/11. This is a war we have to win. As commander in chief, I will have no greater priority than taking out these terrorists who threaten America, and finish the job against the Taliban. I've called for over a year for additional U.S. troops as well as more non-military assistance and more support from our NATO allies. I'm glad there is a growing consensus back home that we need more resources in Afghanistan. We should not wait any longer to provide them. So make no mistake, when I'm President we will win this war and I will always honor and uphold the commitment that America makes to every man and woman who has served in its uniform, because without that commitment I might not be here today.

My grandfather enlisted after Pearl Harbor and went on to march in Patton's Army. My grandmother worked on a bomber assembly line while my grandfather was gone, and my mother was born at Fort Leavenworth. When my grandfather returned, he went to college on the GI Bill, bought his first home with the loan from the FHA, and moved his family west, all the way to Hawaii where he and my grandmother helped raise me. I knew my grandfather when he was older, but I think about him now and then as he was as an

enlisted man of 23, fresh face with a wise-guy grin. Whenever I see our best and bravest young men and women signing up to serve today, I think about him. They're signing up at a time when the dangers we face are great. And when they finally return home, and the guns fall silent, and the cameras are turned off, they deserve the same commitment from their government that my grandparents received. That's why I sought out a seat on the Veterans' Affairs Committee when I arrived on the Senate. So I could fight to serve our veterans as well as they have served us.

I led a bipartisan effort to improve out-patient facilities at places like Walter Reed, because recovering troops should go to the front of the line and they shouldn't have to fight to get there. We pass laws to give family members health care and a year of job protection so they never have to choose between caring for a loved one and keeping a job, and I fought to make sure that the claims of disabled veterans were heard fairly. But there is so much more we need to do to keep our sacred trust with the men and women who serve.

That's why as President, I will build a 21st century VA that gives every service member electronic copies of medical and service records upon discharge. It fully funds VA health care, adds more vet centers, and passes on-time budgets. No more red tape, no more short falls, no more delays. We will stand up against proposals to ration care, and reject the idea that the VA should only treat combat wounds. We will have a simple principle for veterans sleeping on our streets, zero tolerance. I will build on the work I did in the Senate to confront as well the two signature injuries of the war in Iraq and Afghanistan, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and Traumatic Brain Injury. When our loved ones return home, it's time we offered them the same commitment we offered my grandfather's generation by giving every veteran the same opportunity that he had under the GI Bill.

Unlike Senator McCain, I was an early and strong supporter of my friend Senator Jim Webb's 21st Century GI Bill that recently passed through Congress. In fact, if it weren't for The American Legion, we might not have had this GI Bill in the first place. After World War I, too many returning soldiers were left to fend for themselves, with no guarantee from their government or dollar to their name. As servicemen began to come home from World War II, the Legion stood up and demanded that Washington hold up its end of the bargain. Legionnaires turned to the American people who bombarded Congress with telegrams and letters from all across the country in support of free education and pay for each veteran to keep him on his feet as he looked for a job. On the day of a final vote on a bill to provide those benefits a Congressman who's vote was needed to break the tie was no where to be found. State police searched car to car. Radio stations put out the word. When he was discovered, he said, "You bet I'll get to Washington." A police escort whisked him to a waiting place and arrived at the Capitol late at night to cast the deciding vote on that ground-breaking piece of legislation that began as a draft written in long hand by a Legionnaire. It told our heroes that when you come home to America, America will be here for you, because we are all in this together. It didn't just create the greatest middle class in world history, it allowed millions more in the generations that followed to inherit opportunity they wouldn't have otherwise had. People like me.

Two weeks ago, I visited the Punch Bowl, the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific, lined with the graves of Americans who have sacrificed for our country. As I stood at my grandfather's grave, I remembered the day we laid him to rest. We heard the solemn note of *Taps*, and the crack of guns fired in salute. We watched as a folded flag was handed to my grandmother. It was the nation's final act of service and gratitude to him, an America that stood by my grandfather when he took off the uniform and never left his side.

That's the commitment America made to her soldiers. That's the commitment that you've made for almost 90 years. And should I have the distinct honor of being your commander in chief, I will lead this nation in rededicating itself to that commitment to serving those who have worn the uniform of the United States as well as they have served us. Thank you. God bless you, and God bless the United States of America. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: We appreciate Senator Obama joining us by video this morning. With us today is a senior officer from an organization that

perpetuates the stories of patriotism, courage, sacrifice, tragedy, and triumph of the men who achieved the independence of the American people in the belief that these stories are universal and relevant in the struggle against tyranny. The Sons of the American Revolution encourages true patriotism, maintains the institutions of American freedom, and respects our national symbols and the value of American citizenship. Please welcome the Treasurer General of the National Society of the Sons of The American Revolution, Charles F. Bragg.

Address: Charles F. Bragg, Treasurer General
National Society of the Sons of the American Revolution

National Commander Marty, Distinguished Guests, and fellow Legionnaires. For God and country. I am a Paid-Up-For-Life Member of Lowell Beaver Post #470 in Fishers, Indiana. Today, I represent the President General of the National Society of the Sons of the American Revolution. He, retired Colonel David Appleby, is a veteran of Vietnam, a combat veteran. Over his 26 years he received 29 awards and decorations. He served in the U.S. Army and also the Missouri National Guard. He received the Legion of Merit, the Bronze Star, the Purple Heart, and the Combat Infantryman's Badge (CIB) for his service in Vietnam. He is in Paris, France marking the arrangements for the 225th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Paris, which ended the American Revolution on September 3, 1783. I will join him this weekend to assist him with the Color Guard.

The Sons of the American Revolution is the largest male lineage organization in the nation. We are blood decedents of those veterans who served in the ranks or who gave patriotic service to the cause of the America Revolution. These patriots were our country's first veterans. Our sister organization is the outstanding DAR, The Daughters of the American Revolution. If you are a member of the SAR or DAR, The Sons of the American Revolution or the Daughters of the American Revolution, or you qualify or think you do so, please stand.

During the next few minutes I will tell how The American Legion affected my life, state the mission of The Sons of the American Revolution, and bring forth what we have been told from the past, along with my pledge to you. My 17 years as a member of The Sons of the American Revolution are eclipsed by my 46 year relationship with The American Legion, dating back to when I returned home after serving a tour of duty in Europe during the Berlin crisis of 1961-62. However, The American Legion story goes further back in my life.

When I was a youngster after World War II, my father and mother with their brothers and brothers-in-law would have family meals at the local post. Those men ranged in rank from corporal to major. The major was the base supply officer at a large installation here in the states, but the corporal would remind the major that he, the corporal served in the Air Force unit in the Pacific that delivered the first atomic bomb. Those kinds of stories you have heard over and over again at our local post.

A World War II veteran of the Battle of the Bulge was my Little League coach. He inspired me to support and coach Little League as an adult. As a teenager, I played American Legion baseball. A whole new experience opened when my high school guidance counselor told me that I was invited to Boys State. In my 28 years of coaching Little League, twice I had a relationship with American Legion teams. In one instance, after a tourney game, the winning and losing teams were invited to the local post for hot dogs and soft drinks. That tradition of the winning and losing sides of a conflict goes back to the American Revolutionary War. When the British lost the Battle of Yorktown, General George Washington invited the British general staff to dine with him with his staff. I asked the commander in later years, I didn't know the story at the time, if he knew that, and he said he didn't, but it was just a long-felt thing that American Legion post should do, and I honor them for that.

I attribute much of my professional success to veterans who coached me, served beside me in the military and followed my professional career over five decades. They taught me teamwork, discipline, leadership, and good sportsmanship. The mission of The Sons of the American Revolution is historical, educational, and patriotic. The SAR Color Guard has grown into a large organization. Our National Color Guard Committee is very, very active. You probably have seen us march in patriotic parades in colonial uniforms.

We participate in historical Revolutionary War annual battle celebrations. We mark the graves of Revolutionary War soldiers through a vast network of chapters and state society volunteers. The SAR has the following national youth programs: a poster program for elementary children with a theme of the Revolutionary War each year, oration contests at the chapter, state, and culminating in a competition at our National Congress. We have an Outstanding Eagle Scout Award, Historical Essay Contest, ROTC and JROTC programs, and programs for the support of veterans and veterans' hospitals, and the Blue Star Salute, a program in which American Legion posts and SAR chapters cooperate.

The SAR stands ready to assist The American Legion with personnel as we did recently in the judging of your national oration contest. The American Legion and The Sons of the American Revolution are fighting a war for the hearts and minds of our next generation. As we continue to do all that we can through our outreach programs to promote patriotism and Americanism, we need to elect school board officials, city and town officials, county and state representatives, and national leaders who will lead us in the paths that our republic and our forebearers demand. We need to remember the sacrifices of those veterans who served and died to protect our freedoms and the liberties as Abraham Lincoln said, "For which they gave their last full measure of devotion."

George Washington said, reaching across the generations to you and me, "I am sure there never was a people who had more reason to acknowledge a divine interposition in their affairs than those of the United States, and I should be paying to believe that they have forgotten that agency which was so often manifest during our Revolution or that they fail to consider the omnipotence of that God who alone is able to protect them."

I, Charles F. 'Chuck' Bragg, pledge to each and every Legionnaire and the future leadership of this great organization, that we will leave no stone unturned to further our common goals. As a Legionnaire, I feel a deep debt of gratitude to this membership, past and present, for the personal, professional, success I have enjoyed in my life.

All Legionnaires that attend Louisville next year are invited to our National Headquarters. We are only 8 blocks south of where your headquarters will be, and where the convention center is is on the same street. It's South 4th Street in Louisville, Kentucky. God bless you one and all, and God bless the United States of America, for God and country. Thank you.

National Commander Marty, it is my pleasure to award you with one of the highest awards that The National Society of the Sons of the American Revolution can give, the Distinguished Patriot Award. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: Thank you.

Joining us on stage is a man who has dedicated his life to serving veterans and their families. He was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the U.S. Army where he earned a Bachelor of Science degree in engineering from the United States Military Academy at West Point, class of 1959. At West Point, he was a fullback on the last undefeated Army football team. He served as Administrator of the U.S. Veterans Administration from 1982 to 1986, where he introduced management initiatives that brought a significant increase in efficiency within the organization and received notice outside the VA. Prior to that, he served as Assistant Secretary of the Army for Manpower and Reserve Affairs from 1981 to 1982. From 2001 to 2003, Mr. Walters participated as commissioner and a co-chair of the President's Task Force to Improve Healthcare for American Veterans. He now heads the Veterans Coalition, an initiative of which The American Legion is part. Please give a warm Legion welcome to Harry Walters, President of the Veterans Coalition, Incorporated, Commission on the Future for America's Veterans.

Address: The Honorable Harry Walters
President, Veterans Coalition, Inc.

Good morning. Thank you Commander Conatser. Greetings to all my fellow Legionnaires. Best wishes to my good friend Bob Spanogle, our National Adjutant, and a hearty hello to John Sommer your Executive Director at our nation's capitol. And a special tribute to Ron Conley, Past National Commander from the state of Pennsylvania, and a fellow commissioner on the Commission for the Future of America's Veterans with me. I offer my sincere thanks to Ron for this thoughtful participation and contributions to

our futuristic deliberations. Thanks Ron. At least get the Pennsylvania guys to say something.

Commander, I know this must have been a busy year for you as you traveled the country, and indeed the world, and while visiting VA hospitals you no doubt saw a medical system much advanced since I was Administrator of Veterans Affairs 27 years ago. God, it doesn't seem that long. You saw the scores of out-patient clinics brand new, you saw those out-patient clinics dedicated to the wellness of our veterans, and you witnessed an electronic records system second to none in modern day medicine. You found a system that is treating five million veterans, twice as many as ten years ago. You discovered a medical system in America, one that provides for the poor and disabled first, and then provides the same excellent care for countless other veterans who decided to vote with their feet to get VA health care. They provide their own insurance, and sometimes cover small fees for various services.

All this good news has happened since 1994. Some call it the Kizer Revolution after the noted Dr. Ken Kizer, one of our distinguished commissioners and the recipient of your highest award at last year's National Convention for his work in expanding and transforming the VA medical system from 1993 to 1999. The accolades for the VA system are well earned and appropriate. I have always seen the VA medical system as a national treasure. And so Commander, as you complete your year-long journey, you must be very proud of a system that has grown in stature and reputation over the last decade. I know that my fellow commissioners and I are very proud of it too.

I am here, why am I here, that's the question, if all is so well. Well, I am here to tell you that all is not so well as it might appear, particularly as we look beyond the horizon. Our commission was established as an independent, non-partisan commission to focus entirely on bringing about needed change for an aging system about to face some very tough issues. Just so you know, I listened as the two Presidential candidates spoke here, and I think I gathered they are diligently seeking your support. Well we are pleased, of course, that the two political parties and candidates are concentrating on the welfare of our veterans. It hasn't always been so. The two candidates praised the VA medical system. They recommended some changes, and vowed to support veterans. This is good, and The American Legion is indeed a good place to establish their advocacy for our veterans. However, their futuristic view is not 20 years out, their target is November 2nd. So, they really haven't had time yet to investigate the opportunity, to really investigate the long-term issues, or to seek long-term strategies for the veterans who are fighting this war 20 years from today. And I do not fault them for that. As a matter of fact, very few organizations in the federal government have taken a strategic look or dare to discuss the future.

The Congress and VA are locked into one year budget cycles, and that's not likely to change, but we as a country are always standing by to honor our veterans unlike any other country in the history of the world, and that is rightly so. Our commission has dared to describe the intense federal budget crisis that looms on the near horizon, and have identified a strategy that perhaps can remedy the crisis for the VA Health Care System.

You know, the future is a much different matter than the present. Addressing the future takes a different kind of thinking. Two years ago, we took on the task of looking deep into the future. It was the sole mission for our Commission on a Future for America's Veterans, and you, our partners here, have had a significant role in this endeavor. In 2006, The American Legion joined with the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the Disabled American Veterans, AMVETS, and the Paralyzed Veterans of America, and along with me, formed the Veterans Coalition, a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation. Our singular mission was to create an independent commission to develop a 20-year blueprint strategy for the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Despite the hoopla surrounding the VA today, there was and still is no planning mechanism for shaping the future of the VA Medical System in a rapidly changing world. In simple terms, the world's largest integrated health care system functions with Congress providing one-year discretionary budgets, the administration adding musical chair political leadership while they all work hard to maintain sadly outdated facilities. And all of us are being asked to have trust that the government will always ensure the VA and veterans will have all that we need.

Well, our venture into the future was, and is, startling to me. We found as we ventured into the future a huge government budget dilemma, pointed out by the top federal accountants themselves. This dilemma can be traced back to legislation in the mid '60s when Lyndon Johnson signed legislation into law in 1965. It still might seem great for some of us, but unfortunately Medicare and Medicaid are simply growing to be unaffordable. Even by the greatest economy on the planet. And a crisis is nearly upon us. On January 1, 2011 the first baby boomer will sign up for his or her Medicare benefits. And 12,000 of them will sign-up that day, and for everyday thereafter for 18 years, until 80 million baby boomers have received and secured their Medicare benefits.

These figures come directly from the Congressional Budget Office and the General Accounting Office. The numbers represent a huge distribution to a very significant segment of our population. Left as projected today, the discretionary funding piece of the government, that's the same piece that funds the VA health care system, will rapidly disappear in order to pay for these mandated benefits. And greater taxation, even if it were politically palatable, will not be enough to solve this problem. In fact the General Accounting Office projects that Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security, and the national debt will consume the entire annual budget in less than 20 years. Since the VA medical system currently depends almost exclusively on the discretionary funds from the federal government you can easily understand how funds will not be available for our needs in the future. In fact, discretionary dollars are already scarce as most members of Congress are becoming vitally aware, and all you need do is just ask them.

So how will we maintain and preserve our national treasure, the VA medical system? Each year the leading veterans service organizations ask Congress to provide for mandatory funding for VA health care away from discretionary funding. Mandating funding was also recommended by the Presidents' Task Force to Improve Health Care for America's Veterans that I co-chaired in 2003. We pushed for mandated funding too, but each year Congress refuses to approve it, and in so doing denies mandated funding for veterans health care. The real problem is that our government already has more mandated responsibilities than they can handle with Medicare, and Social Security, Medicaid and TRICARE For Life. So, we need to seek other solutions, new solutions.

Our commission, lead by Dr. Ken Kizer and Bill Diefenderfer, deliberated on finding another way to address the problem. We agreed on a blueprint strategy for transforming the VA medical system so it will not only survive the economics of Medicare, but also enable it to truly prosper. Our major assumptions are: one, there will be projected decreases in the veterans population and these decreases in population will seriously impact future funding and the political stature of the veterans health care system. Secondly, outsourcing veterans' health care, and thereby dismantling the VA, is not a viable option. Secretary Jim Peake, called it "yellow page medicine" and our commissioners agree. That's alright, this is serious stuff. Three, status quo, leaving the system alone will leave the VHA completely unsustainable in the future. Four, despite the growing financial and organizational challenges facing the VA, any potential solution will require three to five years to implement. Our recommendation is first focused on preserving the physical assets of the VA, which currently have an average of 55 years. Much of our reasoning here is to prevent the government from selling off all or some of the assets to meet the obligations that I just described that they have with mandated funding.

The commission's recommendations would establish the Veterans Health Service, a completely unique government sponsored entity to receive and manage all of the assets of the Veterans Health Administration, unencumbered by debt. The new health service would be entrusted with the system's significant resources and it would manage them solely for the benefit of veterans. The new service would continue to receive funds from the federal government, pursuant to a very long-term contract, 30 years or more to cover the cost of category 1 thru 6 veterans, the poor and the disabled. All categories of veterans provided care in the system, all categories of veterans care in the system today at the time of transfer will be grandfathered in the Veterans Health Service to be funded under the federal contract.

The Veterans Health Service will continue to report to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, who will have full oversight responsibility for the Veterans Health Service and for the contractual funding of the category 1 thru 6 veterans. The new entity will be able

to contract for goods and services and to acquire and lease and dispose of real property. It will be able to accept gifts or donations or services or property as appropriate, and be able to borrow from the U.S. Treasury or issue bonds backed by the U.S. Government. The service will be governed by a board of directors, and the veterans service organizations would be well represented on the board to ensure that the veterans' needs are being met, not only at the board level, but throughout the entire entity.

The Veterans Health Service would gradually expand as capacity grows to bring in veterans and their dependents and their families with the ability to bring payments to the system. The expanded services would be billable to third-party payers including Medicare, but the cost of veterans in category 1 thru 6 would remain an obligation of the federal government. Currently, Congressional appropriations cover most expenses, while medical care collections represent just 6% of the system's revenue. The new health service could increase revenue by 45% while Congressional appropriations, of course, continue to cover the category priority 1 thru 6 veterans health care needs, providing a desperately needed reinvestment to bring facilities and equipment up to the highest quality standards over the next 20 years.

All of this is just a preview of the recommendations to be made in a final written report. I am sure that some of you out there right now thinking about this are thinking about the word 'privatization.' But that would not be at all accurate, since most of the VA government funding would continue to support the new entity which will still operate under government regulations and facilities that function as a government sponsored enterprise and this recommendation allows for sufficient future growth of our treasured medical system thus providing it with new life, functionally and politically. It is also a compromise solution, a good one I think, for building on a system that will soon face the looming financial crisis I just described. Our recommendation will be available before the year-end, and the written report will be distributed to all interested parties.

In May of 2006, when I visited The American Legion's Executive Council and introduced this concept of thinking outside the box, I was asked by a member of the Council the following question, "What makes you think, Mr. Walters, that this commission will not suffer the same fate as all commission task force face in the Federal Government?" I thought for a while and I replied, "That I have no guarantees for success," but I added, "The American Legion will have part ownership of this recommendation, and so it will be in your hands."

I have no ownership of this recommendation. That ownership belongs to my commissioners who labored for more than two years to provide a solution for avoiding a catastrophe and building a health care system that will serve all veterans and their families well into the future. Our commission presented our recommendations to a closed session of the House of Representatives Veterans' Affairs Committee just one month ago. We were pleased with their interests, and knew very well at the end of the day that they understand the coming financial challenge, that was clear.

I close this presentation to you with my favorite verse from my favorite poet, Robert Browning, who wrote; "Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp for what is a heaven for." I leave here today with trust in your ability to nurture these seeds of hope for the future, for the veterans who are fighting this war 20 years from today. We want to be there for them. In God we trust. America is number one, thanks to our veterans. God bless you one and all. God bless America. Thank you for your courtesy. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: The Chair recognizes Linda Perham, of Vermont, Chairman of the National Convention Committee on Credentials and Internal Affairs—Membership, for the purpose of making a report.

Report: Convention Committee on Credentials and Other Internal Matters
(Section III of Convention Committee on Credentials and Other Internal Affairs)
Linda Perham, Vermont, Chairman

Forty (40) members of the Credentials and Internal Affairs Committee Section III (Membership), considered one resolution, of which originated with the Department of Florida of The American Legion and was rejected by the Committee.

John Pellegrini (MT) nominated Linda Perham (VT), seconded by John Kalmbach (OR) as Chairman. Motion carried. Norbert Schollett (MI) nominated Gerald Goetzinger (SD) as Secretary. This was seconded by Larry Marcouillier (DE). Motion carried.

Tom Mattice (ID) made a motion that the Chairman and Secretary be authorized to sign the report of the Committee. This motion was seconded by Jeannette Shaw (GA). Motion was carried. V. James Troiola (NY) made a motion that Chairman and Secretary be authorized to make technical corrections to the report resulting out of the Committee to insure proper wording and form without changing the substance of meaning. The motion was seconded by John Kalmbach (OR). Motion carried.

Rejected

Resolution No. 86 (FL): The American Legion Sky Soldiers Demonstration Team

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN PERHAM: Mr. Commander, as a delegate to this convention, I move for the adoption of this report.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: I have a motion and I've heard a second. Is there any discussion? Seeing none. All those in favor by the normal sign of 'aye.' Opposed? Same sign. The Report of the Credentials and Internal Affairs-Membership is adopted.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: It is now time for the membership awards. The departments and individuals who will be joining me on this stage took membership to another level in 2008. Membership is the single most important element to our strength and that strength has been made even stronger by the efforts of the departments and individuals who are about to be recognized. Partnerships with The United States Recruiting Command, Military.com, The American Legion Riders, Team Johnson Racing, Heroes to Hometowns, Walter Reed Army Medical Center, Active and Reserve Military Components, Freedom Team Salute and many others have expanded the opportunity for The American Legion to reach out to all veterans and their families. Couple that with our continual commitment of service to veterans, their families, and our communities, and you can clearly see why The American Legion's growth potential is unlimited. We have a few challenges ahead of us in the upcoming year, but with the help of those being recognized today and those of you out in the audience, we can overcome anything put in before us. It's an exciting time. It is now my pleasure to present a number of membership awards. I ask that National Vice Commander Don Hayden assume duties at the podium.

Presentation: Department Membership Awards
Don Hayden, National Vice Commander

Thank you Commander. During the past year, six departments took their membership efforts to an all-time high. For each of these commanders, membership chairmen and their adjutants we have a ring or a gift to recognize their accomplishments. In addition, a plaque is presented to the department commander for their department efforts. The first department is Nevada; this is their 10th consecutive all-time high. The presentation is to Commander Daniel Waters, Membership Chairman Jerry Finley, and Department Adjutant Lionel Motta, please come forward. Congratulations.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN WATERS (NV): It's an honor to address the fellow members of The American Legion. It was a tough year for us, to be honest with you. Ten year all-time high, we've had several great commanders and several great membership chairman. About two months after accepting the commander for Nevada I was notified of a deployment to Afghanistan. I stand up here in front of you after that deployment, I hopefully, successfully represented, and represented you well in Afghanistan. But what I really want to speak to you about is the fact of the strength is our togetherness in our collective ability to move forward in membership. Even as I was gone to Afghanistan, the success of the team is what drove it home. Commander Finley, now the Department Commander of Nevada, was then of course our membership chairman. Our adjutant, Lionel Motta did a great job, and the entire staff. From the bottom of my heart, I sincerely thank everyone from the state of Nevada who actually made this happen. And

Commander Conatser, his leadership and mentorship really helped us out, and it has been my pleasure serving, and I look forward to our continued service together. Thank you. *(Applause and Music playing)*

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER HAYDEN: Next is the Department of Delaware. This is their 9th constitutive all-time high. Maintaining their traditional membership was a key element in the department reaching its goal. The presentation is to the Commander Lyman Brenner, Membership Chairman Ruth McBride and the Department Adjutant, Past National Commander Rick Santos. Come forward.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN BRENNER (DE): I'm the Commander for the past year, Lyman Brenner. I want to thank Membership Chairman Ruth McBride, and our adjutant, but especially the Department of Delaware, the members who worked so hard for us to be able to do the continuous all-time high. Thank you. *(Applause and Music playing)*

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER HAYDEN: Next is the Department of Virginia. This is their 3rd consecutive all-time high. Maintaining their traditional membership was a key element in the department reaching its goals. The presentation is to Commander Andrew Robertson, Membership Chairman Gerald Rhoads, and Department Adjutant Dale Chapman. Please come forward.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN ROBERTSON (VA): Good morning. I guess its still morning. My name is Andy Robertson, Past Department Commander now for Virginia. I guess I wanted to pass on a thought or two to help us on our way for another great membership year. First of all, I went out and selected the best man I could find to be the program chairman, Mr. Gerald Rhoads, and then I left him alone. I said, you're my program chairman, it's your program. I will help in any way I can, but it's all yours, you get out there and do it. And I bet if you ask Gerald he will tell you I did not call him, contact him directly, except for conventions, maybe more than a half a dozen to a dozen times for the whole year. And he went out and he did this job. My great part in it was I got to ride all over the state of Virginia anytime I could with my Riders, raising the visibility for The American Legion. As our commander knows, if you get out in those small towns and you show them that you care, then they are going to respond. America cares about its veterans, and they care about you, this American Legion. And when they ask me what are they going to do, I said I only got one plan, and that is we are going to be there for the veterans in the past, for the children in the future, for yourselves, for God and country. Thank you. *(Applause and Music playing)*

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER HAYDEN: Next is the Department of Arizona, this is their 3rd consecutive all-time high. The presentation is to Commander Bruce Conklin, Membership Chair Angel Juarez, and Department Adjutant John Aldecoa.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN CONKLIN (AZ): Thank you Arizona. Only two of us are up today. Angel Juarez was running a little late. He was in an Internal Affairs meeting, so that is why he's not here, but he was our Membership Director and he did a great job. We got the award. We got the rings, but I know who did all the work. It was right over there, Arizona, and I thank you, all of you, from the bottom all the way up. You worked hard. I asked for your help and you gave me that and more. And that's why it's three years in a row that we've done it, and we're going to keep this momentum going. We're going to go out there and get these veterans into our organization. Thank you very much, and again, have a great time in Arizona. Thank you much. God bless. *(Applause and Music playing)*

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER HAYDEN: Following Arizona is the Department of Florida. This is their 3rd consecutive all-time high. The presentation is to the Commander Warren Post, Membership Chair Albert Porter, and Department Adjutant Michael McDaniel. Please come forward.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN POST (FL): Is Florida back there? Only one thing to say, and the only one way you can accomplish your goals is the Department of Florida's theme this year was "Team Florida, working together to get the job done." And that's the only way that you can accomplish any of your goals, especially in membership, all working together to get the job done. I appreciate this award. Thank you very much. *(Applause and Music playing)*

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER HAYDEN: The Department of South Carolina is next. This is their 2nd all-time high. The presentation is to Commander John Dellinger,

Membership Chairman Michael Strauss, and Department Adjutant Jimmy Hawk. Please come forward.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN DELLINGER (SC): Thank you for the award. This award is significant for South Carolina, in two ways. First of all, it's our 2nd all-time high, but thirdly it's the first time we broke 30,000 in over 50 years. So now we have an excess of 30,000 members. So that's a real milestone. The work was really done by the blue cappers, but it was done under the leadership of Membership Chairman Michael Strauss, Membership Director Tom Harris, Adjutant Jim Hawk and Past Department Commander John Dellinger. So, having set a new goal, and having past 30,000, my work is cut out for me this year, but I look forward to being back here next year to receive another all-time high award. Thank you.

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER HAYDEN: Please accept these awards as a token of our personal appreciation for your departments' membership efforts. Thank you and congratulations again.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: The Consolidated Post Report is the summary of what The American Legion posts have accomplished in their communities. It is an opportunity to tell the story of your post on an easy to fill out form. For the past 16 years the average response rate has been about 50%. When I testified before Congress in September, only 8,188 posts had submitted their report. In order to increase our response rate, I continued with Commander Morin's challenge to all departments to improve response from all of their posts. This year's response rate improved 2% over last year. Our response rate rose to 59% with 8,350 posts reporting out of 14,263. As you can see, there is still room for improvement. The department commanders that met my challenge of 75% response rate were; Alaska, California, Florida, Idaho, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New York, Ohio, Oregon, Rhode Island, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and Mexico. I think they all deserve a large round of applause. *(Applause)*

Now, those departments that exceeded my challenge, and have response rates of 95% or higher, I have asked to join me on stage today for special recognition. At this time we will present plaques to the Department Commander. Will National Vice Commander David Korth assume duties at the podium for the reading of the winners.

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER KORTH: Thank you Commander. First award winner is: H. Warren Post, Department of Florida; Joe D. Foruria, Department of Idaho; David M. McLean, Department of Montana; Edgar L. Horne, Department of Oregon; Andrew C. Robertson, Department of Virginia, we thought he left on his motorcycle, however, here he is. Larry A. Watson, Department of Washington; David A. Kurtz, Department of Wisconsin; Jerry A. King, Department of Mexico. (*Applause*)

Once again, congratulations to these eight 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.

Presentation: National Recruiter of the Year
Martin Conatser, Illinois, National Commander

The next award goes to a man who has set the standard for recruiting during this membership year. The National Recruiter of the Year, gathered 545 new members for The American Legion fold. This is his third consecutive year as our National Recruiter. Please give a warm welcome to a dedicated Legionnaire, Mr. Frank H. Carr of Post 99, Halifax, Virginia.

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER HAYDEN: Frank, this is but a small token of our appreciation for the job you have done. Without a doubt you are one of the outstanding recruiters who shares a passion for supporting veterans. Commander Conatser will be presenting you a check for $1,500, a Legion cap, a shadow box plaque, a National Top Recruiter ring, and a polo shirt signifying you earning the title of Recruiter of the Year for 2007-2008. Congratulations Frank, and please continue to recruit more members into our great organization. We hope to see you again next year, unless there is someone in the audience who wishes to dethrone Frank. And Frank, a question for you: Are you up to the challenge of retaining your title?

MR. CARR: I'd just like to say a few words to Commander Marty Conatser, to our National Adjutant Robert Spanogle, to all the Legionnaires around the world, good morning. I'd just like to say one or two things. First, give an honor to God who gives me the health and strength to do what I do. To my lovely wife, Mattie Carr, for giving up her time with me, that I might be able to be free to do what I do. To my department membership secretary for helping me keep track of all the members I put in, that I might be able to do what I do. And my thanks to my good friend, J.W. Garrett, some 37 years ago for fighting, and Post 99, to allow Vietnam era veterans to join the post that I might be able to join. And in fact, I was the first Vietnam veteran to join our post, and if it wasn't for that, I would not be able to do what I do. And to all those young men and women, and old men and women also, that have allowed me to sign them up into this great organization, one that fight for veterans rights and benefits, an organization that helps disabled veterans, to help widows, and to help dependents. Our veterans, that's what I do, what I do. It has truly been a pleasure this year being in the position I've been in. It's not all about the awards, or not even about the money, even though the money does help. But it's all about helping others, and that's why I do what I do. And if you out there are trying to do what I do, all you have to do is to ask somebody to sign up. Thank you and God bless you. (*Applause and Music playing*)

Presentation: O. L. Bodenhamer Trophy
National Vice Commander Donald Hayden, Minnesota

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 14th. The department also led The American Legion in traditional membership for the Delegate Strength Report by attaining 98.65% of their goal.

Please give a warm welcome to the Department of Vermont. This presentation is to Commander Barbara Bushaw, Membership Chairman Richard Farmer and Department Adjutant Robert Perham.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN BUSHAW (VT): Where is Vermont? I can't see you. Do I have to get up on a stool? Thank you, Vermont. We have 71 Posts in Vermont, two of them are over 1,000. But I pushed them hard. I had a beautiful working team this year, and I want to thank also from national we had some people come in. And one individual, he has been back four or five times since I've worked with the membership teams, and that's Jim Fiedler. He has done an outstanding job from national. Billy Johnson, Linda Perham, my Chairman, Dick Farmer, my Adjutants and every blue cap member in the state of Vermont. Thank you.

Presentation: Race To The Top
National Vice Commander Hayden, Minnesota

The following are our membership presentations for Race To The Top. This is the first year of the district commanders' race. The top competition winners were awarded a trip to the National Convention. As always, it was a tough competition. Out of the five categories there were four winners. We will now welcome these Department Commanders. The winner of Category I, Jim Byars, Department of Nevada. Category II winner, Charles Scott, Department of Mississippi. Award winner for Category III, Carmen Streit-Smith, Department of Georgia. Category IV winner, James Refinati, Department of Ohio. *(Applause)*

These district commanders are being presented a new Legion cap, a polo shirt and a shadow box. We sincerely appreciate their hard work and dedication. Thank you.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: At this time I call on the National Adjutant for an announcement.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: Before the National Commander goes to the next order of business of the awarding of the National Emergency Fund Awards, we will accept donations to the National Emergency Fund following those awards. Also, following the Americanism Convention Committee Report, we'll accept donations to the Legacy Scholarship Fund.

Presentation: National Emergency Fund Awards
Martin Conatser, Illinois, National Commander

The National Emergency Fund is perhaps one of the most visible ways we demonstrate our commitment to proudly serving veterans. During this challenging year, The American Legion gave out $332,620 in grant monies to American Legion family members for the disasters experienced in the 2007-2008. And we raised over $212,000. It's great to know that when a Legion member needs help, the Legion family will step up and give without reservation. And it's because of your continual giving that we are able to sustain this fund. I think we all deserve a round of applause. *(Applause)*

Those department commanders who were the top fundraisers in their respective categories determined by membership size will receive a plaque. We have six department commanders being recognized today. At this time we will present their plaques. Will National Vice Commander Tom Burns assume duties at the podium for reading the winners.

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER BURNS: Those department commanders who are being recognized as the top fundraisers for the National Emergency Fund based on size are, starting with the number: William Burnett, Department of New York; next is Frank Calandrillo, Department of New Jersey; next will be Harold Barnett, Department of Georgia; stepping in is Faye. The next is Edgar Horn, Department of Oregon; next is Daniel Waters, Department of Nevada; next is Keith Hassey, Department of Wyoming. In addition West Virginia, Mississippi, and New Mexico have been sent a certificate for making 100% of their assigned goal. Congratulations. Thank you for your hard work. Please don't stop the fund raising efforts because we never know where they'll be a disaster again. Remember that each and every dollar donated to the National Emergency Fund stays in the National Emergency Fund. At this time, I would like to ask those departments that would like to present checks for the National Emergency Fund, to please come forward and make their presentations now.

MR. DUNAWAY (AZ): Al Dunaway, Grand Canyon Post 42 from the Department of Arizona, $1,000.

MR. MORRISON (OH): My name is Jim Morrison; I'm one of the directors of Charities, Inc. in the Department of Ohio. With us today is our NECman Carl Swisher; our out- going Commander, Mike Norman; our in-coming Commander, Bob Kimbell; and another member of the directors of Charities, Inc., Glenn Hickman. Now on behalf of the Department of Ohio, I am proud to present a check of $50,000.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: Also, they had Post 144 check for $5,000 in there, bringing them to a total of $55,000.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Mr. Commander, the Southern Bloc breakfast this morning decided they'd take up a little collection for the Emergency Fund, and we do this in honor of our Chairman, Jerry Hedrick who is pretty sick. But he told us by speakerphone this morning that he would be back and we'll continue to do what we do. We're going to have a check for $5,201.

DEPARTMENT COMMANDER HARPER (MO): I'm Marvin Harper, Department Commander from the Department of Missouri. On stage with me is David Voyles, NEC and Rich Haggard, Alt-NEC, and we're going to present $7,000.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN COPHER (MN): I'm the Delegation Chairman from Minnesota, Jim Copher. On stage with us is our Department Adjutant Lyle Foltz and our Department Commander, Tom Conway. We're presenting a check for $1,044 to the NEF.

DEPARTMENT ADJUTANT DERNER (IA): I am John Derner, Department Adjutant for the Department of Iowa. Joining me on stage is our Department Commander, Bruce Feuerbach and our Past Department Commander and Delegation Chairman, Robert Mayhon. As many of you know we had a rough summer here in Iowa, and between tornadoes and flooding we had over 83 of our 99 counties declared as disaster areas. But when things appear to be at their worst, Legionnaires are at their best, and the National Emergency Fund came to our rescue. And we're making a down payment of repayment of $5,000. And as you know, we awarded over $120,000 worth of National Emergency Fund checks in Iowa, and all of those members that received those grants know the value of membership.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN LEWIS (NH): I am Chuck Lewis, Delegation Chairman for the Department of New Hampshire and with me today is our Department Commander, George McCall, and together we are presenting a check for $2,188.85.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN SANDELL (PA): Sandy Sandell, Commander, Department of Pennsylvania. Commander, I proudly present on behalf of the Department of Pennsylvania a check for $7,037.

MR. SALMEN (ID): Every year for 21 years we have the Department of Idaho who represented by Cleve Rice and the Department of Montana who is represented by Joyce Babcock. We have an event we call Fun Days, and I'm Dale Salmen from Nevada, and over the years we have a little outing we call Fun Days. It's a golf tournament get-together for everybody to come to, and we've raised over $26,000. This year we had an off year, we only raised $750 for the NEF.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN BURNETT (NY): Commander Marty, on behalf of every member of The American Legion family in the Department of New York, it is our privilege and honor, because we know the importance and the good that this program does, but it is my honor to present to you, with a check for the NEF Fund of $100,000.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER (IA): Commander Marty, on behalf of Ames Post #37 of the Department of Iowa, I have a check for you for $1,230.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: I believe there is some guy from their post that wants my job, Dave Rehbein, I believe that's his home post.

A quick total of NEF contributions today, $185,450.85. And that shows what's good about America, the American Legion family's commitment to each other.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: The American Legion is not the only organization dedicated to helping America's veterans. We are fortunate to have with us today the leader of a great organization, friends that share our goals and our values. Glenn Gardner served in the United States Marine Corps from 1966 to 1970, and was an aircraft mechanic with the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing in Chu Lai, Vietnam. A resident of Round Rock, Texas, he served as the VFW Adjutant Quartermaster for the Department of Texas for more than 20 years. On August 21st our guest was elected leader of the 109 year old, 1.6 million members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. Please extend a warm American Legion welcome to the National Commander of the VFW, Glenn Gardner.

Address: Glenn Gardner
National Commander of the Veterans of Foreign Wars

Thank you very much. National Commander to you and the National Officers of The American Legion, to your staff, to Past National Commander, my good friend John Brieden, to the Delegates from the great state of Texas, and to all the Delegates of The American Legion here assembled, I bring you greetings from the Veterans of the Foreign Wars of the United States, the second largest veterans' organization in the world. You know, less than a week ago I was sworn in as the National Commander-in-Chief of The Veterans of Foreign Wars. Never did I think that in less than a week that I would have the opportunity to be in Phoenix, Arizona, and stand before this large group of America's heroes and patriots, and I'm truly honored to be here today.

I want too thank you for what you do for America's veterans, for their families, for the active duty military and their families. This has been a great year for the veterans and for active duty military in Washington. We've seen several pieces of legislation passed and signed into law that we can all be proud of. The largest VA budget in history, the GI Bill for the 21st century that sends a true message to those young men and women serving today that America cares about them and appreciates what they are doing. And other bills that have been passed and signed into law which will help the veterans of this country and the active duty military as we go forward through the next years.

You know, we must always be ever vigilant as we face the challenges that we have before us. None of us today know what challenges we'll face during this upcoming year, but I know that all of us will be there for the veterans of this country and for our active duty military. In less than two months, we will elect a new president, new congressmen, and new senators. I encourage all of you to be active in the process no matter who you

choose to support. And once the election is over with, you must then go to these elected officials that you supported and let them know that as a veteran, as one that is concerned with veterans issues and military issues, that you supported them, and now you ask for their support as they go forward to serve in Washington.

I encourage you also, to work with the other veterans' organizations in your area. I had the opportunity to serve as the chairman of the Texas Coalition of Veterans Organizations for 15 years. Let me tell you that my voice in Austin was much louder when I spoke on behalf of 20 veterans' organizations and 600,000 members, than it was when I spoke as the Adjutant Quarter Master of the Veterans of Foreign Wars and our 97,000 members during that time. Over the last 15 years, working together, standing side by side, we've been able to pass many pieces of legislation which have greatly increased the entitlements that the veterans of Texas now enjoy. And I ask you to do that.

Comrades, I would ask you one more thing, as I ask all the members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars when I speak to them at their meetings. Always remember first and foremost, and I think it was demonstrated this morning with the donations that you made to your disaster fund, that we're a veterans' organization. We were formed to be a veterans' organization, and we've got to be here to support America's veterans and those active duty military serving today.

You know, there are a lot of good charities out there, and we support a lot of them on a local basis. But let me assure you that none of the other non-profits or fraternal organizations are willing to stand up and do what it takes to protect veterans entitlements more than the VSO's, and we have to be there for our veterans. Let me say, that I stand ready as the Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, to work with your leadership as we go forward during this next year to make sure that the veterans entitlements remain in place, to make sure that the young men and women serving today are never forgotten. I want to thank you once again for what you do for the veterans of this country and their families. I want to thank you once again for what you do for the active duty military and their families. I want to wish you all the best for a very successful year for you and your great organization. Thank you very much. (*Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: There are many projects and things that we work on together with the VFW, and I'm going to give the VFW National Commander a news release that is very concerning to The American Legion. The VA is looking at outsourcing the new GI Bill and outsourcing state veteran home inspections, and we're not very happy with that. So here's your first joint effort together. We ask you to look at that and see what your organization thinks.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GARDNER: Commander, I had a discussion yesterday with our Executive Director from the Washington office, and I can assure you that the Veterans of Foreign Wars is not in favor of that, and I understand a meeting has been set-up next week with our organizations to the VA to make sure they understand that the VA is to take care of veterans entitlements, not some private company that they want to hire.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: The Chair recognizes James E. Koutz of Indiana, Chairman of the National Convention Committee on Economics, for the purpose of making a report.

Report: Convention Committees on Employment and Veterans Preference and Other Economic Matters
James E. Koutz. Indiana, Chairman

Eighty-One (81) members of your Committees on Employment and Veterans Preference and on Other Economic Matters met at 8:30 a.m. on August 24, 2008, in Room 207, Lecture Hall, West Building, Second Level, Phoenix Convention Center, Phoenix Arizona and agreed on the following report, which is respectfully submitted for your consideration.

The Committees were called to order by Joseph Sharpe Jr. (DC), Liaison Representative appointed by the National Adjutant to act as temporary chairman. Mark Walker (DC), Assistant Director for Economic Commission, acted as temporary secretary and called the roll. A quorum being present, nominations were received for permanent

chairman. James E. Koutz (IN), Chairman of the Standing National Economic Commission, was unanimously elected Chairman of the Convention Committees.

With unanimous consent, the Chairman appointed Richard Zulch, as Committee Secretary; Albert M. Robotti (NJ), Chairman of the Employment and Veterans Preference Committee and Richard T. Lee Jr. (CA), Secretary; William Christoffersen (UT), Chairman of the Other Economic Matters Committee and James Fratolillo (MA), Secretary.

A Screening Committee on Economic Resolutions, in a preconvention meeting, screened and grouped the resolutions. A report of their action, 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 James E. Koutz, Chairman of the Economic Commission and was composed of the following individuals: Richard Zulch (OH); James Fratolillo (MA); Albert M. Robotti (NJ); and David G. Desmond (NC).

The 52 Economic resolutions presented for the consideration of this Convention were referred by the Resolutions Assignment Committee. The following action on the resolutions was taken by the Convention Committees:

Approved or Approved w/Amendment	38
Consolidated with Resolutions Approved	6
Referred to the Standing Commission	2
Received and Recorded	5
Rejected	1

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 52 resolutions referred to the Standing Economic Commission will be made to the National Executive Committee and to the Adjutant of the Department concerned.

Employment and Veterans Preference Committee

Approved

Resolution No. 9: Work Opportunity Tax Credit Program
Origin: Utah
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economics

WHEREAS, The United States Government has recognized that employment of veterans is a national responsibility and the alleviating unemployment or underemployment of honorably discharged veterans is a national priority; and

WHEREAS, Unemployment rates of individuals recently separated from military service is unacceptable because America's employers have been lax in hiring those ex-service members; and

WHEREAS, The Work Opportunity Tax Credit program created by Congress encourages employers to hire targeted applicants but present program language is too restrictive and fails to include many veterans who are receiving food stamps, welfare or seeking job vocational rehabilitation when requesting employment; and

WHEREAS, Expansion of the Work Opportunity Tax Credit program to include those and other categories of separated members of the uniformed services will in the long run promote recruitment and retention of members in all branches of the military services; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion request congress for changes in legislation relating to the Work Opportunity Tax Credit program to include:

1. **All members of the military who have honorably served on active duty and/or still on active duty for training who have served more than 180 days since September of 2001;**

2. **Any veteran who has served honorably on active duty for more than 180 days and meets the criteria for low income applicants;**
3. **A disabled veteran who has completed or is an enrollee in a rehabilitative service programs funded by a state or the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.**

Resolution No. 11: Allow Military Retirees to Apply for Positions in Federal Law Enforcement after Age 37
Origin: Utah
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economics

WHEREAS, Under present Public Law 101-509 makes it mandatory for all federal law enforcement position personnel to retire by age 57 requiring an applicant to be no older than 37 when applying, thus allowing them to complete 20 years of service before age 57; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense spends in excess of $15 billion annually to train men and women of the Armed Services with thousands of career personnel who complete their initial 20 years for retirement of which a large number have reached the age of 38–40 at time of separation; and

WHEREAS, Under existing law it is impossible for a 20 year military retiree to obtain a career in federal law enforcement because of age restriction even though they are more than qualified for federal employment with their job expertise, security clearance credentials, allegiance to their country, etc.; and

WHEREAS, Providing opportunities for transitional career military personnel is a reinvestment in defense training that would help preserve scarce recruiting and training funds while providing a stable source of manpower to help fulfill the federal government 188,000 law enforcement personnel requirements; and

WHEREAS, Removing the age restriction or at least providing a waiver based on military service would complement the American taxpayer who has fully funded the training and experience of our career military by utilizing their expertise for federal law enforcement positions; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion petition the Congress to amend Public Law 101-509 that makes it impossible for our retiring military men and women to pursue post-military careers in federal law enforcement based solely on age; and; be it finally

RESOLVED, That age waivers or other means be adopted to accommodate those who have served honorably allowing them to continue to serve in a profession that would be enhanced by their previous experiences.

Resolution No. 31: Adequate Funding for the Local Veterans' Employment Representatives and Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialist
Origin: South Dakota
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economics
(Consolidated with Resolution No. 57 (MA))

WHEREAS, For over 60 years the Local Veterans Employment Representatives (LVERs) and Disabled Veterans Outreach Specialists (DVOPs) have been the cornerstone of veterans' employment services for veterans throughout the United States Employment Services and its delivery system; and

WHEREAS, The LVER and DVOPs facilitate intensive services to job seeking veterans in the Local Employment Services offices; and

WHEREAS, The funds made available in the past have not been sufficient to support the full funding and appropriate level of LVERs and DVOPs in every state, especially in the smaller states; and

WHEREAS, Across the nation today, many local employment offices have no coverage by a DVOP or LVER; and

WHEREAS, Sufficient funding is crucial to the delivery of veterans' employment services in this time of troop deployments during the Iraq war; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED; By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion shall ask and

insist that the Congress of the United States appropriate sufficient funds to support the LVER and DVOP positions with at least the minimum funding for each state and one full-time DVOP or LVER position per local employment office.

Resolution No. 261: Support Recognition of Military Service and Pay When Calculating Starting Federal Civilian Salaries
Origin: Texas
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economics

WHEREAS, The Office of Personnel Management's interpretation of Section 531.203 of Title 5, Code of Federal Regulations does not allow the use of military pay rates to determine the rate of basic pay that may be paid to an individual upon appointment to a civil service position; and

WHEREAS, The interpretation of this law places an undue financial hardship on former member of the Armed Forces and penalizes the individual for serving in the military defending our country and provides an advantage to non veterans seeking higher starting salary when entering into federal employment; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion seek and support legislation that requires Federal agencies to take an employee's military experience and military pay history into consideration when computing that employee's starting civilian salary.

Resolution No. 262: Restore Oversight of Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS) Program
Origin: Texas
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economics

WHEREAS, Throughout the nearly two hundred and twenty-year history of The United States, the men and women of this nation have served in the armed forces in the interest of the collective body of states, united under a central federal government, "to provide for the common defense"; and

WHEREAS, In Section 4301, Title 38, United States Code (USC), Congress expressed its purpose in enacting the Uniformed Service Employment and Reemployment Rights Act of 1994 (USERRA), "to encourage non-career service in the uniformed services by eliminating or minimizing the disadvantage to civilian careers and employment which can result from such service"; and

WHEREAS, It has been the finding of numerous surveys and studies that, for a variety of reasons, the vast majority of disabled veterans of the armed forces are disadvantaged in pursuing civilian employment and careers; and

WHEREAS, It is altogether fitting and proper that such programs of employment assistance for veterans be provided by direction of, and subject to oversight by, Congress to ensure that all veterans/disabled veterans are afforded such services in a uniform manner following completion of their service and return to the several states; and

WHEREAS, PL 107-288 has eliminated the requirement that DOL/VETS review all workforce centers annually and this has minimized Federal oversight of the programs since the ASVET has drastically cut funds allocated for this activity and established a policy that only 10 percent of the centers operated under Title 38 will be reviewed; and

WHEREAS, PL 107-288 has removed the job descriptions of the Disabled Veteran Outreach Program (DVOP) Specialists and Local Veterans Employment Representative (LVERs) from Title 38 USC, and given the States the ability to establish the duties and responsibilities, thus weakening the VETS programs across the country by eliminating the language that required these staff positions provided services only to veterans; and

WHEREAS: The passage of PL 107-288 also removed the Federally mandated manning formulas for assigning DVOPs and LVERs and this has allowed each State to determine the number of veterans' employment personnel in each State, and the assignment of more than one half time DVOP and/or LVER to one office, while eliminating positions in offices that need veterans' staff by virtue of veterans intake; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion support

legislation that will restore language to Chapter 41, Title 38 that will require that veteran staff serve only veterans, require that half time DVOP/LVER positions be assigned only after approval of the DVET, and that the Secretary of Labor be required to monitor all career centers that have veteran staff assigned; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion also support legislation that restores the duties and responsibilities of the Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialist and Local Veterans Employment Representative; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion supports Department of Labor's Assistant Secretary for Veterans' Employment and Training being given jurisdiction to review all Department of Labor employment and training programs in order to insure that all programs provide priority services to veterans.

Resolution No. 263: Support the Development of Veterans On-The-Job Training Opportunities
Origin: Texas
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economics

WHEREAS, In years past there have been special employment initiatives for employment of veterans; and

WHEREAS, One was the Servicemembers Occupational Conversion and Training Act (SMOCTA), and the other was the Veteran's Job Training Act (VJTA); and

WHEREAS, These programs were designed to provide financial incentives for employers to hire certain categories of veterans and have expired; and

WHEREAS, These were highly successful programs because employers were able to defray some costs associated with training these veterans; and

WHEREAS, There have been numerous changes to the Montgomery G.I. Bill (MGIB) making it easier for veterans to obtain higher education and even a license or certification; and

WHEREAS, The MGIB can be a useful tool to help employers defray the costs of training of veterans by developing an on-the-job training (OJT) program thereby benefiting both the veteran and employer; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion support the development of an outreach program to veterans and employers to develop on-the-job training (OJT) programs for eligible veterans; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion support the development of joint projects to enhance OJT opportunities for eligible veterans through the Montgomery GI Bill.

Resolution No. 264: Department of Labor to Develop a Data Collection System to Monitor Veterans' Priority of Service
Origin: Texas
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economics

WHEREAS, Title 38 Chapter 4215 as amended by PL 107-288 requires that all employment and training programs provide priority services to veterans who qualify for the particular programs; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Labor has failed to promulgate regulations, or enforce this requirement; and

WHEREAS, In order to accomplish this requirement, the U.S. Department of Labor and State Agencies must develop and implement timely and accurate performance data accountability systems to track the priority of services provided to veterans in all DOL funded activities in accordance with current laws; and

WHEREAS, The data systems must reflect current operations, production and performance not less than monthly and by individual staff, section, workforce center, workforce board, state and national level; and

WHEREAS, The data systems must reflect services to veterans, all categories utilized by DOL, and non-veterans, to allow comparison of service levels and priority of service; and

WHEREAS, The requirement to provide priority of service to veterans in all DOL funded activities has existed since November 2002 and to date DOL has not identified nor provided any data that will substantiate such service priority being provided; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Labor's continued failure to establish viable performance accountability and tracking systems in the four years since the law was enacted reflects poorly on the Administration's stance of supporting our nation's veterans and does not meet the intent and purpose of Congress in passing PL 107-288; and, now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That we petition the Department of Labor to develop a timely and accurate performance data system that will track and report priority services to veterans in all DOL funded programs at the local workforce center, workforce board, state and national levels; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That we provide copies of this resolution to members of the House and Veterans Affairs Committees expressing our concern over the lack of real time accountability for priority services to veterans in Department of Labor programs which is required by Title 38, Section 4215.

Resolution No. 266: Veterans Hiring Preference from Employers with Federal Contracts or Grants
Origin: Texas
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economics

WHEREAS, The employment of veterans should be one of the highest priorities of the federal government; and

WHEREAS, Veterans do not receive hiring preference from employers that receive grants and contracts from the federal government; and

WHEREAS, Veterans do not receive preference from employers that receive contracts on federally assisted projects while other target groups do receive special hiring consideration; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion seeks to ensure that veterans receive employment preference from employers who receive grants and contracts from the federal government and employment preference from employers that receive funding on all federally assisted projects.

Resolution No. 267: Oppose the Job Loss of Veterans with the Proposed Outsourcing of Federal Jobs in the Federal Government
Origin: Texas
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economics

WHEREAS, Veterans and disabled veterans have honorably served their country; and

WHEREAS, Veterans and disabled veterans have provided many years of faithful service working for The United States Government; and

WHEREAS, Veterans and disabled veterans will lose all their employment rights and benefits due to the proposed outsourcing of federal jobs to the private sector; and

WHEREAS, The proposed outsourcing will put thousands of veterans and disabled veterans in the unemployment lines without the protection of Reduction in Force policies; and

WHEREAS, There will be no veterans preference when these unemployed veterans and disabled veterans apply for the same jobs that they previously held; and

WHEREAS, Years of experience will be lost; and

WHEREAS, There are not current studies that support the cost savings proposed by outsourcing of federal jobs; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion opposes the outsourcing of all Federal Jobs held by veterans and disabled veterans without the protection of Reduction in Force policies and veterans preference.

Resolution No. 269: Oppose the Transfer of Veterans' Employment and Training Service to the Department of Veterans Affairs
Origin: Texas
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economics

WHEREAS, Throughout the nearly two hundred and twenty-year history of The United States, the men and women of this nation have served in the Armed Forces in the interest of the collective body of states, united under a central Federal Government, "to provide for the common defense"; and

WHEREAS, The men and women served The United States under the constitutional authority vested in, and by direction of the President of The United States; and

WHEREAS, In Section 3401, Title 38, United States Code (USC), Congress expressed its purpose in enacting the Uniformed Service Employment and Reemployment Rights Act of 1994 (USERRA), "to encourage non-career service in the uniformed services by eliminating or minimizing the disadvantage to civilian careers and employment which can result from such service"; and

WHEREAS, It has been the finding of numerous surveys and studies that, for a variety of reasons, the vast majority of disabled veterans of the Armed Forces of The United States are disadvantaged in pursuing civilian employment and careers; and

WHEREAS, It is altogether fitting and proper that such programs of employment assistance for veterans be provided by direction of, and subject to oversight by, Congress to ensure that all veterans/disabled veterans are afforded such services in a uniform manner following completion of their service and return to the several states; and

WHEREAS, PL 107-288 has eliminated the requirement that DOL/VETS review all workforce centers annually and this has minimized Federal oversight of the programs since the ASVET has drastically cut funds allocated for this activity and established a policy that only 10 percent of the centers operated under Title 38 will be reviewed; and

WHEREAS, PL 107-288 has removed the job description of the Disabled Veteran Outreach Program (DVOP) Specialists and Local Veterans' Employment Representatives (LVERs) from Title 38, USC, and given the States the ability to establish the duties and responsibilities, thus weakening the VETS programs across the country by eliminating the language that required these staff positions provide services only to veterans; and

WHEREAS, VETS works closely with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Vocational Rehabilitation Program to assist enrolled veterans in job search efforts throughout their rehabilitation; and

WHEREAS, The present administration continues to recommend transferring VETS from DOL to VA; and

WHEREAS, DOL has expertise in job placement; job development, vocational counseling, vocational testing, job search training, and any other area of employment services; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion opposes all legislative or administrative efforts to transfer Veterans' Employment and Training Service from Department of Labor to Department of Veterans Affairs.

Resolution No. 270: Support Staffing Local Veterans' Employment Representatives (LVERS), as Required by Law
Origin: Texas
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economics
(Consolidated with Resolution No. 55 (MA))

WHEREAS, Under Title 38, Chapter 41, U.S. Code, Section 2004a (2)(A), the regulation states that at least one LVER shall be assigned to each local employment office having at least 1,100 Veterans registered and an additional LVER be assigned for each additional 1,600 Veterans registered above the 1,100 base; and

WHEREAS, Under the current LVER allocation formula as utilized by the Department of Labor, there are inadequate appropriations to several states because of policies and practices which cause these states to receive fewer positions and/or less funding; and

WHEREAS, This procedure caused a deterioration of the available services provided to Veterans in those states, and adversely impacts the level of services provided; and

WHEREAS, Since the enactment of Public Law 100-323, the level of funding for these mandated positions have been below the level required for the program to be effective; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Annual Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion petition the Secretary of Labor to request full funding of the LVER grant so that the number of positions equal the level that were available in 1991 and DOL be required to adhere to the requirements of Title 38, Chapter 41, Section 2004 and assign Local Veterans Employment Representative positions on the basis required by law.

Resolution No. 272: Reauthorize the Service Members Occupational Conversion and Training Act Program
Origin: Texas
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Employment and Veterans Preference (Consolidated with Resolution No. 53 (MA))

WHEREAS, In 1992, Congress enacted the Service Members Occupational Conversion and Training Act (SMOCTA), which became Public Law (PL) 102-484; and

WHEREAS, SMOCTA was a transitional tool designed to provide job training and employment to certain veterans discharged from the military after August 1, 1990; and

WHEREAS, SMOCTA helped eligible veterans enter the civilian workforce through training in a stable and permanent position that involved significant training; and

WHEREAS, VA made monthly payments to employers who employed and trained eligible veterans in these jobs, and made a final lump sum payment when the trainee had completed the training program and was employed for four months; and

WHEREAS, These payments aided employers in defraying the necessary costs of training; and

WHEREAS, To be eligible for participation in the SMOCTA program, the veteran must meet at least one of the following criteria: (a) have a primary or secondary military occupational specialty that the Department of Defense (DoD) has determined is not readily transferable to the civilian work force; or (b) be entitled to compensation (or would be entitled to compensation but for the receipt of military retired pay) for a VA service-connected disability rate of 30 percent or more; or (c) be unemployed and have been unemployed for at least eight of the last 15 work weeks before filing an application; and

WHEREAS, Veterans eligible for job training under SMOCTA were precisely those individuals who need the most assistance in making a successful transition to the civilian workforce; and

WHEREAS, DoD, Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Department of Labor (DOL) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in March 1993, which defined their roles and responsibilities in the implementation of SMOCTA; and

WHEREAS, DoD provided funding for SMOCTA, while VA and DOL are responsible for administering the program; and

WHEREAS, Under the Terms of the MOU, the SMOCTA program would terminate when all funds provided by DoD are expended or at such time as agreed upon by all parties; and

WHEREAS, SMOCTA was the only Federal job training program specifically designed and available for use by State veterans' employment personnel to assist veterans with barriers to employment; and

WHEREAS, SMOCTA offered financial incentives for employers to hire SMOCTA-eligible veterans; and

WHEREAS, SMOCTA was officially terminated on July 26, 2001; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention, assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion support

legislation to reauthorize the Service Members Occupational Conversion and Training Act program; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion seeks adequate funding for Service Members Occupational Conversion and Training Act.

Resolution No. 274: Oppose Consolidation of Employment Service Program and Veterans Employment Program into the WIA Program
Origin: Texas
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economics

WHEREAS, The employment programs now operated under the Wagner-Peyser Act require that dedicated funds be used for a national labor exchange program and these programs have proved extremely effective in providing services to veterans by requiring staff assigned to these be merit system staff hereby excluding political influence in the funding and operation of these programs; and

WHEREAS, The current staffing requirements under Wagner-Peyser Act also extends to the positions of the Disabled Veteran Outreach Program staff and the Local Veterans Employment Representative Staff requiring them to also be merit system employees; and

WHEREAS, The WIA Reauthorization Act, which contains language that will consolidate the Employment Service funds and programs into the Workforce Investment Programs, has passed The United States House of Representatives and has been referred to the Senate; and

WHEREAS, This consolidation of funds and programs will effectively eliminate any accountability for labor exchange funds and programs thereby eliminating the few remaining Employment Service positions and possibly the LVER/DVOP staff positions and dissolving the veterans employment programs; and

WHEREAS, HR 27 also had an amendment known as WIA PLUS 4, which included language that specifically gave the governors of the states the option to consolidate the Veterans' Employment and Training Service Programs with four other program funds; and

WHEREAS, This blending of funds will result in accountability for veterans programs and staff identified specifically for providing mediated services to veterans; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, That The American Legion oppose any legislation that seeks to block grant or blend the Employment Service Programs or funds or the Veterans Employment Programs or funds into the Workforce Investment Act programs or give the governors of the various states the option to combine funds identified for services to veterans.

Resolution No. 275: Employment of Veterans in Government Workforce
Origin: Texas
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economics
(Consolidated with Resolutions No. 54 (MA) and No. 271 (TX))

WHEREAS, A grateful nation has thanked those who bore the burdens of battle by providing certain rights and benefits, one of which has been a small advantage when seeking federal, state and local government employment; and

WHEREAS, Absence from a highly competitive job market creates an unfair disadvantage on veterans when competing with their non-veteran peers for employment in federal, state and local government; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion strongly urges the strengthening of veteran's preference in federal, state, and local government and opposes any efforts to reduce or circumvent veterans preference.

Resolution No. 276: Oppose DVOP/LVER Personnel to Work on Public Assistance Related Programs
Origin: Texas
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economics

WHEREAS, The United States Department of Labor Veterans' Employment and Training Service administers programs to assist veterans with their employment and training needs; and

WHEREAS, Many state employment agencies are utilizing DVOP/LVER personnel to work on public assistance related programs including food stamps; and

WHEREAS, This diverts the DVOP/LVER personnel from their prime mission which is to assist veterans with their employment and training needs; and

WHEREAS, That time would be better utilized assisting veterans with their employment and training needs or providing them with veterans benefit information; and

WHEREAS, Many veterans are not aware of their veterans benefits and could benefit from information on veterans benefits in addition to assistance with employment and training; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in, National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion will go on record opposing the utilization of DVOP/LVER to work with, or process public assistance programs; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the Congress reinforce the mandate of the program to assist veterans with their employment and training needs and whenever possible provide veterans benefit information as a part of their service to the veteran customers.

Resolution No. 348: Oppose Efforts to Change the Residency Requirements For State Directors of the Veterans Employment and Training Service (VETS)
Origin: Convention Committee on Economics
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economics

WHEREAS, The United States Government has recognized that the employment of veterans is a national priority and responsibility; and

WHEREAS, The United States Department of Labor, Veterans Employment & Training Service has done an outstanding job of promoting the employment of veterans and protecting the rights of veterans to employment across the United States of America; and

WHEREAS, The Veterans Employment and Training Service does its jobs in every state by employing State Directors that work with the states, local veterans service organizations, community based organizations, local governmental entities and local employer; and

WHEREAS, It is essential that each State Director have a comprehensive knowledge of the state economy, veterans service organizations, including the American Legion, local service providers, and each state workforce agency; and

WHEREAS, Each State Director must have a strong cohesive relationship with state Workforce agencies, therefore, in most cases the State Directors are hired from the state Workforce agency; and

WHEREAS, Title 38, U.S Code 4103 (s)(2) requires each Director for Veterans Employment and Training for a State shall, at the time of appointment, have been a bona fide resident of the State for at least two years; and

WHEREAS, The residency requirement as stated in Title 38 USC has served this nation well and has enhanced the success of all programs administered by the Veterans Employment and Training Services; and

WHEREAS, For many years the American Legion has been a strong supporter of keeping the residency requirement part of federal law; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion vigorously oppose any effort to change the current law that requires the residency requirement for the State Directors, United States Department of Labor, Veterans Employment and Training Service.

Resolution No. 349: Oppose Any Weakening of the Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialist and Local Veterans Employment Representative
Origin: Texas
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economics
(Consolidated with Resolution No. 268 (TX))

WHEREAS, Throughout the nearly two hundred and twenty-year history of The United States, the men and women of this nation have served in the armed forces in the interest of the collective body of states, united under a central federal government, "to provide for the common defense"; and

WHEREAS, These men and women served The United States under the constitutional authority vested in, and by direction of, the President of The United States; and

WHEREAS, It has been the finding of numerous surveys and studies that, for a variety of reasons, the vast majority of veterans of the armed forces of The United States are disadvantaged in pursuing civilian employment and careers, and that veterans helping veterans has proven to be extremely effective; and

WHEREAS, It is altogether fitting and proper that such programs of employment assistance for veterans be provided by direction of, and subject to oversight by, the Congress of The United States to ensure that all veterans who served The United States in uniform in time of war and peace are afforded such services in a uniform manner following completion of their service and return to the several states; and

WHEREAS, PL 107-288 has revised Title 38 to eliminate the requirement that DVOP/LVER staff be veterans and serve only veterans and to reduce the direction and control of such employment assistance programs while relinquishing the direction of veterans services to the discretion of the governors of the several States and/or contracting of such services to for-profit organizations; and

WHEREAS, PL 107-288 also eliminates the requirement that DVOP/LVER staff be assigned based on veteran intake and veteran population, and creates half time DVOP positions, thereby eliminating positions available to serve veterans or allowing positions to be assigned at the discretion of the individual state workforce agency, which may or may not adequately assign positions; and

WHEREAS, Such devolution of program responsibility will then be based on each state's elected officials' whim and may result in either limited services or such variations in employment assistance provided disabled veterans as to make a mockery of the expressions of the Congress found in Title 38 USC; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008 That The American Legion seek national legislation that will require LVER and DVOP staff be veterans and serve only veterans, and that the assignment of these positions to local one stop centers be based on veteran populations; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That all DVOP and LVER staff members be Federal employees.

Resolution No. 350: Support Employment and Reemployment Rights of National Guard and Reservists Returning from Deployment
Origin: Convention Committee on Economics
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economics

WHEREAS, Over seven years of war has caused record high deployment rates of citizen soldiers, who have the responsibility of maintaining civilian employment while waiting for the call to serve their country; and

WHEREAS, Many of these soldiers, who struggle daily to balance their dual military and civilian lives, have returned home from deployment to find that same contract of balance not upheld by their employers; and

WHEREAS, According to the Department of Defense's Status of Forces study released in November 2007, among post-9/11 returning Reservists and National Guard, nearly 11,000 were denied prompt reemployment and more than 20,000 lost seniority, pay, and other benefits awarded to them through their dedicated service; and

WHEREAS, It was the intent of Congress in enacting the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act of 1994 that no veteran be denied employment, reemployment, advancement or discrimination in employment for serving their country in the interest of protecting our nation; and

WHEREAS, As currently drafted, the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act of 1994 fails to adequately support military personnel upon their return to civilian employment as countless employers have violated the rules laid out in Title 38 of the United States Code; and

WHEREAS, Legislation is under consideration that will help ensure that servicemembers and veterans are promptly reinstated in their civilian jobs when they return from tours abroad; and

WHEREAS, This Legislation would strengthen the protections in current law to ensure that servicemembers' and veterans' employment and reemployment rights are effectively enforced under the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act of 1994 (USERRA); now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion supports and urges Congress to adopt and enforce the provisions as outlined in USERRA; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion supports the amendment and strengthening of USERRA to ensure that National Guard and Reservists receive the employment and reemployment rights afforded to them through their dedicated service to the country and as required under law.

Resolution No. 353: Federal Procurements and Contracts for Veteran-Owned Business
Origin: Convention Committee on Economics
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economics

WHEREAS, Small business assistance to all veterans who have honorably served our country is a veteran's benefit that dates back to the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion seeks and supports legislation to require a 5 percent goal, with set-aside and sole source authority, for Federal procurements and contracts for businesses owned and operated by veterans, including those small businesses owned by reserve component members who have been or may be called to active duty, or may be affected by base closing and reduction in our military forces; and

WHEREAS, Benefits to all veterans have always included assistance in creating and operating veteran-owned small businesses; and

WHEREAS, Due to a small number of service-disabled and veteran-owned businesses that are representative in the Federal procurement small business area; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That any veteran business development assistance should include funding to assist Federal agencies in reaching their 5% veteran procurement goals; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion seek to develop a user-friendly veteran procurement database for use by all Federal government agencies; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion support that the Federal government and the Department of Defense utilize its available technology to create, fund and support a veteran procurement-spending database within the Department of Defense that would finally bring veteran-owned and service-disabled veteran-owned businesses on equal footing with all other small business special interest groups when it comes to Federal procurement opportunities; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion encourages the Congress of the United States to require a reasonable set-aside of federal procurements and contracts for businesses owned and operated by Veterans and for those Veteran businesses affected by base closings and reduction in our military forces.

Resolution No. 356: Support Improvements to Veterans Employment and Training Service (VETS) Training Standards
Origin: Convention Committee on Economics
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economics

WHEREAS, The National Veterans Training Institute (NVTI) has provided several thousand training sessions for State Employment Security Agency staff, Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS) staff and Department of Defense staff; and

WHEREAS, NVTI provides standardized training for veterans' advocates providing employment and training services; and

WHEREAS, NVTI's positive impact on the quality of services provides veterans with well-trained vocational specialists across the country; and

WHEREAS, Public Law 109-461 stipulates that newly hired Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) Specialists/Local Veterans' Employment Representatives (LVERs) must attend the NVTI to be trained for their position within 3 years of hiring; and

WHEREAS, A newly hired individual in the position can retain their position for two and a half years before they are required to begin training to ensure that graduation is within the 3 year hiring period; and

WHEREAS, Untrained personnel have direct interactions with veterans seeking assistance for employment and are unable to properly assist the veteran; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, on August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion support that newly hired DVOP/LVER must be trained at NVTI within the first year of employment; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion support that all untrained DVOP/LVER staff at the time of enactment of new legislation must be trained within 1 year.

Resolution No. 361: Support Tax Credit for Certain Employers
Origin: Convention Committee on Economics
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economics

WHEREAS, More than 265,300 members of the armed forces reserves and National Guard served on active duty during Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm (1990-1991); and

WHEREAS, According to Defense Manpower Data Systems, since 1991, an additional 63,938 members of the reserve components served on active duty during the military operations known as Southern Watch, Joint Forge and Uphold Democracy; and

WHEREAS, Currently another 80,000 reserve components are supporting Operation Enduring Freedom; and

WHEREAS, The vast majority of those men and women left jobs and careers in the civilian community to answer the call of their country; and

WHEREAS, Many of those veterans and their families suffered economic hardship as the result of that service because the military salaries they received while on active duty were often much lower than the salaries paid by their civilian employers; and

WHEREAS, While some employers were able to make up the difference between their employee's military pay and their regular civilian salary, most employers could not, or would not, make up the difference between the two; and

WHEREAS, There is no incentive for employers to make up the difference between an employee's military pay and their regular salary; and

WHEREAS, The financial disadvantages suffered by many members of the armed forces reserves and National Guard who are called to active duty could very possibly serve as a major impediment to the recruitment and retention of a competent reserve component of the military total force; and

WHEREAS, The recent downsizing of armed forces resulted in increased reliance on reserves and National Guard units for military operation; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion sponsor and support legislation providing tax credits to any employer who either pays an employee who is called to active duty their regular salary or who makes up the difference between that person's military pay and their regular civilian salary.

Resolution No. 363: Capital for Service-Disabled Veterans and Reservists
Origin: Convention Committee on Economics
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economics

WHEREAS, President Bush has recently signed into law a bill which calls in part for identification of gaps in financial services to Veterans Service Disabled Veterans and Reservists; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion is very cognizant of the great need to provide small business financing to Veterans and especially Service Disabled Veterans, and Disabled Reservists; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Treasury has an existing financing program known as the New Markets Tax Credit (NMTC) Program which offers investors a thirty-nine percent (39%) tax credit for supporting loans and investments under the NMTC Program; and, in turn, can offer attractive interest rates and technical assistance for Veterans; and

WHEREAS, Certain Small Business Administration (SBA) loan programs known as the SBA Express and the Community Express were approved by the SBA Administrator in 2006 for use with the NMTC Program; and

WHEREAS, SBA instituted the Patriot Express loan Program for Veterans and Service Disabled Veterans and Reservists in 2007, but neglected to approved use of NMTC with the Patriot Express Program; and

WHEREAS, NMTC transactions to date have overwhelming benefited transactions greater than $5,000,000 and have not been directed to small business working capital loans, especially for Veterans and Service Disabled Veterans and Reservists; and

WHEREAS; The original spirit of the NMTC legislation passed in the year 2000 was to support all Small Business; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion recommends that in order to support better access to Capital for Veterans, Service Disabled Veterans and Reservists, The American Legion will support modifications to the NMTC Program which will direct the Department of Treasury to allocate at least twenty percent (20%) of all annual NMTC awards to applicants who designate Small Business transactions and that do not exceed $1,000,000 in transaction size; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, The American Legion requests that the Small Business Administrator take all necessary and reasonable actions to insure that its Patriot Express loans qualify to participate in the NMTC Program in a fashion similar to their SBA Express and Community Express Programs.

Referred to the Standing Commission on Economics

Resolution No. 273 (TX): Support revision of Veterans Employment and Training Service Performance standards

Received and Recorded

Resolution No. 257 (NY): Oppose VA National Call Center for VA Education Benefits Employment and Training Service (VETS)

Rejected

Resolution No. 265 (TX): Credit Service of Military Retirees towards Federal Employment Benefits

Convention Committee on Other Economic Matters

Approved

Resolution No. 44: Time Constraint with the Montgomery GI Bill
Origin: Indiana
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economics

WHEREAS, The Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944—the original G.I. Bill; and

WHEREAS, This G.I. Bill helped our veterans to pursue a higher education; and

WHEREAS, The Montgomery G.I. Bill is now in place; and

WHEREAS, The benefit of a higher education is still viewed as a vehicle to economic security; and

WHEREAS, The present ten year window to utilize this benefit should not exist; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That there be No time constraint with regard to the Montgomery G.I. Bill.

Resolution No. 220: Federal Procurements and Contracts For Veteran-Owned Business
Origin: Utah
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economics
(Consolidated with Resolution No. 49 (MA))

WHEREAS, Small business assistance to all veterans who have honorably served our country is a veteran's benefit that dates back to the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944; and

WHEREAS, Benefits to all veterans have always included assistance in creating and operating veteran-owned small businesses; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion seek and support legislation to require a 5% goal, with set-aside and sole source authority, for federal procurements and contracts for businesses owned and operated by service-disabled veterans and business owned and controlled by veterans, including those small businesses owned by reserve component members who have been or may be called to active duty, or may be affected by base closing and reductions in our military forces.

Resolution No. 221: Veterans Entrepreneur Training Program
Origin: Utah
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economics
(Consolidated with Resolution No. 8 (UT))

WHEREAS, In 1989 The American Legion Department of Utah received a grant for $91,447.00 from the U.S. Small Business Administration to be used to fund entrepreneurial training for veterans desiring to implement and own a small business venture; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion program was designed to encourage and motivate veterans to explore their management and organizing abilities required in formulating sound business plans and help in obtaining needed financing for successful implementation of a business; and

WHEREAS, Cooperation with The American Legion and the U.S. Small Business Administration with local entities that entail schools with Small Business Development Centers, Chambers of Commerce, business owners, State Industrial Development Departments, private consulting support systems, lending institutions, and instruction and information from existing and retired business owners can contribute to The American Legion programs following three-fold objectives:

1. To reach out to as many veterans as possible to explore their business interests;
2. To select a reasonable number of veterans to participate based on entrepreneurial potential and application of business successful criteria;
3. To provide selected veterans with education programs, support workshops and counseling to assist in forming sound business plans; and

WHEREAS, Classes should be held at educational establishments during evening or weekend hours and should include the veteran entrepreneur's spouse or partner whenever possible having proved to be an unequivocal asset to the veteran's success; and

WHEREAS, Due to older age individuals separating from active military, plus activation of Guard and Reserve units who have immediate family obligations that interrupt a service person's business or employment while deployed can completely change their future professions when returning could necessitate a training program to fit their changed needs; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion request the Small Business Administration and Congress make funding available to reinstate the Veteran's Entrepreneur Training Program grants to help those who are in need in return to productive civilian professions.

Resolution No. 222: Reaffirm Support of the Small Business Administration's Office of Veterans' Business Development
Origin: Utah
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economics

WHEREAS, Small business assistance to veterans who have honorably served this country is a traditional veterans' benefit that dates back to the passage of the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944; and

WHEREAS, There is increasing demand among veterans for assistance in creating and operating veteran-owned small businesses; and

WHEREAS, Successful veteran-owned small businesses are good for the economy in the local community, state, and nation; and

WHEREAS, Estimates are that the Small Business Administration's Office of Veterans' Business Development needs $15 million in FY 2010 to enable it to implement a nationwide community based entrepreneurial assistance program to veterans and self employed members of the reserves and National Guard; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion support increased funding for the efforts of the Small Business Administration's Office of Veterans' Business Development in its initiatives to provide enhanced outreach and specific community based assistance to veterans and self employed members of the Reserves and National Guard; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion support legislation that would permit the Office of Veterans' Business Development to enter into contracts, grants, and cooperative agreements to further its outreach goals and develop a nationwide community based service delivery system specifically for veterans and members of reserve components of the United States military.

Resolution No. 223: Veterans' Small Business Opportunities
Origin: Utah
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economics

WHEREAS, Small business ownership and entrepreneurship are the backbone of the American economy and foundation for democracy; and

WHEREAS, Veterans, through their service, have cultivated experiences, skills, and self-discipline that make them well suited for self-employment; and

WHEREAS, Congress enacted the Veterans Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development Act of 1999 (P.L. 106-50) to assist veteran and service-disabled veteran owned businesses by creating the National Veterans Business Development Corporation; and

WHEREAS, The National Veterans Business Development Corporation is no longer fully engaged in providing entrepreneurial education, services and advocacy to promote and foster successful veteran entrepreneurship within the veteran business community; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion no longer support the continuing initiatives or existence of the National Veterans Business Development Corporation.

Resolution No. 351: Allow Current Spouses of Deceased Veterans to Gain Eligibility for the Department of Veterans Affairs Home Loan Program
Origin: Convention Committee on Economics
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economics

WHEREAS, The current eligibility for a home loan from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Home Loan Program for spouses are: an unremarried spouse of a

veteran who died while in service or from a service-connected disability, or are a spouse of a serviceperson missing in action or a prisoner of war; and

WHEREAS, It is unfair for a veteran's spouse only to become eligible for the Department of Veterans Affairs home loan if the veteran dies of a service-connected disability; and

WHEREAS, Veterans are more likely than not the primary income provider for the household and contribute the majority of payments to mortgages for the family; and

WHEREAS, Upon death of a veteran, the mortgage payments must continue to be paid and the burden falls on the widow/widower. Many times the spouse elects to relocate to a smaller, more economical establishment, that is within their means; now, therefore, by it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion support that current spouses of deceased veterans gain eligibility for the VA Home Loan program.

Resolution No. 352: Amend the Federal Student Financial Aid Means Test for Veterans
Origin: Convention Committee on Economics
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economics

WHEREAS, All students who seek federal student financial aid must report their wages of the prior year to determine the level of funding that they are eligible to receive; and

WHEREAS, The current formula requires that the prior year's taxable wages be applied to the current year of application; and

WHEREAS, The basis behind this formula is to predict financial trends of students so they receive the accurate amount of funding that would allow them to attend school; and

WHEREAS, The majority of Reservists and National Guard members who are enrolled in school have low income while in school, and when called to active duty earn a substantially greater income during that time; and

WHEREAS, Once veterans' are discharged and re-enroll in college, their student financial aid status is severely diminished, unless they serve in a combat zone; and

WHEREAS, Recently discharged veterans, within 1 year of discharge, who enroll in post-secondary education are greatly disadvantaged in regards to federal student financial aid; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, on August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion support amending the Federal Student Financial Aid 'means test' to make exempt a recently discharged veteran's prior year income towards receiving federal financial aid.

Resolution No. 354: Home Loan Guaranty Program
Origin: Convention Committee on Economics
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economics

WHEREAS, The Serviceman's Readjustment Act of 1944 (P. L.346, 78th Congress) established, among other things, a home loan guaranty program that was to be administered by the Veterans Administration, which later became the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA); and

WHEREAS, The two purposes of the original program were to help returning World War II veterans in their readjustment to civilian life and to stimulate the economy by assisting those veterans in obtaining mortgage financing from the private sector; and

WHEREAS, Because of the popularity and success of the DVA Loan Guaranty Program, and because it benefited the American economy as well as eligible veterans, Congress decided to make that five-year pilot program permanent; and

WHEREAS, To date the DVA has guaranteed over 18 million loans to eligible veterans and has, for the most part, maintained a default rate that compares very favorably with the default rate on private sector mortgages; and

WHEREAS, While many of the veterans who have participated in this program could have obtained private sector financing, many others could not have qualified for conventional mortgages; and

WHEREAS, Congress has made numerous changes over the years in attempts to improve this VA program, including authorizing certain pilot programs; and

WHEREAS, In 1992 Congress authorized DVA to conduct a three-year pilot program which allowed VA to guarantee Adjustable Rate Mortgages (ARMs); and

WHEREAS, During that three-year period the DVA's ARM program became very popular and accounted for approximately 22 percent of all loans guaranteed by the DVA; and

WHEREAS, One of the attractive features of an ARM is that it allows the borrower to obtain a home loan with an interest rate below that of a normal fixed rate loan, thus allowing that person to select the financing option that best suits their needs; and

WHEREAS, Because the DVA's ARM program was underwritten much more conservatively than ARMs available in the conventional market, very few loans went into default; and

WHEREAS, Although the DVA and Congress were in favor of making the program permanent, the Congressional Budget Office blocked a permanent extension because it believed that the cost would be $36 million per year, even though the DVA had proven that it could run that program at a lower cost; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion reaffirm its strong support for the Department of Veterans Affairs' Loan Guaranty Service and its Programs; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion support legislation to reinstate the Department of Veterans Affairs' Adjustable Rate Mortgage program; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion support any administrative and/or legislative efforts that will improve and strengthen the Loan Guaranty Service's ability to serve America's veterans.

Resolution No. 355: Homestead Privilege to Veterans
Origin: Convention Committee on Economics
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economics

WHEREAS, Since the Revolutionary War America has honored her veterans by granting them homestead acreage because of their service to our country; and

WHEREAS, Congress is considering granting Alaskan Native Vietnam veterans limited rights to obtain public land allotment; and

WHEREAS, Veterans are the most homeless group of the population that ever existed in our country; and

WHEREAS, Our federal government has ample public lands available to grant veterans homestead lots; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That Congress be petitioned to open up homestead privileges to United States military veterans on a priority basis.

Resolution No. 357: Mandatory Funding for the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Veterans Affairs (VA) Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) Homeless Program
Origin: Convention Committee on Economics
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economics

WHEREAS, The Homeless Veterans Comprehensive Assistance Act of 2001 (P.L. 107-95) codified the HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) program, which provides permanent housing subsidies and case management services to homeless veterans with mental and addictive disorders; and

WHEREAS, Under the HUD-VASH program, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) screens homeless veterans for program eligibility and provides case management services to enrollees; and

WHEREAS, HUD allocates rental subsidies from its Housing Choice Voucher program to the VA, which then distributes them to the enrollees; and

WHEREAS, A decade ago, there were approximately 2000 vouchers earmarked for veterans in need of permanent housing. Today, less than half that amount is available for distribution; and

WHEREAS, The Veterans Benefits, Health Care, and Information Technology Act of 2006, P.L 109-461, again authorizes appropriations for additional rental assistance vouchers for veterans beginning with 500 vouchers in fiscal year 2007 and increasing the number to 2,500 by fiscal year 2011; and

WHEREAS, At a time when the number of homeless veterans on any given night hovers at approximate 200,000, the need for safe, affordable, and permanent housing is imperative; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion support funding for vouchers for the HUD-VASH program be set aside and transferred to the VA Secretary from amounts made available for rental assistance under the Housing Choice Voucher program.

Resolution No. 358: Support Major Enhancements for the Montgomery GI Bill
Origin: Convention Committee on Economics
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economics

WHEREAS, The American Legion first drafted the GI Bill of Rights, which was enacted by Congress in 1944; and

WHEREAS, The nation now has a Total Force military policy that requires the operational integration and deployment of active-duty, National Guard and Reserve forces; and

WHEREAS, All members of the Total Force endure the same hardships and sacrifices, including National Guard and Reserve personnel who contribute to every operational mission and deployment; and

WHEREAS, The original purposes of the GI bill are sound and supportable; and

WHEREAS, Many Selective Reserve members have significant readjustment challenges upon discharge from active-duty service; and

WHEREAS, The current structure and management of the MGIB by the Departments of Defense and Veterans' Affairs causes administrative confusion and inequitable allocation of benefits; and

WHEREAS, A grateful nation should honor the service of all members of the Total Force GI Bill that is compatible with the nation's Total Force military policy; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That Congress should move the Montgomery GI Bill—Selected Reserve from Title 10, the United States Code (USC) to Title 38 USC; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the annual appropriations for the MGIB and the MGIB-SR become one annual appropriation within the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA); and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That VA has administrative authority for both the MGIB and the MGIB-SR Bill.

Resolution No. 359: Transitional Housing Allotments for Returning Combat Veterans
Origin: Convention Committee on Economics
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economics

WHEREAS, Unlike the active duty component that are stationed stateside in the final months of their service, Guardsmen and Reservists are fully employed in a combat zone up until the final day that they redeploy back to the Continental United States; and

WHEREAS, At the demobilization site, returning veterans undergo approximately 3 weeks of physicals, transition programs, reunion with family members and inventory accountability. There is little time for these service members to start the process of finding a home, apartment, room or other dwelling; and

WHEREAS, Families are sometimes unaccommodating to returning veterans and cannot or refuse to house them. Young veterans are living with their families, friends, in hotels, in cars, and are homeless; and

WHEREAS, Many single soldiers stay at hotels and are burning up their savings earned over the prior year. Veterans are having to enter unfair leases/agreements just to find a place to stay because they are in dire need; and

WHEREAS, Veterans are ineligible to live on campus housing due to the likelihood of returning in the middle of a semester and are unable to start college for 4 more months. For 9 months out of the year, universities are in their lengthy fall and spring semester terms and these young men and women can't restart their academic careers until the next term starts; therefore, they are not eligible to live on campus; and

WHEREAS, Approximately 90,000 Guard and Reserve have been re-entering the private sector each year since 2001; and

WHEREAS, A 180-day 'buffer' period will allow veterans to transition back in to the civilian sector with much greater ease and will prevent homelessness; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion support the creation of a program by Congress for returning veterans similar to Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH), for housing upon return from mobilization for 180 days.

Resolution No. 360: Housing Preference for Low-Income Veterans in the Department of Housing and Urban Development
Origin: Convention Committee on Economics
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economics

WHEREAS, There are currently millions of elderly and low-income veterans and veterans' families; and

WHEREAS, Because many of those veterans are living on fixed incomes, it is often difficult if not impossible for them to provide adequate housing for themselves and their families; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) operates affordable housing programs for senior citizens; and

WHEREAS, Many needy and deserving veterans are unable to participate in those housing programs because of long waiting lists; and

WHEREAS, A large percentage of those occupying HUD housing are legal and illegal aliens who have never served this country's armed forces; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix Arizona August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion supports any legislative or administrative initiative that will give preference to American veterans and their families in obtaining housing through the programs of the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Resolution No. 362: Funding for Homeless Veterans
Origin: Convention Committee on Economics
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economics

WHEREAS, The Congress of the United States has passed legislation to fund the United States Department of Veterans Affairs Health Care for Homeless Veterans program, the Homeless Domiciliary Care Program and the Compensated Work Therapy (CWT) rehabilitation program; and

WHEREAS, Some of these programs have been in partnership with veterans service organizations and other non-profit organizations; and

WHEREAS, There are estimates ranging from 154,000 to 300,000 veterans who are currently homeless; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion has been an active partner with the United States Department of Veterans Affairs with the Health Care for Homeless Veterans and CWT programs; and

WHEREAS, These programs have proved to be successful in rehabilitation of the veteran in helping him/her to become a productive citizen again; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion renew its commitment to assisting homeless veterans and their families; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion continue to support the efforts of public and private sector agencies and organizations with the resources necessary to aid homeless veterans and their families; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion seek and support any legislative or administrative proposal that will provide medical, rehabilitative and employment assistance to homeless veterans and their families; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion shall call on the Congress of the United States to keep the Health Care for Homeless Veterans program, the Homeless Domiciliary program and the Compensated Work Therapy Rehabilitation program funded separately from general United States Department of Veterans Affairs funding.

Referred to the Standing Commission on Economics

Resolution No. 238 (NY): Homeless Veterans Assistance Fund

Received and Recorded

Resolution No. 6 (UT): Support Reinstatement of Funding for Veteran Upward Bound
Resolution No. 52 (MA): Support the Small Business Loan Program in the VA
Resolution No. 209 (IL): Raise Ceiling on VA Home for Two Legally Married Eligible Veterans
Resolution No. 224 (UT): Support the Small Business Loan Program in the VA

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN KOUTZ: Mr. Commander, I, James E. Koutz of Indiana, a duly elected and registered delegate of this convention move for the adoption of this report. Respectfully submitted.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: Do I hear a second?

…Second.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: I have a motion and a second on the floor. Any discussion? What? Hearing none. All those in favor by the normal sign of aye. Opposed? Same sign. The Report of Economics is adopted.

Presentation: Employer of the Year Awards for Hiring Veterans
Martin Conatser, Illinois, National Commander

It's now time to extend special recognition to three employers for their outstanding record of making jobs available to veterans. That special recognition comes in the form of The American Legion Employer of the Year Award. We recognize three such organizations as 2007 Employers of the Year. One award is for companies employing 50 or less people, another for companies employing 51 to 200 people, and the third for companies with more than 200 workers. Each is nominated by a post and advances through department and national competition levels. The award for the 50 employees or less category goes to Millennium Security Services, Inc. of Roswell, Georgia. Accepting the award is Mr. Michael Mizell.

ANNOUNCER: The award reads: The American Legion National Award for Outstanding Employer of Veterans for 2007. Presented to Millennium Security Services, Inc. for an exceptional record in the employment of veterans. Presented at the 90th Annual National Convention, Phoenix, Arizona.

MR. MICHAEL MIZELL: Thank you to this wonderful organization, it's great to be among so many veterans. I myself, am a 60% service-connected disabled veteran, and 100% owner of Millennium, which is a service-disabled veteran owned small business. Just recently, in 2006, we got into the market in the federal arena, and I was looking at a report that I saw this morning. I want to tremendously send out a great comment of thanks to this organization for its efforts on behalf of all the veteran businesses that are out there. Not just my industry, which is the security industry, but we've got a long way

to go, and I look forward to supporting this organization and its efforts. I looked at a report that showed over 1,100 security contracts in the federal arena, and as you well know, those federal agencies that are out there have a goal of at least 3% for veteran contracting. Of those 1,100 contracts, only 35 have been awarded to veteran-owned businesses. So we've got a lot of work to do in front of us, and I look forward to supporting this organization as we go forward to do exactly that.

A great thank you to this organization for this award. It will go in the highest place of honor in my office. A great thanks to the state of Georgia, to Commander Faye, the 'Great White Ghost.' Love her to death and love the organization, and I too am a Paid-Up-For-Life Member of American Legion Post #1 in Atlanta. And I was told this morning that I was out of uniform. That I could not put that blame on my lovely wife who is here with me of 32 years. Sometimes I forget what I ate for breakfast, let alone where I am. But from the bottom of my heart, I want to tell you that I will continue to do everything in my power as I grow my business and as I grow my organization to put veterans first, because there are no greater assets in this country than the American vets who come home and need to go to work, because they are the best trained, best qualified, and the most devoted employees that an employer could ever have. Thank you very much. (*Applause*)

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: The award in the 51 to 200 category goes to Prologistix in Sanford, North Carolina. Accepting the award is North Carolina Past Department Commander, Richard W. Neville and current Department Commander James C. Mayhew.

ANNOUNCER: The award reads: The American Legion National Award for Outstanding Employer of Veterans, 2007. Presented to Prologistix for an exceptional record in the employment of veterans. Presented at the 90th Annual National Convention, Phoenix, Arizona.

RICHARD W. NEVILLE: Commander Marty, on behalf of the great state of North Carolina, our Department Commander Jim Mayhew and myself, we graciously accept this award. It is great that our organization recognizes those companies that do hire the veterans. We'll present this to their representative at our Fall Conference in October at Raleigh, North Carolina. Again Commander, we thank you and the Committee. Thank you very much. (*Applause*)

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: In the large employer category of 200 plus employees, the award goes to CSX Transportation of Jackson, Florida. Accepting on behalf of the company are Margaret Downey and Steve Toomey.

ANNOUNCER: The award reads: The American Legion National Award for Outstanding Employer of Veterans, 2007. Presented to CSX Transportation for an exceptional record in the employment of veterans. Presented at the 90th Annual National Convention, Phoenix, Arizona.

MARGARET DOWNEY: Well thank you so much for this honor and the opportunity to share in this wonderful convention. Steve and I have been so impressed by the people that we've met and by the passion and the commitment that you have for what you do.

CSX is proud to accept this award for the Large Employer of the Year, especially on behalf of our employees who are current serving in the Middle East conflict. In fact, one in every five employees at CSX is a military veteran, and CSX is proud that our railroad has been a critical link in our country's military readiness for almost a 150 years. Just in the last three years, CSX has moved over 25,000 carloads of equipment and munitions in support of overseas deployment and military training. We have also found that military men and women make great employees. We have a current work force of 36,000 employees spread across 23 states in the eastern half of the United States. 8,000 of those employees are veterans, and we have a goal this year to award 25% of our hires, which will be a little more than 4,000 jobs this year, to military veterans. So why do we hire so many veterans? For many reasons, but several include the fact that they are disciplined, they have tremendous leadership qualities, they're committed, they have strong ethics, they're well trained and safety conscious, and they know how to get the job done right.

CSX also believes and supports its current National Guard and Reserve employees in many ways. We pay differential compensation to our patriotic volunteers who are called up to serve their country, and ensure the continuance of medical benefits for the

families of our deployed employees. So again, thank you so much to The American Legion for programs like this that recognize and support the superior efforts of both employees and employers who support their veterans. Thank you again. (*Applause*)

Presentation: American Legion Local Veterans Employee Representative of the Year Award
Martin Conatser, Illinois, National Commander

Well, I think she said an awful lot. Maybe we should given her two awards. Another employment award that I'm proud to present goes to the top local veterans employment representative in the nation. The award honors individuals who have done such a remarkable job of placing veterans in jobs, even their peers take notice. The Employment Service Award to the Local Veterans Employment Representative for 2007 goes to Gerard Donnelly of Patchogue, New York.

ANNOUNCER: The award reads: The American Legion National Award for Outstanding Local Veterans Employment Representative Of The Year, 2007. Presented to Gerard Donnelly for your outstanding service to the veterans of the state of New York.

GERARD DONNELLY: Thank you Marty, thank you Legionnaires. It's Patchogue, it's an old Indian name. That's one of the things on Long Island that it's famous for. I'd like to say, thanks. It's a special honor indeed to be here before this union, this American Legion group. For the past 90 years you've done an outstanding job for veterans everywhere, and here I am to get an award for doing my job and helping veterans and making a difference in getting them back to work. I accept this award on behalf not only of myself, but all of the LVERs in the country. It's an enjoyable job. It's nice to be able to make a difference almost every day, and when you make that difference you get an award and a reward everyday you do it. This presentation here for me comes a little bit strange. About 24 years ago, my son was awarded a special award in New York as a Boys State attendee. So here I am, it just took me 24 years to get back and get a chance to do the same thing 24 years later, but thank you again, it's a pleasure to be here. Thank you sir. (*Applause*)

Presentation: Disabled Veterans Outreach Program of the Year Award
Martin Conatser, Illinois, National Commander

The American Legion is also proud of the men and women who work on behalf of disabled veterans seeking employment. This year, I'm happy to present the Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) of the Year Award to Don Collins of Lubbock, Texas.

ANNOUNCER: The award reads: The American Legion National Award for Outstanding Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Of The Year 2007. Presented to Don Collins for your outstanding service to the veterans of the state of Texas.

DON COLLINS: Thank ya'll for this great honor. It's kind of humbling. I had a great privilege of my daughter is in the audience. She's taking pictures. She's serving on the USS *Nimitz*, and her commanding officer let her off to come see her dad get this prestigious award.

September 22nd my youngest son will report for recruit training at the Marine Corps Recruit Depot in San Diego to start his Marine career. He's following in his dad's footsteps. I was a Marine too. One of the biggest honors I had was when they finally called me a Marine, and this is my second one. I hope ya'll can understand me. I do have a west Texas dialect, and English is a second language to me, but I have been working on it. No man stands alone. I have a lot of ladies and gentlemen that has helped with this award. It just so happens my name got put on it, and I can't tell you how much it's really humbling. And it just makes me want to do more, and thank you very much. (*Applause*)

Presentation: Outstanding Employer of the Disabled of the Year Award
National Commander Conatser, Illinois, National Commander

When the Employer Awards Program was established in 1947, its purpose was to recognize employers across the country who had established outstanding records in the employment and retention of the disabled. In doing so, we are able to educate employers

and the general public about the many positive aspects of hiring disabled persons, and thereby increase employment opportunities. The Outstanding Employer of the Disabled Award goes to REACH of Denton of Denton, Texas. Here to accept the award is Murphy Hardinger.

ANNOUNCER: The award reads: The American Legion National Award for Outstanding Employer of Disabled Veterans, 2007. Presented to REACH *of Denton for an exceptional record in the employment of disabled veterans. Presented at the 90th Annual Convention, Phoenix, Arizona.*

MURPHY HARDINGER: Wow, thanks, this is great. REACH of Denton is the resource center on independent living. It's actually an acronym that stands for Rehabilitation, Education, and Advocacy for Citizens with Handicaps. We prefer REACH. We do a broad range of services to people with all types of disabilities. One of the joys the job has been to provide those services to veterans and their families who may also be disabled. It makes it so that the community is more barrier-free, which is our main goal. But it also empowers the individuals to add back to their vocabulary, things such as self respect, self esteem, and dignity. And that's what we try to do, and looks like we're doing a pretty good job. Thank you again, it's good to be here. Thank you. (*Applause*)

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: On behalf of every veteran in America, I extend to you our congratulations and say those words all workers love to hear, "Thank you for a job well done." Please tell other businesses about the reliability and work ethic of disabled veterans, and congratulations again.

Presentation: Employment Service Office of the Year Award
Martin Conatser, Illinois, National Commander

Continuing with our recognition of those who assist our fellow veterans in finding meaningful work, it is time to honor the top employment service office of the year. The award goes to Worksource Career Center of Lubbock, Texas. Accepting the award is Joel Saucedo.

ANNOUNCER: The award reads: The American Legion National Award to the Outstanding Employment Service Office of the Year, 2007 is presented to Worksource Career Center for outstanding service to the veterans of the state of Texas.

EARNEST MERRITT: To National Commander, he said, he didn't butcher my name, but the other gentleman that works real closely with me, Joel Saucedo. On behalf of the Lubbock Worksource, way down in west Texas, we gladly accept this award. Someone once said, you have to do the right thing, and doing the right thing is putting veterans to work, and that's what we do, and we will continue to do it. And again to the National Commander and The American Legion, we gladly accept this award. Thank you. (*Applause*)

Presentation: Homeless Veterans Outreach Award
Martin Conatser, Illinois, National Commander

The charge of The American Legion is to provide service to veterans and their families. That service includes helping our homeless veterans as they try to reenter society as productive self-supporting citizens. I thank God that we have agencies across America that initiate programs to assist our homeless veterans. I'm honored to present the Homeless Veterans Outreach Award to one department of The American Legion that goes above and beyond the call of duty to help our homeless veterans. The department receiving the award is the Department of Wisconsin. Accepting the award is Clifton M. Sorenson, Chairman, Homeless Task Force Committee, The American Legion of Wisconsin, Portage.

ANNOUNCER: The award reads: The American Legion National 2007 Homeless Veterans Outreach Award is presented to The American Legion Family Department of Wisconsin for the year 2007 for exceptional efforts toward the elimination of the homelessness among the veterans in the state of Wisconsin. Presented at the 90th Annual National Convention, Phoenix, Arizona.

CLIFTON SORENSON: Thank you Commander. I'm overwhelmed and humbled by this award. And first of all, thanks for this honor first go to my supportive and patient wife and children: my son Bradley, Marines; Jason, who is active Army in Japan; and

Christian, serving on the home front. Thank you Commander and all of the Past Commanders who have supported this Homeless Veterans Task Force since Commander Conley initiated it. My gratitude to The American Legion's Economics Commission: Chairman, Jim Koutz, Joe Sharpe and Ron Chamrin. Thanks to Wisconsin Department Commanders for their support and participation in the Task Force since its inception. And my heartfelt thanks to the dedicated Department of Wisconsin American Legion family members and other Department Task Force members who worked together, one, to make sure that the needs of our fellow veterans who are homeless are met, and secondly, to support the lofty goal of the elimination of homelessness among our veterans.

I am proud to report to this Convention we are succeeding. Over the past five years with the help of The American Legion family, homelessness among our fellow veterans has dropped 22%. But the challenge continues. There still are homeless veterans right here in Phoenix, Arizona, right there in Portage, Wisconsin, and throughout the nation. Working for our homeless veterans is not just what we do, it's who we are. Thank you for allowing me to do this work. May God bless you and continue to bless the United States of America. (*Applause*)

Presentation: The Older Workers Award
Martin Conatser, Illinois, National Commander

The American Legion strongly believes that older workers are valuable economic resources of proven skills, stability, and experience. We also encourage employers to hire and retain older workers in their work force. The purpose of the Older Workers Award is to recognize the employers for their outstanding record of hiring and retaining older workers. The award is presented to Holophane Company of Newark, Ohio. Accepting the award is Mrs. Claudia Weaver. If she'll come up here and explain how I just destroyed that name.

ANNOUNCER: The award reads: The American Legion National Award for Outstanding Employee of Older Workers, 2007 is presented to the Holophane Company for an exceptional record in the employment of older persons. Presented at the 90th Annual National Convention, Phoenix, Arizona.

CLAUDIA WEAVER: Well, it is the Holophane Company and we're a department out of Acuity Brands in Georgia. But Holophane makes light fixtures, you've probably walked under several street lights, gymnasiums, industrial, airports, parking lots. We're everywhere. I want to thank you all for this opportunity to be here. Veterans are my passion and to be in a room of this many veterans is just overwhelming for me, and I'm very, very appreciative. Our company appreciates this award and if you are ever in Newark, Ohio, which is a small town east of Columbus, we have a beautiful veterans wall. It was my project, but everyone that is a veteran in our company was invited to submit a picture of themselves in uniform, and I put that on the wall. We have over 100, and it's beautiful, and thank you all very much. (*Applause*)

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: Thank you again for all your dedication to employing our veterans. The Chair now recognizes Joe Caouette of New Hampshire, Chairman of the National Convention Committee on Americanism for the purpose of making a report.

Report: Convention Committee on Americanism
Joseph Caouette, New Hampshire, Chairman

Thirty-nine members of your Convention Committee on Americanism met at 8:30 a.m. on Sunday, August 24, 2008, in the Hyatt Regency, Phoenix, Arizona to discuss matters of Americanism-related resolutions assigned to the committee.

The committee organized by electing Joseph E. Caouette, Jr. (NH), Chairman; James M. Gates (CO), Vice Chairman; and Theodore J. Howarth, Jr. (NJ) as the Secretary.

The committee discussed 46 resolutions that were assigned to the group. The resolutions that were considered continue to reflect the desire by the Departments of The American Legion to address matters of patriotism and government, and to maintain strong general Americanism programs that compliment the organization and benefit the Nation.

A motion was made by William Moore, Jr. (KY) and seconded by Charles Tucker (GA) that the Convention Committee on Americanism authorize the chairman and secretary to sign and deliver the report, on behalf of the committee, to the National Convention. The motion was approved.

Forty-six resolutions were considered with 27 being approved, 6 approved as consolidated, and 13 referred to the standing commission on Americanism.

Approved

Resolution No. 281: Internal Security of the United States
Origin: Convention Committee on Americanism
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism

WHEREAS, The American Legion has always recognized the importance of investigations that expose the truth about subversive activities that may harm or seek to destroy our constitutional government; and

WHEREAS, The Central Intelligence Agency and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, both security agencies of this Nation, perform functions essential to the maintenance of our national security; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion supports the thorough background investigation of all applicants for federal employment to expose possible links to subversive activities or membership in subversive organizations that contribute to the weakening of the internal security of the United States; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion urges the President and the Congress of the United States to immediately take such action as may be appropriate and necessary to effectively fund and staff federal intelligence and security agencies at a level that will help protect us from foreign espionage, organized crime, terrorism and subversive activities; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges the President and the Congress of the United States to approve legislation and take executive action as necessary to deny subversive individuals or groups the ability to infiltrate and subsequently destroy our government agencies and institutions through federal employment.

Resolution No. 284: English Language be Used in Naturalization Ceremonies
Origin: Convention Committee on Americanism
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism

WHEREAS, Resolution No. 567, titled, "Naturalization Ceremony," was passed by delegates to the 56th annual National Convention of The American Legion in 1974 and opposed any change in the Judicial Naturalization Ceremony for new United States citizens; and

WHEREAS, In recent years, naturalization ceremonies have been conducted in foreign languages; and

WHEREAS, Several resolutions have been passed by The American Legion which urged Congress and the various state legislatures to declare the English language as the official language of government in the United States; and

WHEREAS, Amendments to the Immigration and Naturalization Act make the traditional naturalization ceremony conducted by a U.S. District Judge optional, thereby removing an integral and indelible step in the naturalization process; and

WHEREAS, Legionnaires and Posts of The American Legion have traditionally participated in naturalization ceremonies as part of the Legion's Americanism program; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion encourages the United States Attorney General to issue a directive making naturalization ceremonies by a U. S. District Judge a mandatory step in the process of acquiring U.S. citizenship; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges Congress, the U.S. Justice Department and the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services of the

Department of Homeland Security to require that all Citizenship Naturalization Ceremonies be conducted in the English language.

Resolution No. 285: Illegal Aliens
Origin: Convention Committee on Americanism
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism

WHEREAS, Current law, as established within "The Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986" (IRCA) has not achieved the results desired by The American Legion for addressing the many and varied problems created by illegal aliens; and

WHEREAS, A 1996 study by the Center for Immigration Studies estimated the cost of the IRCA amnesty after 10 years at $76.7 billion for the 2.7 million illegal aliens who received amnesty, which represents a government subsidy of $28,727 for each illegal alien; and

WHEREAS, A 2004 study by the Center for Immigration Studies found that as a result of illegal aliens accessing government programs upon being granted amnesty, the government's net fiscal burden would increase an additional $18.6 billion;

WHEREAS, U.S. Customs & Border Protection (CBP) reported that each day in 2007 an average of 1,239 aliens were intercepted as inadmissible to enter, 2,411 were apprehended for illegal entry and they seized an estimated 7,388 pounds of narcotics; and

WHEREAS, Illegal aliens in the United States create serious economic problems which include increased welfare costs, adverse effects on the American labor market, and the expense of detecting, detaining, processing and deporting of apprehended illegals; and

WHEREAS, Veterans are displaced from employment by the employment of illegal aliens; and

WHEREAS, There must be a broad exchange of information and related action among those Executive Departments responsible for dealing with various aspects of immigration law and illegal aliens; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion wishes to reiterate its opposition to any type of amnesty ("legalization") program that excuses and rewards the law-breaking illegal aliens; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion supports strict enforcement of employer sanctions as called for in current employment laws that assess heavy penalties on employers who knowingly hire illegal aliens; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the Department of Homeland Security be provided the monies necessary to ensure both the thorough performance of its responsibilities and the security of the borders of the United States; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That aliens illegally in the U.S. should be denied Social Security benefits, unemployment compensation, and other types of public assistance; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion encourages the United States government to hold respective agency heads accountable in guaranteeing the desired communications and exchanges of technical information concerning the various aspects of the illegal alien issue.

Resolution No. 286: Immigration Reform
Origin: Convention Committee on Americanism
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism

WHEREAS, The inability and/or unwillingness of certain government agencies to enforce immigration quotas, laws and policies has resulted in an influx of illegal immigrants into this country; and

WHEREAS, In 2006 the Department of Homeland Security, Office of Audits stated that each year more than one million aliens attempt to illegally enter the United States without proper documentation, or enter legally but violate their visas; and

WHEREAS, The Federal Bureau of Prisons documented that in April 2008 approximately 26–percent of the federal prison population possessed other-than U.S. citizenship; and

WHEREAS, Many illegal aliens resort to document fraud to establish their employability, their residency and eligibility for this country's social services, often displacing U.S. workers; and

WHEREAS, According to a study from the Center for Immigration Studies, a cost of $2,700 for each illegal household was imposed upon the United States federal budget, creating a fiscal burden of $10.4 billion in 2002; and

WHEREAS, The federal government has failed to mandate the enforcement of existing immigration laws; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion be unalterably opposed to illegal immigration; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion encourages the Congress of the United States, state governments, the U.S. Justice Department and the Department of Homeland Security to take necessary action to stop the massive flow of illegal immigration into this country by means that include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. **Hire and train additional U.S. Border Patrol agents with employment preference afforded former members of the United States Armed Forces; and**
2. **Encourage the United States Congress to require the Department of Homeland Security to work with state and local law enforcement agencies to enforce immigration laws in this country; and**
3. **Require that all legal aliens carry U.S. Government issued identification documents that are made as secure as technology allows and that are verifiable by any employer or benefit agency through an easy-to-access central database; and**
4. **Petition the President of the United States and the Congress to enact measures to effectively halt the smuggling of illegal immigrants into this country; and**
5. **Grant law enforcement agencies at the local, state and federal levels the authority to work together to apprehend and incarcerate, where appropriate, illegal immigrants, especially those determined to have ties to terrorist groups and organizations; and**
6. **That, as appropriate, military resources be employed to assist in stopping the flow of illegal aliens into this country, and all of the resources of the United States of America be utilized to enforce the security of our country's borders; and, be it finally**

RESOLVED, That The American Legion continue an information campaign to alert its members, federal and state elected officials, and the general public of the massive influx into the country of illegal immigrants, the consequences of mass immigration and how it will affect the standards of living in these United States.

Resolution No. 287: Injured or Disabled Non-Citizen Veterans Applying for Naturalization
Origin: Convention Committee on Americanism
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism

WHEREAS, During our Nation's call to arms in the preservation of our liberty, our Nation has been blessed with the services of individuals from many nations who cherish liberty; and

WHEREAS, The Congress of the United States has recognized that through service in our Armed Forces these servicemen have forged a bond with our Country; and

WHEREAS, Under the present Immigration and Nationality Act the non-citizen soldier is allowed to apply for naturalization only upon completion of three (3) years of active duty; and

WHEREAS, Some non-citizen servicemen were injured or became disabled while on active duty and were medically discharged from the Armed Forces for said injuries or medical conditions prior to the completion of three years of active duty service; and

WHEREAS, Admitting men and women with service-connected disabilities into the U.S. does not increase the taxpayer's obligation, since all U. S. veterans, without regard to their citizenship or residence, are currently entitled to both disability compensation and medical care from the Department of Veterans Affairs; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion support legislation that will amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to allow non-citizen veterans with less than three years of active duty and who were legally in the United States at the time of enlistment, to seek naturalization if they are injured or their injuries aggravated while on active duty with the U.S. Armed Forces, resulting in a discharge under honorable conditions.

Resolution No. 288: School Prayer
Origin: Convention Committee on Americanism
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism

WHEREAS, Americans have historically believed in seeking God's protection and guidance through prayer; and

WHEREAS, The value of expressing spiritual convictions through public prayer has been recognized as a firm basis on which to conduct public proceedings; and

WHEREAS, Supreme Court decisions during the early 1960's have had the effect of severely restricting the practice of any manner of public prayer even though these decisions simply addressed prescribed or compulsory prayer; and

WHEREAS, This restriction is most evident in our nation's public schools where a concurrent moral and spiritual decline is clearly manifested; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion reaffirms its support for an amendment to the Constitution of the United States that would permit voluntary prayer in public buildings, including public schools and at other public gatherings; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That Congress pass legislation to promote the concept of school prayer in order to ensure that our Nation's public school children have a daily opportunity to pray.

Resolution No. 289: Constitutional Amendment to Protect the Flag of the United States
Origin: Convention Committee on Americanism
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism

WHEREAS, The American Legion has campaigned diligently for the passage of an amendment to the Constitution of the United States to protect the symbol of our Nation, the Flag of the United States, from physical desecration; and

WHEREAS, Part of that campaign has included the founding of The Citizens Flag Alliance, Inc., a coalition of civic, veteran, business and fraternal organizations which have come together to persuade Congress to propose a flag amendment; and

WHEREAS, The legislatures of all 50 states have indicated by memorial resolutions to the U.S. Congress that such an amendment to the U.S. Constitution is needed in view of the 1989 decision of the United States Supreme Court (*Texas v. Johnson*) that invalidated all flag protection laws; and

WHEREAS, Surveys have shown that over 80% of the American people support the passage of a flag amendment; and

WHEREAS, Since the time of the American Revolution millions of men and women have proudly defended our country under the "Stars & Stripes" and, as a last gesture of gratitude this emblem of our country is placed upon the coffin of veterans as a token of respect for services rendered to a grateful nation; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion continue to urge the Congress of the United States to propose and approve an amendment to the U.S. Constitution that would allow the Congress to prohibit the physical desecration of the Flag of the United States; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion continue its efforts through affiliation with The Citizens Flag Alliance, Inc. to bring to a successful conclusion the grassroots campaign to amend the Constitution of the United States of America in order to return to the people their right to protect the Flag from acts of physical desecration.

Resolution No. 291: Conscientious Objectors Tax Diversion
Origin: Convention Committee on Americanism
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism

WHEREAS, The Constitution of the United States of America provides for the common defense of all citizens; and

WHEREAS, The freedoms we enjoy and the security of our Nation that we desire rests on the individual determination of each of us to help preserve it; and

WHEREAS, Legislation has been introduced in the Congress that would allow conscientious objectors to elect to have their taxes spent for non-military purposes; and

WHEREAS, Implementation of such a practice could affect military strength and national security; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion urges Congress to oppose legislation that would give conscientious objectors a voice in diverting monies from military spending.

Resolution No. 292: Oppose Changes to "Title V of the Immigration and Nationality Act"
Origin: Convention Committee on Americanism
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism

WHEREAS, The 1996 Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act, that includes Title V of the Immigration and Nationality Act, has proven to be a valuable tool in keeping terrorists from our shores; and

WHEREAS, A most vital section of this law allows for the gathering of secret evidence that identifies the person as a terrorist or links the person to a known terrorist organization or group; and

WHEREAS, Information obtained by the United States intelligence community on individuals identified as terrorists or having links to terrorist organizations were reportedly used in some INS administrative deportation hearings; and

WHEREAS, Title V of the Immigration and Nationality Act authorized the use of evidence, the source of which must remain secret and allowed for the use of this secret evidence in INS administrative deportation hearings; and

WHEREAS, Revealing the sources of the secret evidence would compromise intelligence gathering methods, operations, personnel and jeopardize national security; and

WHEREAS, Denial of this vital evidence in administrative deportation hearings could result in known terrorists remaining in the United States, posing a threat to our national security; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion opposes any change to "Title V of the Immigration and Nationality Act" (8 U.S.C. 1531-1537) that would require revealing the source(s) of secret evidence used in the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services, Department of Homeland Security, administrative deportation hearings.

Resolution No. 293: Oppose Amnesty for Illegal Immigrants
Origin: Convention Committee on Americanism
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism

WHEREAS, Consideration is being given to granting amnesty to millions of illegal immigrants currently in the United States of America; and

WHEREAS, The number of illegal immigrants currently in the United States is uncertain, with estimates ranging between 10 – 20 million; and

WHEREAS, Any policy that leads to millions of illegal immigrants receiving legal permission to remain in the United States, whether such a policy is disguised in euphemistic language such as "legalization," "regularization," "a guest worker program," "earned status adjustment," or "earned access," is in fact an amnesty for having broken the laws of the United States; and

WHEREAS, Amnesty for illegal aliens will encourage still more people to immigrate illegally to this country and will further erode respect for the law; and

WHEREAS, The 1986 amnesty involving 2.7 million immigrants is estimated to have cost the American taxpayers $78 billion; and

WHEREAS, The amnesty proposals being contemplated today are much larger – encompassing some or all of the estimated nine to eleven million illegal immigrants living in the United States; and

WHEREAS, Because of existing family reunification policies that allow immigrants to bring extended family members to this country, an amnesty program could make millions more people eligible to immigrate in the coming decade and at much greater cost than that of the amnesty granted in 1986; and

WHEREAS, Neither the Administration nor Congress have explained how a massive amnesty program for illegal immigrants will benefit the American public; and

WHEREAS, Numerous authoritative studies have shown that mass immigration has harmed the interests of millions of Americans, including veterans, by undercutting wages and working conditions, overburdening local schools, public health care facilities and other vital social institutions; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion opposes legislation that would result in the granting of amnesty and legal residency, in any form or by any name, to illegal immigrants currently in the United States; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion encourages the federal government to provide the needed resources to enforcement agencies tasked with curtailing illegal immigration in this country.

Resolution No. 294: Oppose Financial Aid for Illegal Alien Students
Origin: Convention Committee on Americanism
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism

WHEREAS, "The Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986" (IRCA) has not achieved the results desired by The American Legion for addressing the many and varied problems created by the large number of illegal aliens in this country; and

WHEREAS, A 1996 analysis by the Center for Immigration Studies estimated the cost of the IRCA, after 10 years, at $76.7 billion for the 2.7 million illegal aliens granted amnesty representing a government (taxpayer) subsidy of $28,727 for each illegal alien; and

WHEREAS, Delegates to the Eighty-Sixth National Convention of The American Legion held in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, Sept. 1, 2, 2004, adopted Resolution No. 422, that encouraged the Congress of the United States to restrict the eligibility of illegal aliens for publicly funded assistance; and

WHEREAS, Proposed legislation would cancel deportation orders against and grant permanent residency (amnesty) to illegal aliens under the age of 21, who have been in the United States for five consecutive years and who have been enrolled in a middle or secondary school in the United States; and

WHEREAS, Certain members of Congress have attempted to amend the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 (IIRIRA), to allow illegal aliens to attend state universities at in-state tuition rates; and

WHEREAS, Such legislation would place American citizens at a comparative disadvantage by allowing illegal aliens to receive in-state tuition rates, federal education grants and financial assistance while American citizens have to pay higher out of state tuition rates if they are not residents of the state in which they attend a state institution of higher education; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion believes that "rewarding" illegal aliens with amnesty and financial aid will increase the flow of illegal aliens into the United States

increasing the financial burden on law-abiding taxpayers who would ultimately pay for these services; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion opposes any legislation or executive order that would allow illegal aliens and others who are in this country illegally to receive in-state tuition rates, federal or other government education grants and or financial assistance to attend a college or university in the United States.

Resolution No. 295: Reform of the Student Visa System
Origin: Convention Committee on Americanism
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism

WHEREAS, Participants in both the 1993 and 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center were reportedly in the United States on student visas; and

WHEREAS, There were more than 582,984 foreign students in the United States during the 2006/07 academic year, according to the Institute of International Education; and

WHEREAS, After the 1993 attack, Congress required the former Immigration and Naturalization Service to develop a means to keep records of foreign students, and, specifically, their whereabouts; and

WHEREAS, The Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) was developed to provide tracking, monitoring, and access to accurate and current information on non-immigrant students and exchange visitors; and

WHEREAS, SEVIS was designed to enable schools and program sponsors to transmit electronic information and event notifications via the Internet to the monitoring agencies of the federal government throughout a student or exchange visitor's stay in the United States; and

WHEREAS, Many educators formerly opposed a similar program, but now support full implementation of the SEVIS program; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion encourages the Congress of the United States to mandate that the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (I.C.E.) Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) continue and be aggressively administered by the responsible agency of the federal government; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That institutions of higher education failing to cooperate with the federal government in monitoring and tracking foreign students be ineligible to receive federal student loan monies benefiting foreign students.

Resolution No. 296: Amend the "Temporary Status" Portion of the Immigration Act of 1990
Origin: Convention Committee on Americanism
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism

WHEREAS, Temporary Protected Status (TPS) is a classification granted to eligible nationals of designated countries who are temporarily present in the United States when natural disaster or political turmoil in their country interferes with their plans to return; and

WHEREAS, A person from a designated country who is in the United States is eligible to be granted TPS only by establishing that the designated country was the applicant's last place of habitual residence; and

WHEREAS, TPS beneficiaries are granted work authorization during the TPS period and for any extensions of the designation; and

WHEREAS, TPS was created by the Immigration Act of 1990; and

WHEREAS, Anyone in the United States from the designated country is eligible for TPS, whether they entered the country in violation of our immigration law in order to find work or for other reasons, or violated the law by staying in the country and taking a job illegally, or were a bona fide visitor; and

WHEREAS, Currently seven countries are designated as TPS; and

WHEREAS, Conferring TPS status on persons illegally in the United States rewards them with a work permit that legitimizes their illegal activity; and

WHEREAS, Any person who can establish that they fear persecution if forced to return to their country of origin is eligible for asylum in the United States; and

WHEREAS, TPS allows aliens to live in the United States without our being able to learn their true identities or background information; and

WHEREAS, The events of September 11, 2001 have proven that we can no longer afford to accept people into our country without thorough background checks; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion encourages the Congress of the United States to amend the Temporary Protected Status section of the Immigration Act of 1990 to limit its coverage to foreign visitors legally in the United States.

Resolution No. 297: Tracking Arrival and Departure of Foreign Visitors to the United States
Origin: Convention Committee on Americanism
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism

WHEREAS, Each day, foreign visitors flood our nation's ports of entry; and

WHEREAS, In the aftermath of terrorist attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001, it was revealed that our government did not have the ability to determine when a foreign visitor leaves the United States or overstays their visa; and

WHEREAS, President Bush, during his 2002 State of the Union address, said that (we will) "use technology to track the arrivals and departures of visitors to the United States"; and

WHEREAS, The technology exists to place biometric information on visas to identify visitors, keep track of their entry and exit, and confirm compliance with the terms of their entry; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion encourages the Congress of the United States to provide agencies of the federal government with the necessary resources to track the arrival and departure of foreign visitors to the United States.

Resolution No. 298: Support Fairness for Immigrant Spouses
Origin: Convention Committee on Americanism
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism

WHEREAS, The American Legion was founded by veterans who were concerned about the welfare of dependents of servicemen and women killed as a result of their service in World War I; and

WHEREAS, Current immigration law requires an immigrant spouse to be married to a citizen of the United States for two years before proceeding with a petition for legal permanent resident status; and

WHEREAS, The immigrant spouse's petition for permanent legal residence is canceled when the citizen spouse dies before the two-year threshold is reached; and

WHEREAS, Current law allows immigrant spouses of U.S. military personnel who die in combat or as a result of combat to continue their original petition for permanent resident status; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion is committed to caring for the families of the service men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice by giving their lives in the furtherance of the interests of the United States; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion encourages the Congress of the United States to amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to allow immigrant spouses of U.S. military personnel who die in training on military installations to continue their petition for permanent resident status without the current two-year eligibility restriction; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the Immigration and Nationality Act be amended to waive the fees for posthumous citizenship assessed to surviving family members who lose a relative in hostile combat while a member of the U.S. Armed Forces and who has a pending application for United States citizenship.

Resolution No. 299: Reform of the Non-Immigrant Visa Program
Origin: Convention Committee on Americanism
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism

WHEREAS, The Non-Immigrant Visa program has been used by terrorists and others with unlawful intentions to gain entry into the United States; and

WHEREAS, The fading distinction between the U.S. Non-Immigrant Visa (NIV) and Immigrant Visa (IV) programs has the potential to substantially undermine this country's legal immigration system; and

WHEREAS, According to the Department of Homeland Security, Office of Immigration Statistics the number of people from foreign lands admitted temporarily to this country under the NIV program over the past 20 years has increased from approximately 12 million in 1987 to 33.7 million in 2006; and

WHEREAS, Our national security has been breached by issuing visas for travel to this country without thorough background checks, resulting in the death of thousands of U.S. citizens and others on September 11, 2001; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion encourages the Congress of the United States to establish numerical limits for all immigration categories of temporary workers to help prevent labor market distortions; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the U.S. Department of State be required to enforce the completion of a thorough background check and also interview each candidate for a U.S. visa prior to issuing said visa; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the U.S. Department of State be responsible for tracking and arresting those visa recipients who perpetrate fraud and/or are visa overstays and that they be turned over to the Department of Homeland Security for removal/deportation processing.

Resolution No. 300: Oath of Renunciation and Allegiance
Origin: Convention Committee on Americanism
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism

WHEREAS, Since the earliest days of our republic, Congress has exercised its constitutional power to establish a uniform Rule of Naturalization; and

WHEREAS, The Rules of Naturalization, as established by Congress, requires an oath of allegiance and renunciation of all prior allegiances as a condition of naturalization; and

WHEREAS, The Oath of Renunciation and Allegiance serves as a contract between the applicant for citizenship and the United States government in which the applicant, in return for the benefits and privileges received, agrees to

1. Renounce all allegiance to any foreign state or sovereign;
2. Support and defend the U.S. Constitution and laws of the United States of America against all enemies, both foreign and domestic;
3. Bear "true faith and allegiance" to the United States of America; and
4. Bear arms, perform noncombatant service, or perform work of national importance on behalf of the United States of America; and
5. Take this oath without mental reservation or purpose of evasion; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion believes that naturalization is a privilege, not a right, to be granted only in accordance with the conditions established by the Congress; and

WHEREAS, A "Citizenship Roundtable" was created by NEC Resolution 28 (Oct. 1999) titled "Citizenship Naturalization Process" that established a working relationship between The American Legion and the Hudson Institute, an internationally recognized public policy research not-for-profit 501c(3) organization; and

WHEREAS, The Citizenship Roundtable opposes any revisions to the oath of allegiance that would dilute or eliminate the applicant's commitment, under oath, to the United States of America; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion opposes any and all changes to the Oath of Renunciation and Allegiance, as used in naturalization ceremonies, that would dilute or eliminate any of the following important and necessary elements of the oath:

1. **Renunciation of all allegiances to foreign states or sovereignties;**
2. **Support for and defense of the U.S. Constitution and laws of the United States of America against all enemies, foreign and domestic;**
3. **Bear 'true faith and allegiance' to the United States of America; and**
4. **Bear arms, perform noncombatant service, or perform work of national importance on behalf of the United States of America; and**
5. **Take this oath without mental reservation or purpose of evasion; and, be it finally**

RESOLVED, That The American Legion encourages the Congress of the United States to prescribe the language that is used in the oath of renunciation and allegiance for purposes as outlined in the Immigration and Nationality Act.

Resolution No. 301: Prohibit Use of Foreign Issued Forms of Identification
Origin: Convention Committee on Americanism
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism

WHEREAS, The Mexican government has reportedly issued approximately 2 million identification cards known as the "matricula consular" to its nationals, whether they are in the United States legally or illegally during the past two years; and

WHEREAS, The Mexican government is lobbying state and local government jurisdictions and banks for acceptance of the card in the United States, especially in areas where Mexican illegal aliens are concentrated; and

WHEREAS, The Center for Immigration Studies reported that the cards are being issued without authenticating the documents used to obtain the cards and that safeguards are not in place to prevent multiple issuance of the matricula consular cards to the same individual; and

WHEREAS, The matricula consular is useful in the United States only for illegal aliens, since legal immigrants, by definition, already possess U.S. government-issued documents, including official forms of identification; and

WHEREAS, The acceptance of the matricula consular card by many commercial institutions, state and local government agencies in the United States has prompted other Latin American countries (Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Brazil and Columbia) to consider issuance of similar forms of identification for its residents living illegally in the United States; and

WHEREAS, Officials with the Federal Bureau of Investigation were quoted in the *Washington Post* as saying "there are major criminal threats posed by the cards and a potential terrorist threat;" and

WHEREAS, An obvious objective of the effort to gain universal acceptance for the cards is to establish quasi-legal status for an estimated 10-12 million illegal aliens in the United States; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion encourages the Congress of the United States and the state legislatures to pass legislation that would prohibit acceptance of certain foreign-issued forms of identification, to include the Mexican government-issued "Matricula Consular" card, when it is determined said documents lack credibility, authenticity and accuracy of information when used in the application process for federal, state and local government-sponsored public services; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion encourages businesses in the private sector, including financial institutions, to refrain from accepting as valid identification, foreign issued documents that are not determined to be acceptable forms of identification; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That an agency of the federal government, determined by Congress and working in cooperation with other agencies having responsibilities for the administration and enforcement of immigration laws and policies, be tasked with determining the acceptability of forms of identification issued by foreign governments.

Resolution No. 302: Oppose Dual Allegiance; Enforce Citizenship Oath
Origin: Convention Committee on Americanism
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism

WHEREAS, The American Legion considers the Oath of Renunciation and Allegiance to be a contract between the applicant for citizenship and the United States government in which the applicant, in return for the benefits and privileges received, agrees to

1. Renounce all allegiance to any foreign state or sovereign;
2. Support and defend the U.S. Constitution and laws of the United States of America against all enemies, both foreign and domestic;
3. Bear "true faith and allegiance" to the United States of America; and
4. Bear arms, perform noncombatant service, or perform work of national importance on behalf of the United States of America; and
5. Take this oath without mental reservation or purpose of evasion; and

WHEREAS, In taking the Oath of Renunciation and Allegiance, the immigrant pledges to transfer their full political allegiance from his or her birth nation to the United States of America; and

WHEREAS, According to immigration experts, the great majority of immigrants applying for U.S. citizenship come from countries that "allow or encourage multiple citizenship;" and

WHEREAS, From the beginning of this Republic, Americans have regarded the principle of dual allegiance as inconsistent with the principles of American constitutional democracy; and

WHEREAS, Many immigrant-sending countries, including Mexico, are actively promoting dual allegiance; and

WHEREAS, To retain allegiance to another constitution besides the U.S. Constitution, is inconsistent with the moral and philosophical foundations of American constitutional democracy, thus violating our core principles as outlined in the Oath of Renunciation and Allegiance; and

WHEREAS, The integrity of the Oath of Renunciation and Allegiance and the integrity of the entire citizenship naturalization process are challenged or compromised by the continuing increase in the number of U.S. citizens who hold multiple national allegiances; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion and the Hudson Institute, an internationally recognized public policy research not-for-profit 501c(3) organization, have established a working relationship called the "Citizenship Roundtable" to address concerns about the naturalization process in the United States; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion encourage the Congress of the United States to enact measures to prevent dual citizenship by naturalized U.S. citizens.

Resolution No. 303: Call for Action on Illegal Immigration Issue
Origin: Convention Committee on Americanism
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism

WHEREAS, The American Legion, since its inception in 1919, has called for limits on legal immigration, expressing its concern that large numbers of immigrants arriving in this country would be unable to effectively assimilate into American society; and

WHEREAS, It is estimated by immigration reform groups and reported by news sources that more than 10 million individuals are in this country illegally with an estimated 500,000 illegal aliens arriving each year, thereby threatening the fabric of American society with economic hardship and fostering concerns about acts of terrorism; and

WHEREAS, Americans are becoming increasingly frustrated by what they see as the Federal government's failure to stop this invasion and the actions by some states to provide taxpayer funded services and other benefits to illegal aliens thus providing additional incentives for more foreigners to enter this country illegally; and

WHEREAS, Citizen action groups such as the Minutemen have formed to monitor the borders and report illegal border crossing to enforcement agencies, creating an appearance of vigilante operations that increases the likelihood of confrontation between these groups and illegal immigrants and criminal smuggling operations; and

WHEREAS, Few candidates for public office or their political parties address the issue of illegal immigration or express a willingness to take a position—either pro or con—as to their stand on illegal immigration in the United States because of the likelihood of alienating a significant number of voters in their jurisdiction; and

WHEREAS, The failure by the Federal Government to address this matter threatens the security and future of the United States; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion, on behalf of all Americans and future generations of Americans, urge from Congress an immigration reform policy that will secure the borders against those individuals attempting to enter this country illegally; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion seize every opportunity to request an accountability of our elected officials in implementing and enforcing federal and international laws and treaties to stem the flood of illegal aliens across our borders; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That all candidates seeking public office and the two major party platforms express publicly to the American people their positions and solutions to this grave danger to our country's stability; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion use all possible means to bring solution to the challenges faced by the United States because of illegal immigration.

Resolution No. 304: The Boy Scouts of America and the Department of Defense
Origin: Convention Committee on Americanism
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism

WHEREAS, The Eighty-Second National Convention of The American Legion in Milwaukee, Wisconsin passed Resolution 334 titled "Support of Boy Scouts of America" which reiterated The American Legion's longstanding support of the Boy Scouts of America in its efforts to maintain and practice traditional family values with regard to their membership and their leadership standards; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion, as chartered by the United States Congress, pledges to "transmit to posterity the principles of justice, freedom and democracy"; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion endorses the concept that the perpetuation of these principles may best be initiated by an enlightened public achieved through the implementation of educational practices offered in the homes, in our schools and through public wide programs organized and developed for this purpose by organizations like the Boy Scouts of America; and

WHEREAS, The Supreme Court of the United States has upheld the constitutional right of the Boy Scouts of America to set their own standards and membership policies because an indispensable part of being free is the right of individuals to hold moral positions and to associate with others who share those positions; and

WHEREAS, Despite the Supreme Court having ruled in favor of the Boy Scouts' freedom to associate with those sharing their moral views and to not associate with those who do not share their moral views, the Boy Scouts have been subjected to a continual barrage of attacks by groups and individuals holding opposing views; and

WHEREAS, These opposition groups have been successful in eliminating the Scouting program from all branches and installations of the U.S. Armed Forces; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion believes that this unrelenting assault against the Boy Scouts is not a unique occurrence but a part of an orchestrated effort to denigrate, damage and systematically destroy traditional American values, as embodied in the Boy Scouts of America, The American Legion, the Flag of the United States, the Pledge of Allegiance, and numerous other embodiments of Americanism; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion express its steadfast opposition to Department of Defense policies that prohibit the chartering of Boy Scout units by components of the Armed Forces of the United States and prohibit the use of Department of Defense installations and facilities worldwide by the Boy Scouts of America; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion use every executive, legislative and judicial avenue available to restore longstanding policies of cooperation between the Department of Defense and the Boy Scouts of America that will allow Boy Scout units the right to use DOD facilities and to authorize components of the active duty military, National Guard and reserve units to charter or sponsor Boy Scout units without fear of legal reprisal.

Resolution No. 305: A Plan to Reduce the Illegal Population in the United States
Origin: Convention Committee on Americanism
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism

WHEREAS, The American Legion has urged the Congress of the United States to adopt an immigration policy that will eliminate social, economic and population problems resulting from our country's failure to secure our nation's borders and to enforce its immigration and employment laws; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion is opposed to any amnesty or legalization program, policy or directive that would grant illegal immigrants legal permission to remain in the United States, thereby rewarding them for criminal behavior while penalizing those immigrants following lawful immigration channels; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion believes our society cannot absorb the more than 12 million individuals that are in this country illegally without causing irreparable harm to our economy, our national security and the welfare of future generations of Americans; and

WHEREAS, Differing opinions on the issue between the houses of Congress and between illegal immigration proponents and opponents, like The American Legion, have resulted in a national debate that is being carried out in the media and on street corners across America; and

WHEREAS, It is the opinion of The American Legion that no effective immigration reform plan, to include any temporary worker programs, can be adopted without first securing our nation's borders; and

WHEREAS, It is universally thought by both proponents and opponents of illegal immigration that immediate deportation by force of all illegal aliens in the United States is not a workable solution to the issue with estimates for such action, according to the Center for Immigration Studies (CIS), totaling perhaps as much as $206 billion over the next five years; and

WHEREAS, CIS, an independent non-partisan 501(c)(3) research think tank devoted exclusively to research and policy analysis of the impacts of immigration on the United States, has proposed an alternative to mass deportation or mass legalization of illegals, seeking instead the attrition of the illegal population through law enforcement, stronger border security and efforts to encourage illegal aliens to leave the U.S. of their own accord; and

WHEREAS, The CIS plan, which uses the government's own cost estimates, could cut the illegal population by nearly half in five years with an additional investment of less than $2 billion, or $400 million per year; and

WHEREAS, The provisions of the CIS plan have been reviewed by the National Americanism Commission and are determined to be compatible with the provisions of American Legion resolutions on the subject of illegal immigration; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion endorses the

report by the Center for Immigration Studies (CIS) titled "Attrition Through Enforcement—A Cost-Effective Strategy to Shrink the Illegal Population" and adopts the action as proposed in the report as a portion of its strategy for reform of the U.S. immigration policy; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion work with CIS to obtain Congressional approval and national acceptance of the plan which includes the following:

- **Mandatory workplace verification of immigration status**
- **Measures to curb misuse of Social Security numbers and IRS identification numbers**
- **Cooperation between federal, state and local law enforcement officials**
- **Increased screening of foreign visitors**
- **Increase non-criminal removals through increased interior enforcement; and**
- **Discourage illegal settlement by adopting additional state and local legislation.**

Resolution No. 306: Support the Pledge of Allegiance
Origin: Convention Committee on Americanism
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism

WHEREAS, In October 1970, The American Legion's National Executive Committee passed Resolution 13 titled "Defense and Respect for the United States Flag," that voiced The American Legion's support for continuing the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance in the nation's public schools; and

WHEREAS, In recent years, several states have passed legislation to encourage and authorize the reciting of the Pledge of Allegiance in the schools within their state; and

WHEREAS, In 1954, The Congress of the United States reaffirmed the influence on government by a supreme power when it revised the Pledge of Allegiance by inserting the words "under God" as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America and to the Republic for which it stands, one Nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all; and

WHEREAS, Liberal judicial opinions and media coverage have questioned the propriety of reciting the Pledge of Allegiance in public schools in the United States, citing the unconstitutionality in references to God; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion, the Congress of the United States, and many other groups and organizations open their regular meetings by reciting the Pledge of Allegiance; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion reiterate its continuing support for the Pledge of Allegiance in its current form, voicing opposition to any and all attempts to revise it beyond the version approved by Congress in 1954; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion encourage the nation's schools to include the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance by teachers and students in regular school activities and events; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion, at all levels, continue its unyielding support for the Pledge of Allegiance and its provisions of national loyalty by using all means practical to inform Americans about the belief in and the reliance in God by our nation's founders in forming our democratic Republic.

Resolution No. 307: Oppose Amnesty for Illegal Aliens and Their Employers
Origin: Convention Committee on Americanism
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism

WHEREAS, An investigation by state and federal authorities in Utah "uncovered an alarming new crime spree involving illegal aliens and identities stolen from victims under

the age of 12"; and, thousands of companies were found to be paying salaries to the social security numbers of Utah children on public assistance under the age of 12; and

WHEREAS, Fraudulently obtained social security numbers frequently belong to American citizens and legal residents including children; and

WHEREAS, An illegal alien arrested at the Swift meat packing plant in Utah justified identity theft by stating it was the only way she could "legally" work in the United States; and

WHEREAS, Identity theft and document fraud are felonies; and

WHEREAS, Comprehensive immigration reform plans could grant amnesty to illegal aliens who are committing felonies by using the social security numbers and identities of American children; and

WHEREAS, Comprehensive immigration reform plans could grant amnesty to businesses who have failed to pay taxes on salaries paid to illegal aliens; and

WHEREAS, Comprehensive immigration reform plans would make it a crime for federal employees who are processing an illegal alien's paperwork to report the use of fraudulent documents, identity theft or tax evasion to law enforcement authorities; and

WHEREAS, Comprehensive immigration reform plans could leave the victims of identity theft to recover their identities at the cost of hundreds of hours of work and thousands of dollars while criminal illegal aliens could be granted amnesty, given a new social security number and eventually rewarded with American citizenship; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion reiterates its opposition to any and all forms of amnesty for individuals in this country illegally; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge the federal government to hold accountable those employers who knowingly hire illegal aliens, especially those aliens showing suspected fraudulent documents, thus suggesting the possibility that identity theft may have occurred; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That illegal aliens convicted of felonies relating to the use of fraudulent identity documents, especially those of children, in order to obtain employment in the United States be promptly deported to their country of origin; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the Congress of the United States assist victims of identity theft perpetrated by illegal aliens by providing the victims with assistance in reclaiming their identity while erasing derogatory information, such as criminal convictions resulting from the misuse of the victim's identity records; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion adamantly oppose provisions of any comprehensive immigration reform legislation that grants amnesty or forgiveness to the employers of illegal aliens.

Resolution No. 308: Oppose Flag Code Change-Conduct During Hoisting, Lowering or Passing of the Flag
Origin: Convention Committee on Americanism
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism

WHEREAS, The American Legion is recognized as one of the country's foremost authorities on the proper display of the United States flag; and

WHEREAS, Title 4, Chapter 1, Section 9, United States Code previously stated, "During the ceremony of hoisting or lowering the flag or when the flag is passing in a parade or in review, all persons present except those in uniform should face the flag and stand at attention with the right hand over the heart. Those present in uniform should render the military salute. When not in uniform, men should remove their headdress with their right hand and hold it at the left shoulder, the hand being over the heart. Aliens should stand at attention. The salute to the flag in a moving column should be rendered at the moment the flag passes."; and

WHEREAS, Public Law 110-181, 110th Congress, amended Title 4, Chapter 1, Section 9, United States Code to read: "During the ceremony of hoisting or lowering the flag or when the flag is passing in a parade or in review, those present in uniform should

render the military salute. Members of the Armed Forces and veterans who are present but not in uniform may render the military salute. All other persons present should face the flag and stand at attention with their right hand over the heart, or if applicable, remove their headdress with their right hand and hold it at the left shoulder, the hand being over the heart. Citizens of other countries should stand at attention. All such conduct toward the flag in a moving column should be rendered at the moment the flag passes."; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion appreciates the sincere intent of current law to recognize all veterans by authorizing the military salute as an option to the traditional means of honoring the flag by placing the right hand over the heart; and

WHEREAS, Military regulations were affected, which previously specified that members not in uniform face the flag and stand at attention with the right hand over the heart, if covered, men shall remove the headdress and hold it at the left shoulder, the hand being over the heart; and

WHEREAS, Title 36, United States Code, Chapter 1, Section 4 states, "The Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag" should be rendered by standing at attention facing the flag with the right hand over the heart. When not in uniform men should remove their headdress with their right hand and hold it at the left shoulder, the hand being over the heart. Persons in uniform should remain silent, face the flag, and render the military salute; and

WHEREAS, Title 36, United States Code, Chapter 3, Section 301 states, "During a rendition of the National Anthem when the flag is displayed all present except those in uniform should stand at attention facing the flag with the right hand over the heart; men not in uniform should remove their headdress with their right hand and hold the headdress at the left shoulder, the hand being over the heart; and individuals in uniform should give the military salute at the first note of the anthem and maintain that position until the last note," which would cause confusion as to how to properly salute when the flag is raised and the National Anthem is played; and

WHEREAS, The sentence "Members of the Armed Forces and veterans who are present but not in uniform may render the military salute," raises the concern that Legionnaires, while wearing a baseball cap or other casual headdress would render a military salute; and

WHEREAS, The non-veteran public may soon follow the lead of those veterans and render the military salute as the flag is hoisted, lowered, or is passing; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By the National Executive Committee of The American Legion in regular meeting assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That the section of the U. S. Flag Code prescribing that members of the Armed Forces and veterans out of uniform may render the military salute during hoisting, lowering, or passing of the United States flag causes confusion leading to breaches of flag etiquette with regard to proper conduct during the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance and conduct during the playing of the National Anthem; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion encourages the Congress of the United States to repeal that portion of Title 4, Chapter 1, Section 9 United States Code permitting members of the Armed Forces and veterans out of uniform to render a military salute during hoisting, lowering, or passing of the United States flag.

Resolution No. 309: Strategy to Address Illegal Immigration
Origin: Convention Committee on Americanism
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism

WHEREAS, The American Legion is a federally-chartered veterans organization of about 2.7 million members, who have served in the U.S. Armed Forces during a period of armed conflict; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion, since its inception in 1919, has expressed concern that legal and illegal immigrants arriving in this country in large numbers would be unable to effectively assimilate into our society unless numerical quotas were established and enforced; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion's concern is exacerbated by the estimates by immigration reform groups and reports by news sources and others that as many as 12 to 20 million individuals are in this country illegally; and

WHEREAS, The influx of illegal aliens into this country presents a national security concern at a time when acts of terrorism perpetrated by individuals and factions opposed to the United States are occurring worldwide; and

WHEREAS, Americans are becoming increasingly frustrated by what they see as the federal government's reluctance and/or failure to stop this large influx of illegals and the actions by some states to provide taxpayer funded services and other benefits to illegal aliens thus providing additional incentives for more people to enter this country illegally; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion has passed numerous resolutions calling for the enforcement and/or reform of the government's immigration laws, policies and procedures and now seeks to combine many of the positions into a single resolution concisely stating The American Legion's positions and strategy to resolve this complex matter; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By the National Executive Committee, The American Legion, in regular meeting assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion, on behalf of all Americans and future generations of Americans, urge the Congress and the federal government to authorize and fund the following strategy in addressing the issue of illegal aliens in the United States:

1. Secure the borders and other points of entry in the United States:
- **a) Construct physical barriers, as appropriate,**
- **b) Acquire and utilize latest technology to monitor border activity,**
- **c) Employ and train a sufficient number of U.S. Border Patrol Agents to effectively patrol border regions with employment preference given to former members of the U.S. Armed Forces,**
- **d) Utilize National Guard troops to assist in providing border security,**
- **e) Insure all vessels and their cargo arriving at our seaports are thoroughly searched;**

2. Eliminate the jobs magnet and social services benefits:
- **a) Mandate verification of employment eligibility,**
- **b) Enforce employer sanctions,**
- **c) Make illegal residents ineligible for Social Security and other government-sponsored public services,**
- **d) Eliminate governmental financial aid for illegal alien students;**

3. Enforce existing laws and pass new laws to reduce U.S. illegal population:
- **a) Reject amnesty or "legalization" programs for illegal aliens,**
- **b) Enforce immigration laws and promote cooperation between federal, state and local law enforcement officials, with emphasis on interior enforcement,**
- **c) Establish parameters for non-criminal deportations,**
- **d) Prohibit eligibility to services offered by financial institutions in the United States,**
- **e) Issue no drivers licenses to illegal aliens,**
- **f) Designate English as the official language of the U.S. government and print all documents, including election ballots, in the English language only,**
- **g) Work with state and local governments to discourage illegal settlement;**

4. Revise legal immigration procedures; screen and track foreign visitors legally entering the U.S.:
- **a) Eliminate the Visa Lottery Program,**
- **b) Restrict the number of countries participating in the Visa Waiver Program,**

c) Create new visa categories or expand the H-2A and H-2B Visa Categories for temporary agricultural and temporary and seasonal workers as necessary to replace illegal workers eliminated from employment opportunities in the U.S.,

d) Create and enforce a reporting system to track the whereabouts of foreign visitors to include students at academic institutions, members of a country's diplomatic corps, aircraft and vessel crews, foreign press representatives, exchange visitors, H-1B Workers, L-1 Intracompany Transferees and those individuals categorized as humanitarian entrants; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion seize every opportunity to request an accountability of our elected officials in implementing and enforcing federal and international laws and treaties to eliminate the large numbers of individuals from foreign countries entering the United States illegally and that all candidates for public office and the Democratic and Republican National Committees express publicly to the American people their positions and solutions to this grave danger to our country's stability.

Resolution No. 310: Eliminate Damages and Attorney Fees in Establishment Clause Lawsuits
Origin: Convention Committee on Americanism
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism

WHEREAS, The American Legion, whose motto is "For God and Country" and has been since its founding by veterans of World War I in 1919, is leading a nationwide effort to combat the secular cleansing of our American heritage through Establishment Clause lawsuits; and

WHEREAS, Many Americans mistakenly believe that the words "separation of church and state" are included in the Constitution of the United States and provide the legal basis for removal of symbols with a religious aspect or references to God in our National Motto or to our country's founders' reliance on God, from veterans memorials, and other public lands, areas, monuments, buildings, seals, or ceremonies; and

WHEREAS, The First Amendment to the Constitution nowhere in fact mentions "separation of church and state," nor "separation of state from religion," but states only: *"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.";* and

WHEREAS, Judges in increasing numbers have issued orders in Establishment Clause cases that ban the Boy Scouts, ban the Ten Commandments, ban religious symbols at veterans memorials, ban the Pledge of Allegiance, ban historical religious symbols in the official seals of counties, and ban cities and the Department of Defense from assisting the Boy Scouts, and judges in such cases have awarded millions of dollars to the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and others in attorney fees to be paid by taxpayers as authorized by 42 U.S. Code Section 1988, the Equal Access to Justice Act, 28 U.S. Code Section 2412, and/or other federal statutes; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion believes that all federal statutes of the United States should be amended to rescind and repeal the authority Congress gave the courts to impose damages or attorney fees in Establishment Clause cases, as the threat of judge-ordered damages or attorney fees is being used as a club to compel local elected bodies, villages, towns, cities, counties, school boards, and state and federal agencies, to surrender to demands to remove or destroy symbols or expressions of a religious aspect from all areas of the public sphere for fear of imposition of damages or attorney fees to be paid by taxpayers, and is being used to chill private citizens from exercising the First Amendment right to seek redress by entering Establishment Clause lawsuits to defend symbols of and references to our American heritage, for fear that damages or attorney fees will be imposed upon them personally; and

WHEREAS, The 86th National Convention of The American Legion, August 31 – September 1, 2, 2004, passed Resolution 326, Preserve WWI Veterans Memorial in

Mojave Desert, which called on Congress to amend the Civil Rights Attorney Fees Act of 1976, 42 U.S. Code Section 1988, to prohibit the courts from awarding attorney fees under that statute in lawsuits brought to remove or destroy religious symbols; and

WHEREAS, The 87th National Convention of The American Legion, August 23, 24, and 25, 2005, passed Resolution 139, Amend the Equal Access to Justice Act, which called on Congress to amend 28 U.S. Code Section 2412, or any other similar federal statute, to limit remedies to declaratory and injunctive relief only and to eliminate court-ordered attorney fee awards in cases brought under the Establishment of Religion Clause of the U.S. Constitution; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion urge the Congress of the United States to amend the Civil Rights Attorney Fees Act of 1976, 42 U.S. Code Section 1988, the Equal access to Justice Act, 28 U.S. Code 2412, and any and all other federal statutes, to limit remedies to injunctive relief and declaratory relief only, and to rescind the authority of the courts to award attorney fees to the prevailing party in lawsuits brought under the Establishment of Religion Clause in the U.S. Constitution.

Resolution No. 282: The English Language be Declared as the Official United States Language
Origin: Convention Committee on Americanism
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism
(Consolidated with Resolution No. 199 (WI))

WHEREAS, The United States has over the many years been a haven and in most cases a new home for people of many ethnic backgrounds; and

WHEREAS, These people, although keeping their ethnic background alive, were urged to take advantage of the educational system that taught them the English language and American history; and

WHEREAS, Many permanent residents and new citizens, although clinging to their ethnic backgrounds did with pride take advantage of learning the language of the United States; and

WHEREAS, Bilingual programs funded by the Department of Education are designed to teach with the primary instruction in the student's home language, while English is subjected to a secondary status; and

WHEREAS, These programs tend to encourage separatism, rather than a unification of purpose; and

WHEREAS, There exists alternative bilingual education programs which provide a more efficient transition to proficiency in the English language; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion encourages legislation which would establish English as the official national language; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges Congress to encourage and fund alternative bilingual education programs to serve, as was intended, as a short intermediate step to achieve proficiency in the English language.

Resolution No. 283: Return Patriotic Holidays to Traditional Dates
Origin: Convention Committee on Americanism
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism
(Consolidated with Resolution No. 288 (CA))

WHEREAS, The dates of certain patriotic holidays have been changed from their original dates to create "three-day weekends"; and

WHEREAS, The time-honored traditional observances of these holidays has been eroded; and

WHEREAS, The majority of Americans view Memorial Day as a time for relaxation and leisure recreation rather than as a solemn occasion and a time to reflect and pay tribute to the American servicemen and women who sacrificed their lives in defense of our Nation; and

WHEREAS, By urging the ringing of bells in our communities for one minute on traditional Memorial Day, May 30, it will help Americans to realize that the true purpose of this day is to pay tribute to those who have given so much for their country; and

WHEREAS, Our hope for the future has been made possible because our servicemen and women have made sacrifices in order to secure freedom for America and the ringing of community bells is a fitting way to observe traditional Memorial Day in the years to come; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion calls upon the Congress of the United States to restore the official observance of Lincoln's Birthday to February 12, Washington's Birthday to February 22, Memorial Day to May 30 and Columbus Day to October 12 each year; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges the passage of federal legislation that would result in an annual Presidential proclamation calling on all American institutions, public and private, to toll their bells for one minute, beginning at 11:00 a.m. on the traditional Memorial Day, May 30, in remembrance of the servicemen and women who died defending our Nation and our freedom.

Resolution No. 290: Oppose Importation of Foreign Manufactured American Flags
Origin: Convention Committee on Americanism
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism
(Consolidated with Resolution No. 48 (MA))

WHEREAS, The Flag of the United States is a uniquely American symbol; and

WHEREAS, The Flag Code of the United States as listed in Title 4, United States Code, Chapter 1, subsection 8(j) states that: "The flag represents a living country and is itself considered a living thing"; and

WHEREAS, Foreign manufacturers are making and exporting to the United States U.S. Flags and/or merchandise which violate certain provisions of the United States Flag Code; and

WHEREAS, Resolution 191, 1982 National Convention, Chicago, Illinois resolves that The American Legion promote through its Posts and Departments the purchase of American manufactured goods; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion encourages its membership, the general public, and all local, state and federal government agencies to purchase and display only American manufactured Flags of the United States; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion seek legislation through the United States Congress to prohibit the importation of foreign made Flags of the United States.

Referred to the Standing Commission on Americanism

Resolution No. 42 (OR): Proper Disposal of the POW/MIA Flag
Resolution No. 43 (IN): National Americanism Commission to Include a Girl Scout Committee
Resolution No. 67 (ID): Presentation of our National Flag
Resolution No. 80 (CT): Recognition of the Student Trooper Program
Resolution No. 82 (SC): Endorsement of Clemson University Course "Leadership, Citizenship and Community Service" for Boys State and Girls State Programs
Resolution No. 177 (MD): Recognition of Lebanon and Grenada Era Veterans
Resolution No. 200 (WI): Illegal Aliens and Social Security
Resolution No. 231 (CA): Support the Real ID Act of 2010
Resolution No. 241 (OH): Reinstate the Publication Firing Line
Resolution No. 243 (OH): The Pledge of Allegiance in all Public Schools
Resolution No. 245 (OH): Immigrants and the Role of the English Language in the United States
Resolution No. 248 (MN): Establishing Date of American Legion Baseball World Series Championship Game

Resolution No. 251 (MO): Display American Flag in Proper Manner and Good Condition

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN CAOUETTE: As the duly elected delegate to this convention, I move the adoption of his report.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: Good job, Joe. I've got a motion and a second. Any discussion? Seeing none, all those in favor by the normal sign of aye. Opposed? Same sign. The report of Americanism is adopted.

Presentation: 2008 National Education Award
Joseph Caouette, New Hampshire, Committee Chairman on Americanism

Mr. Commander and Delegates, the National Committee on Education during its spring meeting, named a Frances A. Swensen of Junction City, Kansas, as the recipient of the 2008 National Education Award. In making its decision, the Committee noted that Frances' life-long devotion to improving the lives of our nation's youth. Ladies and gentlemen, would you please welcome your 2008 National Education Award recipient from Kansas, Frances A. Swensen.

FRANCES SWENSEN: Thank you. I don't know of a time that I have been more proud, unless it was the day in 1944 when I raised my hand and joined the WAVES. I'm known in my home Department of Kansas, as always talking too much, talking too long, or holding out my hand for a donation. But I want to thank The American Legion for giving me the opportunity to see so many, many places that we can do volunteer work that we can spread our word, the programs that we have. I've been grateful to this organization for giving me that opportunity. You are my family, thank you. (*Applause)*

Presentation: The Frank N. Belgrano, Jr. Trophy
Martin Conatser, Illinois, National Commander

Having completed the adoption of the Americanism Report, it's appropriate to announce the winners of two Americanism Awards. The Frank N. Belgrano, Jr. Trophy is annually awarded to the department rendering the most outstanding service during the 12-month period beginning August 1st to the Boy Scouts of America program. This year's winner is the Department of California.

Presentation: The Ralph T. O'Neil Education Trophy
Martin Conatser, Illinois, National Commander

The Ralph T. O'Neil Education Trophy is given to the department within the United States documenting the greatest activity in using The American Legion School Medal Program. The winning department shows what can be accomplished by an active and involved organization. The winner is the Department of Florida.

Presentation: William Randolph Hearst Americanism Trophy
Martin Conatser, Illinois, National Commander

Now joining me on stage to present the next award is Ward H. Bushee, the Executive Vice President and Editor of the *San Francisco Chronicle* Division of Hearst Communications. Ward has been a newspaper man for 33 years. He's not only been an editor and vice president of the *Arizona Republic*, but he has also left his mark on the *Cincinnati Enquirer*, *Reno Gazette Journal*, and a number of other newspapers. The William Randolph Hearst Americanism Trophy, which Ward is about to present, is one of the most impressive awards that The American Legion presents each National Convention. It is named in honor of one of American journalism's most prominent and influential figures and given to the department achieving the most outstanding results in conducting Americanism programs. The winning department is selected by the National Americanism Commission on the basis of total resources, manpower as well as financial, which was devoted to Americanism activities during the Legion program year. Ladies and gentlemen, Mr. Ward Bushee.

WARD BUSHEE: Ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon. I'm extremely honored to be in your company today representing the Hearst Corporation. And I'm all the more

honored and delighted to be presenting the William Randolph Hearst Americanism Trophy. This is the 69th year we have been able to present this award. Hearst and The American Legion have a fine tradition going back to 1939. In those years, Hearst has grown even beyond the dreams of our inventive and inspiring founder, Mr. Hearst, into magazines, TV, technology all over the world, and of course, newspapers, including the *San Francisco Chronicle*. But through all of that, we are able to do our business, to practice our craft because of the sacrifices and courage you all have provided to keep freedom of the press among the many other freedoms we enjoy in this country today. So please allow me to thank you for that.

This is a homecoming, as you heard, of sorts for me because until seven months ago I worked just a few hundred yards down the street as the editor of the state's largest newspaper, the *Arizona Republic*, which by the way serves one of the largest per capita populations of veterans of any state in the nation. And you were witness to appearances, or at least some appearances here, by both presidential candidates including our hometown boy, John McCain. So, you have to be thinking of what is it like to cover John McCain as the local newspaper editor. Well, like everybody who has been around Arizona's best known veteran and war hero, it was just a bowl of cherries. I actually don't recall Senator McCain calling to say what great work we were doing covering him, but when he didn't like something I learned what it was like to be on the receiving end of Desert Storm. I can most definitely tell you that he's a straight shooter and you always know where you stand with John McCain.

I'm a relatively new resident of San Francisco, and it's taken some adjustment. I'll take the San Francisco fog compared to the heat we have out here during the summer, but city politics are another matter. San Francisco is a city that can't clean its streets. The city council has a foreign policy for every occasion, and I don't feel very comfortable repeating that one here. But in case you harbor some concerns about the unusual politics of San Francisco, let me assure you that the largest daily newspaper in the bay area, the *Chronicle*, like the *Arizona Republic*, has reflected over and over the blood, sweat, tears, and triumphs of brave men and women who have served and are serving their country. The same men and women you represent and support so spectacularly. We have followed different units into battle, and we have covered them at home, both before and after their deployment. We try everyday to do right by those serving under the most difficult of circumstances.

The Preamble of The American Legion Constitution says that your members preserve the memories and incidences of our associations in great wars. We help you do that by telling the stories of those wars, past and present, with the context that war involves the valor and actual lives of friends, our sons and daughters, husbands, wives, fathers, and mothers. Whether you are a soldier or a journalist operating in times and places of war it's the acts of bravery, large and small, that determine the character of the person and of our nation. So we in the press develop an unqualified appreciation for those who do put their lives on the line for long stretches of time. As The American Legion noted in a resolution two years ago in Salt Lake City, "Warriors above all other people pray for peace, for they must suffer and bare the deepest wounds and scars of war." Since 1919, you in the Legion have provided unqualified support for the men and women who serve those warriors and you've done so much in so many ways. I hope you can view the press as helping the public to understand the humanity of those men and women, that they are real people with real lives and a profound commitment they undertake willingly.

In journalism we like to say we got into this profession to help change the world, and sometimes we do. But you all have changed the world in many, many ways throughout the life of this organization and through sacrifices and courage of your members. It was the safety, security, and service that inspired William Randolph Hearst, and it's in that spirit that this award was created. So again, I'm particularly honored to be presenting this year Americanism Trophy to the department of The American Legion that has exemplified those ideals that we all wish for our lives and country. The winning Department is Ohio. (*Applause*)

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN MORMAN: Mr. Commander, Mike Morman, Delegation Chairman for the Department of Ohio, Onstage with me is our Commander, Bob Kimball and Past Department Commander Darell Bishop. And I proudly accept this William Randolph Hearst Americanism Trophy on behalf of our delegation from the

Department of Ohio, and I ask them to please stand now to be recognized, and I thank you very much.

Presentation: 2008 National Law Enforcement Officer of the Year
Martin Conatser, Illinois, National Commander

As an organization anchored in the belief that we must maintain law and order, The American Legion annually selects an individual as its National Law Enforcement Officer of the Year. The next order of business is to honor a member of law enforcement for setting an example in their community for service. Our 2008 National Law Enforcement Officer of the Year is a dedicated and driven professional. She was hired as a police officer in 1983 at a time when there were few female officers. She quickly earned the trust and respect of her fellow officers and through years of hard work and education she rose through the promotional ranks. This past year, after a very competitive selection process, she was selected to be the first female chief of police in the history of the Des Moines Police Department. A tremendous ambassador for the city of Des Moines, ladies and gentlemen, please welcome to our convention, Ms. Judith A. Bradshaw, Chief of Police, Des Moines Police Department.

ANNOUNCER: The award reads: America's finest. The American Legion National Law Enforcement Officer of the Year Award presented to Judith A. Bradshaw for distinguished service above and beyond your assigned duties rendered through selfless dedication to community service and professional achievement. By your demonstrated performance you have personified the versatile police officer that represents America's finest. The American Legion congratulates you and wishes you continued success in your career. Awarded this 27th Day of August at the 90th Annual National Convention in Phoenix, Arizona.

JUDITH A. BRADSHAW**:** Good afternoon everyone. First of all, I'd like to thank you Mr. Commander, the members of The American Legion, and those who participated in this process especially Everett Freel, his wife, and the Iowa membership, for this humbling recognition. It truly is an honor to represent the state of Iowa and the Des Moines Police Department. I'm a little biased, being the chief of police, but I think Des Moines has one of the finest police departments in this country.

To all of us who share a contribution to the public, we don't do it for a commission or the pay, as it is well below any private sector position. We don't enter into law enforcement and do it for the great hours, because it includes weekends, holidays, and time away from our families. We are all driven to contribute by different things, and I can tell you that the reasons that brought me into the law enforcement profession are not the same ones that have compelled me to stay with the profession. As a very young person coming on 28 years ago, red lights and sirens and the challenges of day-to-day patrol were a great deal of fun, but as you gain from experience you know that the inner action with just your fellow human beings is what keeps you and drives you. I truly believe that one person can make a significant difference in other people's lives. It doesn't need to be in a manner that creates celebrity for yourself. It doesn't even have to be by direct contact. Our service and our actions in law enforcement impact others. Law enforcement is a noble profession that involves a great deal of self-sacrifice.

There's something great at work when one is called to provide protection and public safety to others. Police officers are led every day into situations that are much larger than they are. We interact with people in crisis, people who are vulnerable, and most of them who cannot stand up for themselves. Experience humbles us as we serve and strive to relate to people that we have nothing in common with many times. Those in crisis allow us into their homes, and they allow us as police officers come into their lives. It takes a great deal of courage to enter into those homes, as a police officer, they're very dangerous. But it also takes courage by those that are in crisis or those who are vulnerable to admit that they are weak and that they need your help. As police officers, we must be responsible with such authority.

I want to thank those of you who have served our country, and spent time away from your families so that our families could be free. You are to be honored for your sacrifices, and I am forever grateful to you. I am truly in awe of The American Legion and what you represent. I accept this in honor of my Grandfather, Charles Wesley Bradshaw, who was

killed in action in the Battle of the Bulge in Belgium, November 8, 1944. War forever touched my family's life as it has all of you. Again, I'm humbled. I appreciate The American Legion. Thank you. (*Applause*)

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: The Chair recognizes Dennis Boland, Chairman of the National Convention Committee on Children & Youth for the purpose of making a report.

Report: Convention Committee on Children and Youth
Dennis Boland, Florida, Chairman

The Convention Committee on Children and Youth met at 9:00 a.m. on Sunday, August 24, 2008 in the Hyatt Regency Phoenix, Ellis Room, 2nd Floor, Phoenix, Arizona. The meeting was organized by electing delegate Dennis Boland of Florida as Chairman and Donald Suchy of Nebraska as Secretary. There were 48 members of the committee present.

The committee considered twenty-two (22) resolutions. Twenty-one resolutions were approved and one resolution was referred to the Standing Commission on Children and Youth.

Approved

Resolution No. 314: Protect Children From Unrestricted Media
Origin: Convention Committee on Children & Youth
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Children & Youth

WHEREAS, In the Preamble to the Constitution of The American Legion we pledge "To uphold the Constitution of the United States;" and "To maintain law and order;" and

WHEREAS, The producers of our nation's movies, TV shows and TV news, and the Internet have become very explicit in describing and depicting various types of violence; and

WHEREAS, Organizations such as the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) have taken it upon themselves to defend such actions as the constitutional right of freedom of speech of the author, regardless of the potential consequences to minor children; and

WHEREAS, God has been rejected as a violation of civil rights; and

WHEREAS, The void has been filled with violence, vulgarity, racism, and every other form of moral depravation that can be imagined; and

WHEREAS, The Internet has become a place for promoting violence and illegal activities; and

WHEREAS, The lack of laws governing such productions allows for a vast expansion of audiences at all media levels promoting a violent country without restraint; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion support appropriate legislation at all levels of government to restrict the excessive use of violence, vulgarity and other forms of moral depravity in movies, TV programs, TV news and the Internet; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That Departments and Posts of The American Legion provide leadership and be encouraged to conduct awareness campaigns to educate their members, their families and the general public about the potential dangers the Internet and other forms of electronic media pose to children and teenagers, and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the National Commission on Children & Youth disseminate educational materials to inform Department and Post leadership to the end that all children and parents will be better informed about the dangers inherent in the media, in an effort to return the country to the God-given principles of life, liberty, and the true pursuit of happiness, under God's moral laws.

Resolution No. 315: Financially Assist Families Faced By Catastrophic Illness Of Their Children
Origin: Convention Committee on Children & Youth

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Children & Youth

WHEREAS, A catastrophic illness is any illness or condition, acute or chronic, for which expenses are incurred that are not fully covered by a private insurer, federal or state health care assistance, or other financial source; and

WHEREAS, When a child becomes ill or disabled, the cost of medical care alone can be catastrophic for the family; and

WHEREAS, Families of any income level may be faced with high uncovered medical expenses for their children; and

WHEREAS, Families with or without insurance are vulnerable to extraordinary medical bills; and

WHEREAS, Several states have enacted legislation to establish Catastrophic Illness in Children Relief Funds to help families bear the excessive financial burdens associated with the care of children with special health care needs and disabilities; and

WHEREAS, These funds have been proven effective and are designed to act as a safety net for families from all walks of life who have excessive expenses related to a child's medical needs; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion urges the federal government to enact legislation to financially assist families faced by the catastrophic illness of their children, thus preserving the family's financial integrity and their ability to cope with the responsibilities that accompany significant health problems in children; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion through Department and Post leadership, urge state governments to enact legislation including, but not limited to state-specific Catastrophic Illness in Children Relief Funds, to assist financially those individual families faced by the catastrophic illness of their children in order to maintain the integrity of the family; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That it in lieu of a better approach, the present federal Maternal and Child Health Services Block Grant programs be expanded to include catastrophic illness.

Resolution No. 316: Maximize Efforts To Screen Children For Sickle Cell Disease
Origin: Convention Committee on Children & Youth
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Children & Youth

WHEREAS, The American Legion has long advocated the use of preventive medicine to protect children from many childhood ailments; and

WHEREAS, Sickle cell disease is an inherited disease of red blood cells which can cause attacks of pain and damage to vital organs and can lead to early death; and

WHEREAS, Sickle cell disease is a major public health concern, affecting more than 80,000 Americans; and

WHEREAS, Many children of our nation have undiscovered Sickle Cell disease; and

WHEREAS, Infants and young children with Sickle Cell disease are especially vulnerable to several bacterial infections, such as those that cause meningitis and blood infection, and infections are the leading cause of death in children with Sickle Cell disease; and

WHEREAS, There is no specific treatment for children with Sickle Cell disease, but early diagnosis and treatment dramatically reduce the risk of infections and death; and

WHEREAS, Present screening procedures (i.e. blood tests) enable the undiscovered cases to be found and a National Institutes of Health panel has recommended that all babies be screened at birth for Sickle Cell disease; and

WHEREAS, To date, only 40 states are testing newborns for Sickle Cell disease; and

WHEREAS, There is much benefit gained by counseling the parents of the affected child(ren) and the child(ren) who have the disease; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion urges the maximum dissemination of information presently known about Sickle Cell disease; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges the fullest use of any suitable procedure developed to screen children who are potential victims of Sickle Cell disease; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That once a child has been found to have Sickle Cell disease or to be a carrier of the disease trait, that adequate counseling be available for the affected children and their families; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That sufficient federal funds be provided so that medically indigent children may have an opportunity to be afforded such services necessary to treat Sickle Cell disease; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That states be encouraged to enact legislation to make screening for Sickle Cell disease among potential victims a requirement for admission into public schools.

Resolution No. 318: Oppose All Efforts To Undermine, Alter Or Otherwise Corrupt The Institution of Marriage
Origin: Convention Committee on Children & Youth
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Children & Youth

WHEREAS, A guiding principle of The American Legion's Children & Youth Program is to strengthen and maintain the integrity of the family unit; and

WHEREAS, The World Congress of Families II defines the "natural family" as the fundamental unit, inscribed in human nature and centered around the voluntary union of a man and woman in a lifelong covenant of marriage; and

WHEREAS, A 1999 Wirthlin Worldwide survey conducted for the World Congress of Families II found that 84 percent of people around the world agree that the definition of marriage is the union of one man and one woman; and

WHEREAS, A child's biological connection to a married father and mother increases the likelihood that they will identify with the child, be willing to sacrifice for the child, and thereby reduces the likelihood that either parent would abuse the child; and

WHEREAS, Children are dependent on a mother and father for their physical, emotional and spiritual needs and that the existence of a marital bond between a mother and father is vital for the child's overall well-being; and

WHEREAS, Children raised by their married mother and father experience low rates of social problems, to include premarital childbearing, illicit drug use, arrest, health problems, emotional or behavioral problems, poverty, and school failure or expulsion; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion recognizes that the natural family is the fundamental unit, inscribed in human nature and centered on the voluntary union of a man and a woman in a lifelong covenant of marriage for the purposes of:

- **satisfying the longings of the human heart to give and receive love;**
- **welcoming and ensuring the full physical and emotional development of children;**
- **sharing a home that serves as the center for the social, educational, economic and spiritual life of a child; and**
- **building strong bonds between succeeding generations to pass on a way of life that assures the perpetuation of the natural family; and, be it further**

RESOLVED, That The American Legion recognizes that marriage is a fundamental institution that predates the law and the Constitution of the United States: and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion opposes all efforts to undermine, alter or otherwise corrupt the institution of marriage, which is the cornerstone of a healthy family; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges the President of the United States and the Congress to ensure that the institution of marriage is preserved and protected, either through appropriate federal legislation or through an amendment to the Constitution of the United States.

Resolution No. 319: Oppose Any Attempt To Weaken Present Laws Governing Penalties For The Production, Sale And Distribution Of Pornographic Or Obscene Materials
Origin: Convention Committee on Children & Youth
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Children & Youth

WHEREAS, Since 1960, The American Legion has maintained a position of complete opposition to the production, sale and distribution of pornographic or obscene materials to children 17 years and under; and

WHEREAS, Present laws forbid the importation of such materials from foreign countries, interstate trafficking, the use of the United States Mail, and the use over public radio, television and the Internet; and

WHEREAS, Any attempt to eliminate such protective laws from state and/or federal criminal codes would have a negative impact on our youth and society in general; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion strongly opposes any attempt to weaken our present laws governing the penalties for the production, sale and distribution of pornographic or obscene materials; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the United States Congress be made aware of our concern through proper legislative channels.

Resolution No. 320: Support Efforts To Reduce Drug Abuse
Origin: Convention Committee on Children & Youth
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Children & Youth

WHEREAS, The first duty of government is to provide security for citizens and the Constitution of the United States articulates the obligation of the federal government to uphold the public good, providing a bulwark against all threats, foreign and domestic; and

WHEREAS, Drug abuse, particularly by our nation's children and youth, constitutes such a threat and is a hazard to our safety and freedom, producing devastating crime and health problems and diminishing the potential for citizens to grow and develop; and

WHEREAS, Drug abuse, drug trafficking, and their consequences destroy personal liberty and the well-being of communities, draining the physical, intellectual, spiritual, and moral strength of America; and

WHEREAS, Crime, violence, workplace accidents, family misery, drug-exposed children, and addiction are only part of the price imposed on society as drug abuse spawns global criminal syndicates and bankrolls those who sell drugs to young people; and

WHEREAS, Drug use and its consequences threaten Americans of every socioeconomic background, geographic region, educational level, and ethnic or racial identity, demonstrating that no one is immune and every family is vulnerable; and

WHEREAS, Prevention efforts are our first line of defense against illegal drugs, and organizations like The American Legion have programs designed for youth to keep them active and to help them feel a sense of pride in the future of their community, state and nation; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That all levels of The American Legion be urged to continue their efforts to reduce drug abuse, as it affects our nation's young people; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion does affirm its support for the Office of National Drug Control Policy and that, to the extent possible, the Legion will work with the President of the United States, Congress, state legislators, and federal, state and local agencies when, as an organization, the Legion believes changes or additions to our laws or government policies are necessary; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion support those initiatives designed to educate children about the real dangers associated with drugs and seeks the involvement of parents, business and community leaders, school administrators and coaches, and other role models in a broad prevention campaign; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion encourages families and institutions, including employers, law enforcement agencies, faith-based and community-based organizations, and health care providers to help drug abusers recognize their addiction and urge them to seek appropriate treatment; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That drugs and drug abuse must be attacked as a whole, which includes international relations, law enforcement, education, judicial reform, research, treatment and rehabilitation, to ensure that our nation's children grow up as healthy and productive members of society.

Resolution No. 321: Provide Equal Treatment In Admission Of Children Of United States Citizens
Origin: Convention Committee on Children & Youth
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Children & Youth

WHEREAS, United States citizens now have greater access to the nations of the world for work opportunities, both in the public and private sectors, and travel; and

WHEREAS, Many children in foreign countries are progenies of United States citizens; and

WHEREAS, Public Law 97-359 was enacted to amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to provide preferential treatment in the admission of certain children of United States citizens; and

WHEREAS, Public Law 97-359 addresses only alien children from Korea, Vietnam, Laos, Kampuchea, or Thailand born after 1950 and before October 22, 1982; and

WHEREAS, No child created by a United States citizen should be denied equal treatment under the laws of this country; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion seek legislative action to amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to provide equal treatment in admission of all children of United States citizens.

Resolution No. 322: Strengthen Penalties To Eliminate The Production, Sale & Distribution Of Materials That Use Children In Sexually Explicit Scenes
Origin: Convention Committee on Children & Youth
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Children & Youth

WHEREAS, The very future of our country is being threatened by individuals who would use children in pornographic magazines and films; and

WHEREAS, National crime reports reveal that there is a strong correlation between those who read pornographic magazines and those who commit related crimes such as rape, incest, molestation, child abuse and even murder; and

WHEREAS, The use of children as subjects in the production of pornographic materials has a devastating effect upon these innocent children, which is a disgrace to our society; and

WHEREAS, Existing laws dealing with those who produce, sell and distribute pornographic materials are often weak and/or inadequate; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That state legislatures be encouraged to evaluate and make appropriate improvements in existing laws aimed at those individuals involved in the child pornography business; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That we urge the strengthening of existing federal legislation by the United States Congress to make penalties severe enough to eliminate the production, distribution and sale of materials that use children in sexually explicit scenes, and we urge the Congress to provide adequate funding, when necessary, to accomplish these goals.

Resolution No. 324: Support Efforts Aimed At Improving Child Care Services For Children
Origin: Convention Committee on Children & Youth
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Children & Youth

WHEREAS, The American Legion is deeply concerned about the quality of life issues surrounding our children and youth; and

WHEREAS, According to the National Center for Education Statistics there are approximately 21 million infants, toddlers, and preschool children under the age of six in the United States with more than 12.9 million of these children in child care; and

WHEREAS, Child care services have traditionally been providing care, supervision and protection for children of pre-school and early school age, when the primary caregiver is necessarily absent from the home; and

WHEREAS, The Carnegie Report finds that quality child care enables a young child to become emotionally secure, socially competent, and intellectually capable; and

WHEREAS, Consistent studies have found that childcare at most centers in the United States are poor to mediocre and child care licensing standards, designed to assure minimal standards for health and safety, vary widely from state to state; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion support appropriate legislation at all levels of government aimed at improving child care services for children; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion is authorized to collaborate with the leading national child care organizations as determined by the National Commission on Children and Youth to the end that The American Legion can maintain an effective role in the promotion of adequate child care programs; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That all Departments and Posts are encouraged to cooperate with the state and community public or private agencies with day care responsibilities to the end that licensed child care facilities will be available to all children in our nation; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That Departments and Posts of The American Legion continue to encourage the adoption and implementation of safe and consistent licensing standards for childcare in facilities throughout this nation; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That Departments and Posts of The American Legion be encouraged to assist in raising the level of understanding among the general public about the needs of adequate child care, and to contribute to a greater willingness to commit more resources to achieve a level of quality that is necessary for children to grow in a healthy and safe environment.

Resolution No. 325: Support Efforts To Immunize All Children
Origin: Convention Committee on Children & Youth
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Children & Youth

WHEREAS, The American Legion has long recognized that there is no place in civilized society for communicable diseases; and

WHEREAS, There are today vaccines and other specific medical treatment to protect children against communicable diseases; and

WHEREAS, There exists today in our country areas with extremely low levels of immunization against certain childhood diseases that may break out in epidemic proportions; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion reaffirms its position of supporting the fullest use of any licensed vaccine to combat communicable diseases; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That local Posts of The American Legion provide leadership and support to stimulate local treatment and immunization programs so that children in every community may achieve the fullest protection against communicable diseases; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That sufficient federal and state funds be provided so that medically indigent children may be afforded an opportunity to receive the necessary treatment and immunization against all communicable diseases.

Resolution No. 326: Support Funding Comprehensive Health Care For Children & Youth Programs
Origin: Convention Committee on Children & Youth
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Children & Youth

WHEREAS, The American Legion has and will continue to do everything possible to ensure that every child has a home, health, education, character and opportunity; and

WHEREAS, Since its inception, the Maternal and Child Health Services Title V Block Grant has provided a foundation for ensuring the health of our Nation's mothers and children; and

WHEREAS, The Maternal and Child Health Services Block Grant has operated as a Federal-State partnership for more than 67 years; and

WHEREAS, When the Social Security Act was passed in 1935, the Federal Government, through Title V, pledged its support of state efforts to extend and improve health and welfare services for mothers and children; and

WHEREAS, Title V funds are used by states and jurisdictions to implement a wide range of maternal and child health care programs (assessment, diagnosis and treatment for low-income children, long-term care for special needs children, rehabilitation services for blind and disabled children, prenatal care for women, and childhood immunization) and to develop comprehensive, family-centered, systems of care for children with special health care needs; and

WHEREAS, These programs are dependent upon the annual appropriation of funds by the Congress of the United States; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion affirms its support and endorsement of the programs as outlined by the Maternal and Child Health Services Block Grant contained 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, to include all programs related to the Comprehensive Health Care for Children and Youth.

Resolution No. 327: Support Funding For All Drug Trafficking Prevention Programs
Origin: Convention Committee on Children & Youth
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Children & Youth

WHEREAS, The illegal trafficking of drugs into the United States is one of the greatest threats to the welfare and safety of our citizens, particularly our youth; and

WHEREAS, The enemies of our Nation and way of life hope to destroy us from within by debilitating our most precious resource for the future, our youth; and

WHEREAS, The economic and social costs of drug abuse annually exceed the $100 billion mark; and

WHEREAS, The efforts to halt the entry of such illegal drugs may be seen as a war of will and resources—a war that at the present we are not winning; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion urge the President and Congress of the United States to fully support with adequate funding all border state, federal and military drug trafficking prevention programs through which our children and youth might secure a more stable and healthy future.

Resolution No. 328: Support Legislation Aimed At The Prevention, Investigation And Prosecution Of Child Sexual Exploitation
Origin: Convention Committee on Children & Youth
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Children & Youth

WHEREAS, The sexual victimization of children is overwhelming in magnitude, yet largely unrecognized and underreported; and

WHEREAS, Statistics show that one in five girls and one in ten boys are sexually exploited before they reach adulthood, yet less than 35 percent of those child sexual assaults are reported to authorities; and

WHEREAS, The widespread use of the Internet to sexually victimize children presents an even broader threat to our children's safety; and

WHEREAS, According to *Highlights of the Youth Internet Safety Survey* conducted by the U.S. Department of Justice "one in five children (10 to 17 years old) receive unwanted sexual solicitations online"; and

WHEREAS, By far the most prevalent exploitive act reported to the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children is the production and distribution of pornographic images of children; and

WHEREAS, The lives of the children featured in these illegal images are forever altered, not only by the exploitation itself, but by the permanent record of it; and

WHEREAS, The impact of these terrible acts can devastate families and put children at risk of depression, disassociation, and post traumatic stress – symptoms that can last well into adulthood; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion support appropriate legislation at all levels of government aimed at the prevention, investigation and prosecution of child sexual exploitation; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion be authorized to collaborate with national and state agencies and organizations involved in the prevention of child sexual exploitation as determined by the National Commission on Children & Youth to the end that The American Legion can maintain an effective role in preventing child sexual exploitation; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That Departments and Posts of The American Legion are encouraged to raise community awareness about the prevalence of sexual exploitation of children and to cooperate with law enforcement agencies, government entities and public/private organizations that seek to empower the public to take immediate and direct action to enforce a zero tolerance policy regarding child sexual exploitation.

Resolution No. 329: Support Legislation Aimed At Reducing Or Preventing Teen Pregnancy
Origin: Convention Committee on Children & Youth
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Children & Youth

WHEREAS, The American Legion has long been concerned with the health and quality of life issues surrounding its young people; and

WHEREAS, Teenage pregnancy is a serious problem in the United States, which currently has the highest rates of teenage pregnancy and births in the industrialized world; and

WHEREAS, Each year one million pregnancies occur among American teenagers aged 15-19 and almost 200,000 teens aged 17 and younger have children, with the vast majority (86%) unintentionally; and

WHEREAS, Childbearing has adverse consequences for teenage mothers and particularly for their children, contributing directly to mothers and their children being poorly educated, unmarried and not well connected to the workforce; and

WHEREAS, Teenage pregnancy creates an ever-widening, self perpetuation of programs affecting the mother, infant, parents, grandparents and, therefore, tears at the very fabric of the all important family unit in our society; and

WHEREAS, The offspring of teen mothers have high rates of illness, mortality, educational and emotional problems, and often are the victims of child abuse at the hands of parents too immature to understand their baby's needs; and

WHEREAS, Preventing teen pregnancy is an effective way to address a range of other pressing social issues including poverty, child and family well-being, responsible fatherhood, workforce development, and out-of-wedlock childbearing; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion support appropriate legislation at all levels of government aimed at reducing or preventing teen pregnancy; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion is authorized to collaborate with national and state teen pregnancy prevention organizations as determined by the National Commission on Children & Youth to the end that The American Legion can maintain an effective role in the promotion of adequate teen pregnancy prevention programs; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That Departments and Posts of The American Legion are encouraged to support and cooperate with organizations and agencies that seek to educate teenagers on the advantages of delaying pregnancy.

Resolution No. 330: Support Legislation & Efforts To Locate Missing Children And Prevent Child Victimization
Origin: Convention Committee on Children & Youth
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Children & Youth

WHEREAS, Each day in the United States, an average of 2,185 children, 17 years and younger, are reported missing or disappear by abduction, run away or are lost to some unknown cause; and

WHEREAS, The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) was created in 1984 as a central resource and data clearinghouse for law enforcement, victims and their families, to aid in fighting for the safe recovery of missing children and the protection of all children from sexual exploitation; and

WHEREAS, Today more children come home safely than at any time in our nation's history, law enforcement is better prepared, and families are more alert and aware than ever before because of the tireless work of NCMEC and law enforcement; and

WHEREAS, NCMEC's overall recovery rate for missing children is 94.9 percent, demonstrating that the current system is working due to effective response of law enforcement, technological advances, and the general public paying attention to missing children photos; and

WHEREAS, Although NCMEC has made a significant impact in tackling this daunting problem, there is much that remains to be done for too many children still do not make it home, and too many are still victims of sexual predators; and

WHEREAS, Even one child disappearing is the concern of all responsible persons; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion support appropriate legislation at all levels of government aimed at locating missing children and preventing child victimization; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge the President of the United States and the Congress to provide adequate annual funding for the continued operation and expansion of the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, America's best resource to combat the national crisis of child victimization; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion be authorized to collaborate with national and state missing and exploited children agencies and organizations as determined by the National Commission on Children & Youth to the end that The American Legion can maintain an effective role, at all levels, in locating missing children and preventing child exploitation; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the Departments and Posts of the American Legion are encouraged to increase the public's awareness of child victimization and its detrimental effects on the children and youth of our society and to cooperate with credible organizations and agencies that seek to locate missing children in their states and communities.

Resolution No. 331: Support Legislation To Prevent Child Maltreatment
Origin: Convention Committee on Children & Youth
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Children & Youth

WHEREAS, The American Legion has, since its inception, voiced and demonstrated active concern about the health and welfare of children; and

WHEREAS, The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Children's Bureau reported that approximately 906,000 children were victims of child maltreatment in 2003; and

WHEREAS, The federal government defines child abuse and neglect in the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) as "the physical and mental injury, sexual abuse, negligent treatment, or maltreatment of a child under the age of 18 by a

person who is responsible for the child's welfare under circumstances which indicate that the child's health or welfare is harmed or threatened"; and

WHEREAS, According to CAPTA, child maltreatment encompasses physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect and emotional abuse; and

WHEREAS, All responsible citizens have a valuable role to play in building strong communities in which families and children are valued and supported, and in which children are safe from all forms of maltreatment; and

WHEREAS, There are concerned adults who care about this problem and will work to combat its degenerative effect on our society; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion support appropriate legislation at all levels of government aimed at preventing child maltreatment; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion be authorized to collaborate with national and state child maltreatment prevention organizations as determined by the National Commission on Children & Youth to the end that The American Legion can maintain an effective role in the promotion of child maltreatment prevention programs; and, be it further

RESOLVED, The Departments and Posts of The American Legion cooperate in all ways possible with organizations and agencies that advocate for child maltreatment prevention and to promote and increase the public's awareness of child maltreatment and its detrimental effects on the children and youth of our society; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges all educators, coaches, school administrators and all others responsible for children in any capacity to familiarize themselves with the warning signs of all forms of child maltreatment and, when necessary, report any suspected maltreatment to the proper authorities and ensure that these children are referred to the appropriate child protective service in their community; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion continue through its Children & Youth program, at all levels, to educate the public of their obligations and duties with respect to reporting suspected cases of child maltreatment.

Resolution No. 332: Support Programs And Organizations That Promote Child Safety
Origin: Convention Committee on Children & Youth
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Children & Youth

WHEREAS, According to the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, unintentional injury remains the leading cause of death and disability among children ages 14 and under in the United States; and

WHEREAS, Every day, more than 39,000 children are injured seriously enough to require medical treatment, totaling more than 14 million children each year; and

WHEREAS, The top causes of unintentional injury-related deaths and disabilities among children and adolescents are automobile accidents, drowning, fire, falls and poisoning; and

WHEREAS, It is estimated that as many as 90 percent of unintentional injuries can be prevented; and

WHEREAS, A combination of education, environmental improvements, engineering modifications, enactment and enforcement of legislation and regulations, economic incentives, community empowerment and program evaluation is effective at reducing the incidence and severity of unintentional death and disability; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion support appropriate legislation at all levels of government aimed at preventing or reducing unintentional injury among children and adolescents; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion is authorized to collaborate with the leading national safety organizations as determined by the National Commission on Children and Youth to the end that The American Legion can maintain an effective role in the promotion of adequate child safety programs; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That Departments and Posts of The American Legion are encouraged to provide leadership on organized safety commissions and to actively promote child safety at the state and local levels.

Resolution No. 333: Support The Rights Of All People With Intellectual Disabilities
Origin: Convention Committee on Children & Youth
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Children & Youth

WHEREAS, Historically, it has been The American Legion's position that all children should have quality services to assure their physical, mental and emotional well-being; and

WHEREAS, According to the President's Committee for People with Intellectual Disabilities, it is estimated that between 7 and 8 million Americans of all ages, or three percent of the general population experience intellectual disabilities; and

WHEREAS, Intellectual disabilities cuts across the lines of racial, ethnic, educational, social and economic backgrounds and one in ten families in the United States are directly affected by a person with intellectual disability at some point in their lifetime; and

WHEREAS, Intellectual Disabilities in children is a complex problem with educational, medical, social, cultural and vocational aspects, and presents a major challenge to the social, educational, health, and economic systems within the United States; and

WHEREAS, About 87 percent of those children with intellectual disabilities are mildly affected and may not be identified until they enter school, and as adults many will be able to lead independent lives in the community; and

WHEREAS, The remaining 13 percent of people with intellectual disabilities will have serious limitations in functioning, but with early intervention, a functional education and appropriate support as adults, can lead satisfying lives in the community; and

WHEREAS, During the past 30 years, significant advances in research have prevented many cases of intellectual disabilities, and other early intervention and prevention strategies have reduced the chance of intellectual disabilities in children; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion recognize and support the rights of all people with intellectual disabilities to enjoy a quality of life that promotes independence, self-determination, and participation as productive members of society; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the goals of the President's Committee for People with Intellectual Disabilities:

- **The assurance of full citizenship rights of people with intellectual disabilities;**
- **The provision of all necessary supports to individuals and families;**
- **The reduction of the occurrence and severity of intellectual disabilities; and**
- **The promotion of the widest dissemination of information of models, programs, and services within the field of intellectual disabilities; become the goals of The American Legion; and, be it further**

RESOLVED, That The American Legion support and encourage early diagnosis, intervention and treatment, increased professional staffing, expanded educational opportunities, family counseling, improved and new living facilities, and adequate social and vocational services for the intellectually disabled; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion supports continuing research, to include research on the development and function of the nervous system, fetal treatments, and gene therapy to correct the abnormality produced by defective genes; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That whenever possible, The American Legion is encouraged to help alert the public through awareness and education programs designed to change the negative attitudes and prejudices concerning our nation's intellectually disabled children.

Resolution No. 334: Urge Congress To Appropriate Sufficient Funds For School Nutrition Program
Origin: Convention Committee on Children & Youth
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Children & Youth

WHEREAS, There has been as expression of concern by health authorities and various national organizations with an interest in the status of proper nutrition among young people; and

WHEREAS, The Federal School Lunch Program and other federally-supported nutrition programs for children have demonstrated their effectiveness as evidenced by the reduction of health problems and improved performance among children; and

WHEREAS, There are many school systems throughout the United States which do not participate in the federal/state-supported school lunch program; and

WHEREAS, There are many schools and school systems throughout the United States that have never had a school lunch program or have dropped existing lunch programs because of the lack of funding, adequate facilities, excessive paperwork requirements, and the training of personnel; and

WHEREAS, Since 1941, The American Legion has supported the Federal School Lunch Program and other related programs of nutrition for children; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That the Congress of the United States be urged to appropriate sufficient funds for school nutrition programs 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.

Resolution No. 335: Urge The President & Congress To Establish "National Family Week"
Origin: Convention Committee on Children & Youth
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Children & Youth

WHEREAS, One of the principles guiding The American Legion's Children & Youth Program is to maintain the integrity of the family unit; and

WHEREAS, The family unit is the center of our affections and the foundation of our American society; and

WHEREAS, No institution can take the family unit's place in giving meaning to human life and stability in our society; and

WHEREAS, It is fitting that official recognition be given to the importance of strengthening family life; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion urges the President of the United States and the Congress to establish "National Family Week" during Thanksgiving Holiday Week as an annual observance.

Resolution No. 336: Improving Services For Children Living In Foster Care
Origin: Convention Committee on Children & Youth
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Children & Youth

WHEREAS, The American Legion affirms that all children need safe, permanent families that love, nurture, protect and guide them; and

WHEREAS, On any given day in the United States, half a million children and youth are in foster care, removed from their homes because of abuse and neglect; and

WHEREAS, While foster care protects children who are not safe in their own homes, too many times what should be a short-term refuge becomes a long-term saga, involving moves from one foster home to another; and

WHEREAS, Social agencies, both public and private, and dedicated foster parents provide these children with a temporary or a permanent environment that will help them become the responsible citizen of tomorrow; and

WHEREAS, These agencies and foster parents are finding it increasingly difficult to provide the basic needs of these children, such as medical and dental care, education, food, clothing, skilled social work, and other community resources; and

WHEREAS, These ends can be met only by increased funding and concerted public effort on the part of all citizens, governmental and private agencies, legislators, and others responsible and concerned for the future of these children; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion support appropriate legislation at all levels of government aimed at improving services for children living in foster homes; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion is authorized to collaborate with the leading national foster care organizations as determined by the National Commission on Children and Youth to the end that The American Legion can maintain an effective role in the promotion of adequate foster care programs; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That Posts are urged to volunteer their talents and energies in behalf of foster children and to make their communities aware of the vital role that adequate foster care services play in enabling these children to develop into mature, responsible and productive adults.

Referred to the Standing Commission on Children and Youth

Resolution No. 233 (NY): Restore Full Funding to the Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant Program

A motion was made and seconded to allow the Committee Chairman and Secretary to sign the report on behalf of the committee. A voice vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously.

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN BOLAND: As a duly elected delegate and registered delegate for the Department of Florida, I move for the adoption of this report.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: I've got motion and a second on the floor. Is there any discussion? Hearing none. All those in favor by the normal sign of aye. Opposed? Same sign. The Report of the Children & Youth is adopted.

Presentation: Garland Murphy, Jr. Award
Martin Conatser, Illinois, National Commander

Now I have the pleasure of presenting the Garland D. Murphy, Jr. Award, to the department that raised the most money for the Child Welfare Foundation during the past program year. Ladies and gentlemen, it's a pleasure for me to present this award to the Department of Ohio.

ANNOUNCER: The Garland D. Murphy, Jr. Award, presented by The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation to the Department of Ohio for the program year of 2007-2008. 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. Dennis R. Boland, President of the Child Welfare Foundation and William A. Pease, the foundation's executive secretary signs it.

DEPARTMENT COMMANDER KIMBALL (OH): Bob Kimball, Department of Ohio. Mr. Commander, I accept this on behalf of the membership, the delegation from the state of Ohio. Thank you so very much. (*Applause*)

Presentation: The U.S. 'Udie' Grant Legacy Award
Martin Conatser, Illinois, National Commander

Now it's time for me to present another prestigious award. The U.S. 'Udie' Grant Legacy Award recognizes the collective efforts of The American Legion family in a department. It goes to the department that collective raised the most money for the Child Welfare Foundation during the past program year. The winner of this prestigious award is the Department of Ohio.

ANNOUNCER: The award reads: The U.S. 'Udie' Grant Legacy Award presented by The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation to the Department of Ohio for the

program year of 2007-2008 in recognition of outstanding support for The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation. We thank you.

ALTERNATE NECMAN ZULCH (OH): Richard Zulch, Department of Ohio. We certainly appreciate the award. Ohio does an awful lot of work. We make a lot of donations. We make a lot of money, and we thank you very much for it. (*Applause*)

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN BOLAND (FL): Commander Conatser, it was indeed an honor this past year to serve as the President of The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation. What you have done for the foundation over this year has been most gratifying for The American Legion, and it is indeed an honor to present to you a diamond lapel pin from The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation and the Board of Directors, sir. (*Applause*)

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: If anyone has donations to the Child Welfare Foundation, I will now accept those on the stage.

DEPARTMENT COMMANDER HOLLAND (SC): Mr. Commander, James Holland from the Department of South Carolina. We have a total contribution of $1,983 with $1,000 going to the Children's Miracle Network and of the $983, $563 is coming from our Sons of the Legion, and the other $466 come from the department blue cappers.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN BARYLSKI (CT): I'm Andy Barylski, Delegation Chairman from the Constitution State, Connecticut and I have a check for the Child Welfare Foundation for $1,500.

MR. MORRISON (OH): Commander, on behalf of the Department of Ohio and the posts that contributed to Charities, Inc., we have a small check here of $75,000 for Child Welfare.

ALTERNATE NECMAN PATNODE (NH): Roland Patnode Alternate NEC from the great state of New Hampshire here with my Department Commander George McCall. On behalf of the state of New Hampshire, a check for $1,177 for the Child Welfare Foundation.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER (KS): Mr. Commander, as you know the Patriot Guard was founded by The American Legion Riders of Mulvane, Kansas, Post #136. The founders never authorized merchandise to be sold using the name of Patriot Guard because they felt it would be the same as making a profit on the lives of the very same people they sought to have by attending the final services. Earlier this year, the true founders made an exception by allowing the Department of Kansas to sell a small and simple pin that anyone can wear if they will attend and stand with the Patriot Guard at a funeral. This exception was made because all the profits from the sale of that pin benefit The American Legion Legacy Scholarship Fund. I would like to take this opportunity to present you with a Patriot Guard pin and a check totaling $5,700 that includes the $1,100 from the sale of these pins. This also brings Kansas' total to the Legacy Scholarship Fund to almost $48,000 this year.

MS. PHYLLIS FITZGERALD: Mr. Commander, I'm Phyllis Fitzgerald, immediate Past District 14 Commander, and Past Commander of American Legion Post 566. I'm representing American Legion Post 566 with a check for Child Welfare for $1,000.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: We certainly appreciate those. Can we get a total? We'll give you a couple of updates here. The Legacy update is $516,551.23, and just turned into the Child Welfare Foundation was $80,660. (*Applause*)

The Chair now recognized K. Robert Lewis of New London, Connecticut, Chairman of the National Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation for the purpose of making a report.

Report: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
K. Robert Lewis, Connecticut, Chairman

Eighty-nine members of your Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation met at 9:00 a.m. on August 24, 2008, in Room 212, West Building, Second Level, Phoenix Convention Center, Phoenix, Arizona, and agreed on the following report, which is respectfully submitted for your consideration.

The Committee was called to order by Peter Gaytan (MD), Liaison Representative appointed by the National Adjutant to act as temporary chairman. Jacob Gadd (DC), Assistant Director for Program Management, VA&R Commission, acted as temporary

secretary and called the roll. A quorum being present, nominations were received for permanent chairman. K. Robert Lewis (CT), Chairman of the Standing National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission, was unanimously elected Chairman of the Convention Committee.

With unanimous consent, the Chairman appointed Phil Youngblood (GA) as Committee Secretary; R. Michael Suter (NY), Chairman of the Claims and Rating Subcommittee and Milton Willis (VT), Secretary; Terry Schow (UT), Chairman of the Hospital and Medical Services Subcommittee and Garland Williams (CO), Secretary.

Subcommittee liaison assignments were as follows: Steve Smithson (MI), Deputy Director, to Claims and Rating and Joseph Wilson (DC), Deputy Director for Healthcare, to Hospital and Medical Services.

As has been the custom for the 63 previous National Conventions, a Special Department Service Officers Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Resolutions, in a preconvention meeting, screened and grouped the 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 K. Robert Lewis, Chairman of the Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission and was composed of the following Department Service Officers:

Region 1—Gary Wyman (NH)
Region 2—James Bartlett (KS)
Region 3—Verna Jones (NC)
Region 4—James Deremo (SD)

The Convention Committee recommended that such a Committee be appointed for this purpose to serve the Ninety-first National Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation.

The 110 Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation resolutions presented for the consideration of this Convention were referred by the Resolutions Assignment Committee. The following action on the resolutions was taken by the Convention Committee:

Approved or Approved w/Amendment	63
Consolidated with Resolutions Approved	20
Referred to the Standing Commission	15
Received and Recorded	1
Rejected	11

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 16 resolutions referred to the Standing National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission will be made to the National Executive Committee and to the Adjutant of the Department concerned.

Approved

Resolution No. 30: Department of Veterans Affairs Dental Care
Origin: South Dakota
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, This great organization was based upon comradeship born of wartime service and dedicated to fair and equitable treatment of all veterans and their dependents; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion recognizes that oral health is integral to the general health and well-being of a patient and is part of comprehensive health care; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) healthcare system is mandated under Section 1712, Title 38, United States Code, to provide outpatient dental services to veterans rated 100% service-connected, to veterans held Prisoner-of-War, or to those who have sustained dental trauma in performance of military service; and

WHEREAS, Section 1710, Title 38, United States Code, authorizes VA to provide hospital care and medical services to any veteran for a service-connected disability or a veteran who has a service-connected disability rated at 50% or greater; and

WHEREAS, A dental condition is a medical condition which can impact on all other medical conditions; and

WHEREAS, VA currently provides dental services throughout the VA health care system; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion supports Legislation to amend Title 38, United States Code, Section 1712, to provide outpatient dental care to all enrolled veterans.

Resolution No. 32: Extend the Filing Period of an Appeal Notice to the Court of Veteran Appeals for Veterans Claims
Origin: Georgia
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, Claimants have up to one year from notice of a Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) rating decision to file an appeal with any or all adjudicated issues to the Board of Veterans' Appeals (BVA); and

WHEREAS, Notice of Appeal of a final denied claim by the Board of Veterans' Appeals must be filed with the United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims (CAVC) within 120 days of the denial by the BVA; and

WHEREAS, The CAVC lacks statutory authority to waive the 120 day period for filing Notice of Appeal; and

WHEREAS, Veterans or their surviving spouses can become discouraged, or are not effectively represented, or may require more time to perfect their appeal to the CAVC; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion shall support legislation to extend the Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims Notice of Appeal filing period to one year following BVA final denial of an appeal.

Resolution No. 33: The American Legion Policy on Assured Funding for VA Medical Care
Origin: Georgia
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) annual budget consists of both mandatory and discretionary funding; and

WHEREAS, Mandatory funding refers to a process where the level of funding is governed by formulas or criteria set forth in authorizing legislation rather than by appropriations; and

WHEREAS, Under budget law, a mandatory program is one that requires provision of benefits to all who meet the eligibility requirements of the law; and

WHEREAS, Mandatory funding is provided for programs such as Social Security, Medicare, and VA compensation and pension; and

WHEREAS, In contrast, discretionary funding is "all other" funding subject to the annual appropriations process; and

WHEREAS, Discretionary funding in VA's current annual budget provides for programs such as medical care, major and minor construction, National Cemetery Administration, State Extended Care Facility Grants, and State Cemetery Grants; and

WHEREAS, There have been annual struggles to obtain sufficient funding to provide access to quality care for eligible veterans seeking care in VA facilities; and

WHEREAS, A method to provide dependable, stable and sustained funding for veterans health care is needed; and

WHEREAS, Assured (mandated) funding is one component of a combination of funding mechanisms to ensure adequate Veterans Health Administration (VHA) funding; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That Congress designate assured funding for VA medical care; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That Congress continue to provide discretionary funding required to fully operate other programs within the Veterans Health Administration's budgetary jurisdiction; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That Congress provide, if necessary, supplemental appropriations for budgetary shortfalls in VHA's mandated and discretionary appropriations to meet the health care needs of America's veterans.

Resolution No. 34: The American Legion Policy on Former Prisoners of War
Origin: Georgia
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, In its interest for the welfare of all those who have served in the nation's Armed Forces, one of the major concerns of The American Legion has been the welfare of those who have been prisoners of war (POWs); and

WHEREAS, The American Legion has supported various legislative measures intended to alleviate the disabilities that afflict former POWs as a result of experience during internment; and

WHEREAS, In the past, The American Legion supported enactment of Public Law 97-37, the Former Prisoners of War Benefits Act of 1981, approved August 14, 1981, and the presumptions included in Public Law 100-322; and

WHEREAS, Continued scientific observation of their condition during the years subsequent to their internment indicates additional health problems probably associated with the conditions of their internment; and

WHEREAS, The United States has a fundamental obligation to do everything possible to alleviate any and all health problems of former POWs and see to their physical, social, and economic well-being; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion believes there is a need to further modify the current provisions of title 38, United States Code, that provide for former POWs; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion shall support legislation to amend section 1112 of title 38, United States Code, so as to provide presumptive service connection for the following conditions in the absence of demonstrable intercurrent disease or injury:

1. **Hepatitis or other infectious diseases of the liver;**
2. **Arthritis, including osteoporosis;**
3. **Chronic pulmonary disease (where there is a history of forced labor in mines during internment);**
4. **Chronic liver disease;**
5. **Adult-onset diabetes; and, be it further**

RESOLVED, That The American Legion seek legislation to be enacted to rescind the requirement in 38 U.S.C. § 1112(b) that a POW must be held in captivity for at least 30 days to receive benefits and compensation for any presumptive disabilities, specified in that section, that were incurred in captivity; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion shall support any and all efforts on the part of the United States government to alleviate and ameliorate social, economic, and physical disabilities experienced by former POWs where such disabilities can reasonably be attributed to the effects of internment by the enemies of the United States.

Resolution No. 35: The American Legion Policy on VA Compensation
Origin: Georgia
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The current disability compensation program has proven to be a fair and equitable manner in which to indemnify veterans suffering disabilities that are incurred or aggravated in line of duty in the military, naval, or air service; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion is totally supportive of every benefit that is currently provided to veterans for their past contributions to their country and its welfare; and

WHEREAS, Disability compensation is a monthly payment made by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) based on a schedule of ratings of reduction in earning capacity from specific injuries as set forth in title 38, Code of Federal Regulations; and

WHEREAS, It is the opinion of The American Legion that there is no way to adequately compensate a veteran for loss of ability to be a working, productive member of society, and that the current monthly rates do not adequately compensate these disabled veterans for the loss due to reduced earning capacity; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion believes Congress should periodically review the amount of disability compensation veterans are receiving and provide a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) to assure they have sufficient economic support; and

WHEREAS, Periodically, proposals are made to tax VA disability compensation benefits; and

WHEREAS, Taxation of these benefits would amount to nothing more than a permanent, enduring reduction in benefits and would demean the sacrifice and service of our nation's service-connected disabled veteran population; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion vigorously oppose any proposal that would subject VA disability compensation benefits to taxation; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion oppose any administrative or legislative proposal to dilute or eliminate any provision of the disability compensation program; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion support legislation to amend title 38, United States Code, section 1114, to provide a periodic COLA increase and to increase the monthly rates of disability compensation; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion oppose any legislative effort to automatically index such cost-of-living adjustments to the cost-of-living adjustment authorized for Social Security recipients, nonservice-connected disability recipients and death pension beneficiaries.

Resolution No. 36: Reduce the Number of Years of One-Hundred Percent (100%) Service Connection Required for Dependency and Indemnity Compensation Purposes
Origin: Georgia
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
(Consolidated with Resolution No. 208 (IL))

WHEREAS, The American Legion is a national organization of veterans who have dedicated themselves to the service of the community, state and nation; and

WHEREAS, Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) is paid to the widows and widowers of service-connected disabled veterans who die as a result of their service-related condition or who at the time of death were rated 100% service-connected disabled for at least ten years; and

WHEREAS, Many veterans don’t reach the 100% level until they are much older and their condition has worsened; and

WHEREAS, They often pass away due to other than their service-related condition well before they have been receiving the 100% rate for the required length of time; and

WHEREAS, The spouse has usually been the primary care giver and companion for these disabled veterans throughout the veteran’s lifetime and the VA compensation has been a primary means of support; and

WHEREAS, The surviving spouse in many instances can no longer count on VA benefits for assistance due to a 100% rating of less than ten years; and

WHEREAS, This causes a dramatic change in the quality of life of the surviving spouse; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion shall support

legislation to reduce the number of years a veteran must be rated 100% from ten years to five years for eligibility to DIC payments.

Resolution No. 37: Amend Title 38, United States Code, to Increase The Special Monthly Compensation (K) Award
Origin: Georgia
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
(Consolidated with Resolution No. 212 (IL))

WHEREAS, The American Legion is a national organization of veterans who have dedicated themselves to the service of the community, state and nation; and

WHEREAS, Title 38, United States Code (USC), section 1114, provides for the payment of disability compensation for a service-connected disability, which is rated from ten percent to one hundred percent under the Department of Veterans Affairs' Schedule for Rating Disabilities for the particular disability; and

WHEREAS, An additional $87 in Special Monthly Compensation (SMC) is payable, under title 38, USC, section 1114 (k), where a veteran, as the result of a service-connected disability, has suffered the anatomical loss or loss of use of one or more creative organs, or one foot, or one hand, both buttocks, or blindness in one eye and having only light perception in the other eye, or rendered unable to speak, or deafness in both ears, or in the case of a female veteran, suffered the anatomical loss of one or both breasts, including by mastectomy; and

WHEREAS, The SMC (k) award, which is paid over and above the amount of compensation authorized under title 38, USC, section 1114, for these losses or loss-of-use disabilities, is intended to recognize the lifelong physical limitations and psychological trauma associated with such loss or loss of use of the veterans' limbs or other body parts; and

WHEREAS, In contrast to regular increases in the rates of disability compensation through the years, the SMC (k) award, which was initially authorized in 1939, has been increased infrequently; and

WHEREAS, In 1939, the SMC (k) award was originally $18.75 when the rate of compensation for being totally or one-hundred percent disabled was $75; and

WHEREAS, In 2008, the SMC (k) award is currently $91 and the rate of compensation for being totally or one-hundred percent disabled is $2,393; and

WHEREAS, Veterans are again being placed in harm's way and many of the seriously wounded veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan have suffered anatomical loss or loss of use injuries; and

WHEREAS, The token payment of $91 is a disgrace to those men and women who have put their bodies on the line in the service of their country and paid a heavy price as a result; and

WHEREAS, To restore the original twenty-five percent (25%) differential that existed in 1939 between the amount of the (k) award and the compensation rate for being totally or one-hundred percent disabled, the SMC (k) award should be increased to $598; and

WHEREAS, This substantial increase would provide a more appropriate level of additional compensation to those veterans who have suffered these types of grievous wounds; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion support an increase in the SMC (k) award, under title 38, USC, section 1114(k) from $91 to $598.

Resolution No. 38: Remove the Specific Date to Award Dependency and Indemnity Compensation Benefits to Surviving Spouses of Former Prisoners of War
Origin: Georgia
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
(Consolidated with Resolution No. 205 (IL))

WHEREAS, The American Legion is an organization of war veterans who have dedicated themselves to the service of the community, state and nation; and

WHEREAS, The Veterans Millennium Benefits Act, Public Law 106-11, authorized payments of Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) benefits to the survivors of former Prisoners of War (POWs) who died after September 30, 1999, and who were continuously rated totally disabled due to a service-connected disability for a period of not less than one year immediately preceding death; and

WHEREAS, There are thousands of widows whose spouse was a former POW who died before September 30, 1999, and who was rated totally disabled for over one year for a service-connected disability; and

WHEREAS, These widows are not able to become eligible for DIC because their husband's death was before September 30, 1999; and

WHEREAS, When other survivor benefit programs were liberalized, they usually covered the widows of veterans who died before the enactment of the law, e.g. deaths from cancers from Agent Orange; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion shall support legislation to amend section 1318 of title 38, United States Code, to remove the date of September 30, 1999, and substituted "who died any time after discharge from active duty and who were rated totally disabled for over one year."

Resolution No. 39: VA Role in National Emergency Preparedness
Origin: Georgia
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, Under title 38, United States Code, 8111A, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has been established as the principal medical care back-up for military health care "during and immediately following a period of war, or a period of national emergency declared by the President or the Congress that involves the use of the Armed Forces in armed conflict"; and

WHEREAS, Under the National Disaster Medical System (NDMS) and the Federal Response Plan (FRP) VA's specialized duties entail conducting and evaluating disaster and terrorist attack simulation exercises; managing the nation's stockpile of pharmaceuticals for biological and chemical toxins; maintaining a rapid response team for radiological releases; and training public and private NDMS medical center personnel around the country in properly responding to biological, chemical, or radiological disasters; and

WHEREAS, The VA Strategic Plan for 2006-2011 lists as an objective, "Improve nation's response in the event of a national emergency or natural disaster by providing timely and effective contingency medical support and other services"; and

WHEREAS, If VA is to play a key supporting role as part of the FRP and the NDMS, it must have adequate resources to execute its role; and

WHEREAS, The Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services (CARES) process was designed to ensure that VA's capital infrastructure meets the needs of veterans for health care services in 2010 and beyond; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That implementation of the CARES decision must take into consideration and sustain VA's ability to perform its fourth mission as a back up to the Department of Defense; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to continue to take an active role in the development and implementation of plans to enhance federal homeland security initiatives; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion strongly urge the President and Congress to provide VA with the funding necessary to further enhance its capacity to act as a back-up to the Department of Defense in times of war and to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in responding to national emergencies.

Resolution No. 40: Allow Beneficiaries to Retain $90 of their Benefits While in Medicaid-Covered Nursing Homes
Origin: Georgia
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
(Consolidated with Resolution No. 210 (IL))

WHEREAS, The American Legion is an organization of war veterans who have dedicated themselves to the service of the community, state and nation; and

WHEREAS, When a veteran without dependents in receipt of pension benefits is covered by Medicaid for nursing home care, Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) pension is reduced to $90 for incidental expenses; and

WHEREAS, However, when a veteran without dependents who is receiving compensation benefits and is similarly covered by Medicaid, only $30 a month is allowed for incidentals; and

WHEREAS, When a helpless child who is in receipt of pension or Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) and is similarly covered by Medicaid, there is no provision for VA to reduce the individual's award for incidental expenses; and

WHEREAS, When a surviving parent who is in receipt of Parents' DIC and is similarly covered by Medicaid, there is no provision for VA to reduce the individual's award for incidental expenses; and

WHEREAS, Under current VA and Medicaid statutes, the service-disabled veteran, helpless child and surviving parent are financially disadvantaged; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion shall sponsor and support legislation to authorize veterans in receipt of VA compensation, or a helpless child in receipt of VA pension or DIC, or a surviving parent in receipt of VA Parents' DIC, to keep up to $90 of their monthly VA benefits for incidental expenses while in a Medicaid-covered nursing home.

Resolution No. 41: Presumptive Medical Care for Persian Gulf War Veterans
Origin: Georgia
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, Many servicemembers who served in the Gulf War suffer from long-term, life-altering ailments and chronic multi-symptom illnesses that have unknown etiolgy—like chronic fatigue syndrome, fibromyalgia, irritable bowel syndrome, concentration problems; and

WHEREAS, Certain ailments caused by environmnental exposures may produce unforeseen health effects that may manifest in the future; and

WHEREAS, Eligibility for Gulf War veterans in Priority Group 6 of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)'s health care system—established by the Veterans' Health Care Eligibility Reform Act of 1996 (PL 104-262)—expired in 2002; and

WHEREAS, Although VA has continued to treat ill Gulf War veterans, despite the expiration of its authority to do so, lack of congressionally mandated authority to treat these veterans could mean abrupt discontinuation of the treatment that is currently available; and

WHEREAS, Continuation of care for ill Gulf War veterans would provide invaluable data that could be used to examine the nature of Gulf War illnesses, provide better care for ill Gulf War veterans, and provide preparation for treatment of future servicemembers who may become ill after deployments to the Southwest Asia theater; and

WHEREAS, Congress needs to grant VA the authority to re-establish eligibility for Gulf War veterans in Priority Group 6; and

WHEREAS, Those veterans who have become ill while performing duty in the Gulf War deserve proper medical care from a grateful nation; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion encourage Congress to enact legislation to give VA the authority to include ill Gulf War veterans in Priority Group 6; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That VA continue to provide appropriate medical examinations and treatment, including follow-up treatment, to all veterans of the Gulf War who report signs or symptoms that may be associated with diseases endemic to that war region and other conditions related to the experience

Resolution No. 66: Petition Congress for the Construction of a Veterans' Justice Center and Courthouse
Origin: Idaho
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
(Consolidated with Resolution No. 232 (NY))

WHEREAS, The American Legion is an organization of war time veterans who have dedicated themselves to the service of the community, state, and nation; and

WHEREAS, There are over 23 million United States veterans who have served the country and such service should be honored; and

WHEREAS, Of those 23 million veterans, more than 2.9 million are currently receiving some level of VA disability and compensation benefits; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion is instrumental in helping veterans navigate the VA claim process and continues to be an advocate for veterans' rights, including independent judicial review at the United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims (CAVC); and

WHEREAS, On November 18, 1988, the CAVC (originally the United States Court of Veterans Appeals) was created under Article I of the U.S. Constitution pursuant to the Veterans' Judicial Review Act (Pub. L. 100-687); and

WHEREAS, The CAVC is a Federal Court of limited jurisdiction, which provides impartial and independent judicial review of final decisions by the Board of Veterans' Appeal; and

WHEREAS, The number of cases before the CAVC has grown exponentially in the last decade; and

WHEREAS, The most recent data reflects that in 2007, 4,644 new cases were filed at the CAVC and the Court issued 4,877 total decisions and that number is expected to continue to grow; and

WHEREAS, The CAVC's consistently increasing caseload has led to the need for additional Court staff, resources, and space in order for the Court to appropriately manage the challenges associated therewith; and

WHEREAS, The CAVC currently occupies the top 3 floors of 625 Indiana Ave, N.W., Suite 900, Washington, D.C., 20004, and eleven story commercial building that is shared by various other tenants including Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board, Office of the Federal Public Defender of the District of Columbia, Department of Veterans Affairs, Office of the General Counsel, Group VII, Paralyzed Veterans of America, and several retailers; and

WHEREAS, The CAVC is the only Federal Court without its own independent courthouse; and

WHEREAS, In 2004, Congress requested a feasibility study be completed for a dedicated Veterans Courthouse and Justice Center, and in May 2007, Congress requested a follow-up study, recognizing the CAVC's continued growth and the need for expansion of the Court due to space limitations at its current location; and

WHEREAS, Veterans who served this country honorably and courageously deserve to be recognized by a Justice Center & Courthouse built to memorialize their distinguished service, ensure that their rights under the law are protected, and maintain the integrity of the both the Veterans' Benefits System and CAVC as an avenue for independent and impartial judicial review; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion petition Congress to develop and construct a Veterans' Justice Center & Courthouse; and be it finally

RESOLVED, That such Veterans' Justice Center & Courthouse be built in an appropriate location within the heart of our nation's capital, Washington, D.C., in close proximity to public transportation with sufficient space for those veterans service organizations that wish to co-locate with the court.

Resolution No. 69: The American Legion Policy on State Veterans Home
Origin: Virginia
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
(Consolidated with Resolution No. 240 (OH))

WHEREAS, State Veterans Homes were founded for indigent and disabled Civil War veterans beginning in the late 1800s and have continued to serve subsequent generations of veterans for over one hundred years; and

WHEREAS, Today, there are 133 State Veterans Homes facilities in a total of 49 states and territories with over 30,000 beds providing nursing home, hospital and domiciliary care, with more capacity being added annually; and

WHEREAS, The State Veterans Home Program has proven to be a cost-effective provider of quality care to many of the nation's veterans; and

WHEREAS, This program is an important adjunct to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) own nursing, hospital and domiciliary programs; and

WHEREAS, Title 38, United States Code, authorizes VA per diem payments for veterans residing in State Veterans Homes; and

WHEREAS, Under the provisions of title 38, United States Code, VA is also authorized to make payments to states to assist in the construction and maintenance of State Veterans Homes; and

WHEREAS, The Grant for Construction of State Veterans Home Program, which provides funding for 65% of the total cost of building new veterans homes, has not been able to keep pace with the number of grant applications; and

WHEREAS, The enactment of the Veterans Millennium Health Care and Benefits bill makes it mandatory that VA provide institutional care and nursing home service to veterans with service-connected disabilities rated at 70% or higher; and

WHEREAS, Currently the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) will only provide these services to 70% or higher service-connected veterans, if the veteran either resides in a VA long-term care facility or a private contracted facility, but not in a State Veterans Home; and

WHEREAS, Veterans with a rating of 50% or greater service connection receive VA pharmaceutical benefits at no cost; and

WHEREAS, Pharmaceutical services are available at the Veterans State Homes for these veterans, but they are required to unnecessarily travel to VA facilities to receive them; and

WHEREAS, Recognizing the growth in long-term health care needs of older veterans, it is essential to maintain the State Veterans Home Program as a viable and important adjunct health care provider to the VA system; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion support enactment of legislation to require VA per diem payments at a rate of 50% of the national average cost of providing care in a State Veterans Home; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge Congress to pass legislation that adequately funds the State Veterans Home Construction Grant projects; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That VA should allow for full reimbursement of nursing home care to 70% service-connected veterans or higher, if the veteran resides in a State Veterans Home; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion support the receipt of prescription drugs and over-the-counter medication in State Homes by veterans enrolled in the VA health care system who have a VA disability rating of 50% or greater; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge the National Association of State Veterans Homes and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to support mutual planning efforts, enhanced medical sharing agreements, and enhanced-use construction contracts with qualified providers.

Resolution No. 70: The American Legion Policy on Opening the Federal Supply Schedule for Pharmaceuticals to Medicare and Medicaid
Origin: Virginia
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The Federal Supply Schedule for Pharmaceuticals (FSS-P) is a schedule of pharmaceutical supply contracts awarded to responsible vendors supplying comparable products and services at fair and reasonable prices to the Government; and

WHEREAS, FSS-P is essentially a price catalog of approximately 24,000 pharmaceutical products available to the Federal Government; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is the largest purchaser of pharmaceuticals under FSS-P; and

WHEREAS, Pricing of pharmaceuticals to VA is at least 24% below and as much as 60% below drug manufacturers' most favored non-federal, non-retail customer pricing; and

WHEREAS, Known as Federal Ceiling Prices (FCP), these prices are generally 14-20% lower than regular negotiated FSS-P prices; and

WHEREAS, Medicaid is a joint Federal and State program that pays for medical assistance for individuals and families with low incomes and relatively few assets; and

WHEREAS, Numerous states encounter shortfalls in Medicaid funds and implement aggressive measures to control growth and curb expenditures, including prescription drug expenditures; and

WHEREAS, Beneficiaries of prescription drug benefits under Medicaid who also receive medical care under Medicare Parts A and B are known as "dual-eligible"; and

WHEREAS, "Dual-eligible" are mostly elderly poor who account for 34% of the enrolled Medicaid population, but 80% of the Medicaid drug bill; and

WHEREAS, "Dual-eligible" beneficiaries were automatically enrolled into the new Medicare Part D prescription drug benefit; and

WHEREAS, In 1990, the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1990 (OBRA90) required drug manufacturers to provide rebates to State Medicaid programs for outpatient drug purchases in exchange for Medicaid reimbursement; and

WHEREAS, Manufacturers are willing to price FSS-P low because it accounts for a very small fraction of the total domestic drug market and because up to 70% of new doctors receive some residency training in medical school affiliated VA medical centers, thereby creating a continuous flow of loyal prescribers of their products; and

WHEREAS, When OBRA90 Medicaid rebates went into effect, manufacturers responded by raising FSS-P pricing to VA some 14%; and

WHEREAS, If Federal legislation mandates that the new Medicare Part D drug benefit be tied to FSS-P, pharmaceutical manufacturers will act predictably to raise FSS-P prices to VA; and

WHEREAS, U.S. veterans receiving outpatient VA pharmacy benefits requiring co-payments of $8.00 for a 30-day supply of medication would almost certainly end up paying more were VA to lose its protected FSS-P pricing; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion has consistently opposed increases in prescription co-payments in the past, arguing that corrections to other programs should not be made "on the backs of veterans"; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion oppose any Federal legislation that would open the Federal Supply Schedule for Pharmaceuticals to Medicaid, Medicare Part D, or any other entity or program not now specifically authorized to purchase on the Federal Supply Schedule for Pharmaceuticals.

Resolution No. 71: The GI Bill of Health
Origin: Virginia
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The American Legion's intention in its initial draft of the GI Bill of Health was to ensure the permanent existence of an effective veterans health care delivery system for the nation's veterans and their eligible dependents into the 21st century; and

WHEREAS, For the past 50 years, the Department of Veterans Affairs has provided high quality health care to America's veterans, trained numerous health care providers, engaged in innovative research, and supported the Department of Defense and the Federal Emergency Management Agency in times of crisis; and

WHEREAS, VA has changed the way it delivers health care during the past decade through restructuring and legislative initiatives, which has resulted in the implementation of several of the original provisions of the GI Bill of Health; and

WHEREAS, The elements of the GI Bill of Health that have already been accomplished under measures established by Eligibility Reform in 1996 and the Millennium Bill in 1999, include:

- Portability
- An equitable standardized resource distribution method
- Extension of health care access to all veterans
- A defined benefits package
- Long-term care for veterans rated 70 percent or higher or for service-connected conditions; and

WHEREAS, There are two main components of the GI Bill of Health that have yet to be addressed—Medicare Reimbursement and dependents access to VA health care; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion support the enactment of the remaining main components of the GI Bill of Health involving Medicare Reimbursement and dependent access to VA health care.

Resolution No. 85: Reinstate Vietnam Veterans with Agent Orange Exposure in the Department of Veterans Affairs Priority Group 6
Origin: New Jersey
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, Over 2 million Veterans served in Vietnam during the Vietnam War and are presumed to have been exposed to dioxin in Agent Orange; and

WHEREAS, A significant number of Vietnam Veterans have developed many different severe diseases which are or may be related to the aforementioned exposure; and

WHEREAS, Many of the diseases contracted by Vietnam Veterans are not accepted as presumptive conditions for the purpose of compensation benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs; and

WHEREAS, Until recently, Vietnam Veterans seeking care for a condition claimed to be related to said exposure were eligible for needed medical care, as those Veterans were enrolled and placed in Veterans Health Administration Priority Category six (6); and

WHEREAS, The regulation placing those Vietnam Veterans in Category six (6) has expired and has not been re-instated; and

WHEREAS, Many Vietnam Veterans may no longer be able to apply for medical care from the VA unless they meet other criteria which places them in Priority Categories one (1) to seven (7); now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion seek and support re-instatement of the regulation placing Vietnam Veterans seeking care for a condition claimed to be related to Agent Orange exposure in VHA Priority Category six (6).

Resolution No. 122: The American Legion Policy on Radiation
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
(Consolidated with Resolutions No. 235 (NY) and 236 (NY))

WHEREAS, Title 38, United States Code (USC), section 1112, lists various diseases which will be presumed to be service-connected in radiation-exposed veterans; and

WHEREAS, The term "radiation-exposed veteran" is defined as a veteran who participated in a radiation-risk activity while on active duty or inactive duty for training; and

WHEREAS, The term, "radiation-risk activity" is defined as involving onsite participation in an atmospheric nuclear weapons test, or the occupation of Hiroshima or Nagasaki during the period beginning on August 6, 1945, and ending on July 1, 1946, or internment as a POW in Japan during WWII which resulted in an opportunity for radiation exposure, or participation in underground nuclear tests at Amchitka Island,

Alaska prior to January 1, 1974, or service at gaseous diffusion plants at Paducah, Kentucky, Portsmouth, Ohio, or Oak Ridge, Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, Radiogenic diseases recognized as being presumed to be related to veteran's exposure to radiation in service-listed in title 38, Code Of Federal Regulation (CFR), section 3.309 - include various cancers that may manifest decades after exposure; and

WHEREAS, Title 38, CFR, section 3.311, requires VA to consider the circumstances of the veteran's service and make a determination of whether the veteran's disease resulted from the claimed exposure; and

WHEREAS, Such determinations are based heavily on an estimate of the veteran's probable dose exposure; and

WHEREAS, It is well documented that, because thousands of veterans who participated in the atmospheric nuclear weapons tests and various other radiation-risk activities did not have dosimetry badges, and record-keeping by the military and other Federal agencies concerning individual and group exposures was poor, current radiation dose estimates have been arbitrary, unreliable, and inaccurate; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) continued use of questionable radiation dose estimates has caused the claims of thousands of radiation-exposed veterans to be denied; and

WHEREAS, Congress expressed concern about this problem in a provision of Public Law (PL) 106-419 requiring VA to conduct a two-year study of the radiation dose estimate program and report back to Congress; and

WHEREAS, Based on the lack of credible historic data as to the amount of radiation atomic veterans were actually exposed to, The American Legion believes this requirement in the regulations should be eliminated; and

WHEREAS, PL 106-398 included provisions amending the Radiation Compensation Act of 1990 to include workers in Department of Energy (DOE) nuclear weapons-related programs who were exposed to radiation, beryllium, or silica; and

WHEREAS, Over the years, thousands of veterans have been assigned duty at various DOE nuclear weapons development, testing and manufacturing facilities, such as Hanford, Washington, Oak Ridge, Tennessee and others, and would have been similarly at risk of exposure to radiation, beryllium, or silica; and

WHEREAS, The claim for a radiogenic disease or a disease related to beryllium, or silica by such veterans would be denied by VA, because their military duty does not meet the current definition of a radiation-risk activity in title 38 USC and proof of such exposure for direct service connection would be difficult if not impossible to obtain, nor do these veterans meet the eligibility criteria for benefits under the Radiation Compensation Act of 1990 as amended; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion seek legislation to eliminate the radiation dose estimate requirement in claims of veterans who were exposed to ionizing radiation during their military service; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion seek legislation to recognize military duty at all DOE nuclear weapons development, testing and manufacturing facilities as a "radiation-risk activity"; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion seek legislation it include title 38, United States Code, those diseases recognized for benefit purposes under the Radiation Compensation Act of 1990 as amended, including those resulting from exposure to beryllium and silica.

Resolution No. 123: Extend VA Protection Life Insurance to Service-Connected Who Are Permanently and Totally Disabled
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs Mortgage Protection Life Insurance is presently available to veterans entitled to the special adapted housing award under Section 2102 (a) of Title 38, United States Code; and

WHEREAS, Service-connected veterans rated as permanently and totally disabled cannot obtain Mortgage Protection Life Insurance through commercial insurance companies; and

WHEREAS, Their widows and dependents must bear an undue hardship upon the death of such veterans; now, therefore, be

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That the members of The American Legion seek the enactment of legislation, which would extend the Veterans Administration Mortgage Protection Life Insurance to service-connected veterans who are rated as permanently and totally disabled.

Resolution No. 124: Recognize Operations in Lebanon (1958), Grenada (1983), Panama (1989-1990) as Periods of War for Department of Veterans Affairs Pension Purposes
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, Subsection 11 of section 101, title 38, United States Code (USC), defines "period of war" as the Spanish-American War, Mexican Border Period, World War I, World War II, the Korean Conflict, the Vietnam Era, the Gulf War and the period beginning on the date of any future declaration of war by Congress and the ending on the date prescribed by Presidential proclamation or concurrent resolution of Congress; and

WHEREAS, Title 38, USC, section 1521 (a) provides that the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) shall pay pension to each veteran of a "period of war" who meets the length of service requirements specified in section 1521 (j) and who is permanently and totally disabled and who meets the income criteria in this section; and

WHEREAS, Title 38, USC, section 101 (6) recognizes that, for VA purposes, the dates for the "period of war' for the Spanish-American War (April 21, 1898, to July 4, 1902) also include service during the Philippine Insurrection, Boxer Rebellion, and service in the Moro Province from April 21, 1898, to July 5, 1903; and

WHEREAS, Operation "Blue Bat" in Lebanon, July 1, 1958, to November 1, 1958, Operation "Urgent Fury" in Grenada, October 23, 1983, and Operation "Just Cause" in Panama, December 20, 1989, to January 31, 1990, are not qualifying service for pension or benefit purposes, under title 38, USC, definition of a "period of war"; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That the Congress be urged to include in the definition of "period of war" in title 38, United States Code, sections 101 (11) and 1521, the following periods—the operations in Lebanon in 1958, Grenada in 1983, and Panama in 1989-1990 for the purpose of establishing entitlement to VA pension.

Resolution No. 125: All Veterans Receive "Wartime" Benefits for Active Military Service Between February 28, 1961 and August 5, 1964
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, Certain VA benefits require wartime service by veterans; and

WHEREAS, The present dates for wartime service during the Vietnam War are August 5, 1964, through May 7, 1975; and

WHEREAS, On November 10, 1997, Public Law 105-110 was signed by President Clinton; and

WHEREAS, This legislation amended the public law which established The American Legion (41 Stat. 285; 36 United States Code (USC) 45), approved September 16, 1919, by striking December 22, 1961, and inserting February 28, 1961; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion has always advocated the principle of equal benefits for equal service and believes that wartime service is not limited to only those who served in combat; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion believes the provision in section 101(29(A), title 38, USC, which limits entitlement to wartime benefits to those who served "in-country in the Republic of Vietnam" in the period February 28, 1961, to August 5, 1964,

discriminates against those other veterans who served on active duty during this period, but who did not happen to have been stationed in Vietnam; and

WHEREAS, During these early years of the war in Vietnam, those serving on active duty in other parts of the world were a part of the build-up of military forces in Vietnam and were subject to transfer to Vietnam at any time; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion shall seek legislation to establish February 28, 1961, as the beginning date of the Vietnam War for VA benefit purposes.

Resolution No. 126: Support Presumption of Service Connection for Hepatitis C
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, Hepatitis C is an easily transmittable blood-borne virus, which can result in long-term, potentially fatal health problems; and

WHEREAS, Because of the exposure risk factors directly related to military service, veterans have a much higher incidence of hepatitis C than the general population; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) estimates 10 to 20 percent of veterans currently have hepatitis C, compared to under 2 percent for the general population; and

WHEREAS, Vietnam veterans are the group most directly affected by the hepatitis C virus; and

WHEREAS, Many veterans who contracted hepatitis C 25 or 30 years ago or more in service are now showing signs of severe liver disease and 52 percent of the liver transplants done by VA are for veterans with hepatitis C; and

WHEREAS, In 85 percent of cases, no acute symptoms would have shown up at the time of infection with hepatitis C; and

WHEREAS, Military training and combat situations offer many opportunities for transmitting the blood-borne hepatitis virus through blood to blood contact; and

WHEREAS, No effective blood test for hepatitis C was available until 1992; and

WHEREAS, Veterans with hepatitis C who were treated for acute hepatitis during military service and who now claim service connection are generally denied by VA, because they cannot prove the current hepatitis C is related to the hepatitis noted in service; and

WHEREAS, The Board of Veterans' Appeals often rejects claims for service connection for hepatitis C, because the veteran's medical records do not show the presence of hepatitis C at time of discharge from service; and

WHEREAS, Because of the nature of this disease and the long latency period, veterans who experience certain exposure risk factors in service, such as: blood transfusion prior to 1992; exposure to blood on or through the skin or mucous membrane; hemodialysis; experience of a needle-stick accident or medical event involving a needle, not due to the veteran's willful misconduct; a diagnosis of unexplained liver disease in service; experience of an unexplained liver dysfunction or abnormal liver test; or duty as a health-care position or specialty as prescribed by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs; should be accorded a statutory presumption for the purpose of establishing entitlement to service connection for hepatitis C; and

WHEREAS, Service connection for hepatitis C is important to veterans and their families, since it entitles the veteran to compensation for any disability related to the disease as well as necessary medical care; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion strongly urge the Department of Veterans Affairs to expeditiously promulgate regulations providing for presumptive service connection for hepatitis C; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion support legislation to provide for a statutory presumption of service connection for hepatitis C under certain conditions in service; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the Department of Veterans Affairs provide regular notification to Congress, the veterans service organizations, and veterans on new treatment modalities for hepatitis C.

Resolution No. 127: Revision of Work-Rate Standards for Department of Veterans Affairs Adjudicators
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The current Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) work-rate standards are based upon a series of work credits or End Products (EPs) that can be taken upon completion of work at the various stages in the processing of a claim; and

WHEREAS, This data is used to measure and evaluate each individual adjudicator's performance as well as the station's overall performance; and

WHEREAS, Under this type of system, the amount of work performed is measured in terms of the cumulative number of EPs reported without regard to whether the action taken, as indicated by the EP, was correct or proper; and

WHEREAS, Since all action—good and bad—receives the same amount of work credit, there is no incentive to do good quality work or disincentive to do poor quality work, which makes the use of these work credits prone to manipulation and abuse; and

WHEREAS, The use of a piecemeal approach to work measurement does not provide accurate or reliable information on the actual amount of work being performed, its quality, or the amount of time and resources needed to properly process a claim; and

WHEREAS, The number of new appeals filed each year and the overturn rate by the Board of Veterans' Appeals (BVA) and the courts can be useful tools in gauging claimant satisfaction with the "quality" of a VA regional office decision and how the BVA views the propriety of these decisions; and

WHEREAS, Since decisions of VA regional office adjudicators do not become final until ruled upon by the BVA, or the claimant does not file a timely appeal within one year; and

WHEREAS, Without a fundamental change in the work measurement system, the BVA will continue to be burdened with an inordinate number of unnecessary appeals, and veterans and their families forced to endure prolonged hardship while waiting for a final decision on their claim; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion seek legislation to amend title 38, United States Code, to provide that VA regional office adjudicators shall not receive work credit for a claim until the decision in that claim becomes final, meaning that no future action is permitted by statute, either because the claimant has failed to initiate a timely appeal or the Board of Veterans' Appeals has rendered a final decision on the claim.

Resolution No. 128: Oppose Legislation Authorizing Legion-Accredited Representatives to Develop Claims
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, There are over 25,000,000 honorably discharged veterans of the Armed Forces of the United States; and

WHEREAS, Currently, there are approximately 650,000 veterans who have some type of action pending on their claims by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA); and

WHEREAS, Approximately 168,000 of those claims are over six months old; and

WHEREAS, In addition, there is a growing backlog of pending appeals, which is now over 169,000 cases, as well as approximately 18,000 remanded cases at the Appeals Management Center; and

WHEREAS, Appeals are, by definition, among the oldest claims in the system and reflect the claimant's belief that they have not received a fair or proper decision; and

WHEREAS, The nation's veteran population is dying at a rate of over 1,300 veterans a day; and

WHEREAS, Proposed legislation to reduce the backlog of veteran's claims at VA was previously introduced in the United States House of Representatives; and

WHEREAS, Under currently proposed legislation, a pilot program, establishing an official federally funded arrangement between County Veteran Service Officers and VA in five states (California, Florida, Ohio, South Carolina, and Texas), with the potential of expanding to other states upon the request of a County Veterans Service Officer in such a

state, would be created in order to eliminate the backlog of claims for veterans benefits; and

WHEREAS, Many County Veterans Service Officers are, in fact, accredited representatives of The American Legion and employed by local municipalities; and

WHEREAS, The proposed legislation would allow the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to choose a County Veterans Service Office for development of a claim based upon the office's geographical proximity to the claimant; and

WHEREAS, County Veterans Service Officers are already working long hours to assist veterans and eligible dependents in the application for, administration of, or receipt of benefits under any federal, state, or county veterans benefits program; and

WHEREAS, The Secretary of Veterans Affairs, under this program, would refer claims to the County Veterans Service Officer for specific development as specified by the Secretary; and

WHEREAS, Claims submitted to the County Veterans Service Officer under this program would be treated, for receipt of claim purposes, as if submitted to VA; and

WHEREAS, VA referrals to a County Service Officer imply a dual role, that of advocate for the veteran and VA adjudicator of the veteran all at the same time; and

WHEREAS, This dual role would essentially make the County Service Officer a quasi VA employee, creating an inherent conflict of interest between the County Service Officer's role as a veterans advocate and his/her function as a quasi employee of VA; and

WHEREAS, VA referrals could jeopardize the veteran-service officer confidentiality and even violate the Privacy Act and Power of Attorney relationship; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion adamantly oppose any federal legislation requiring an accredited representative of The American Legion to develop claims on behalf of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs under a contractual arrangement between VA and County or State government or under any other arrangement where the representative would be acting in an official capacity directly on behalf of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

Resolution No. 129: Clarification of "Service in the Republic of Vietnam" for the Purpose of Agent Orange Presumption
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has begun to implement a General Counsel opinion that impacts negatively on the eligibility of veterans who served their country during a time of war; and

WHEREAS, Until most recently, VA awarded service connection on a presumptive basis for all individuals who served on the Republic of Vietnam soil and also those who served in the territorial waters of Vietnam, thus recognizing such service as service in the Republic of Vietnam; and

WHEREAS, Congress in its plain language included a definition of "Service in Republic of Vietnam" in the most general of terms; "performed active military, naval or air service in the Republic of Vietnam during the period beginning on January 9, 1962, and ending on May 7, 1975," so as to plainly be deemed an intent of inclusion, rather than exclusion; and

WHEREAS, Succeeding interpretations in 38 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) and General Counsel precedent opinion (VAOPGCPREC) prior to VAOPGCREC 27-97 have considered service in a "naval" capacity as service in the offshore or territorial waters of the Republic of Vietnam, as included in the category of "exposed" to Agent Orange, and, therefore, included in those eligible for presumptive consideration; and

WHEREAS, The plain language and sentence structure of the statute is expanded in 38 CFR 3.307(a)6(iii) to include restrictive terminology which was further supported and confirmed in VAOPGCREC 27-97; and

WHEREAS, The sentence structure and plain meaning of even the restrictive language can be interpreted to include "service in the territorial waters offshore" as "service in the Republic of Vietnam;" as "territorial waters" would be considered to be within the boundaries of the Republic of Vietnam; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion seek legislation to plainly identify and further clarify "service in the Republic of Vietnam beginning January 9, 1962 and ending on May 7, 1975" to include those who served in the territorial waters offshore, as this was clearly the original intent of the statute; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That those individuals who served in "other locations," who can show their condition of service-involved duty or visitation in the Republic of Vietnam, shall also be included under the definition of those exposed to Agent Orange and the resultant presumptive conditions.

Resolution No. 130: Establishment of Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS) as a Gulf War Presumptive Disease
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
(Consolidated with Resolution No. 186 (MI))

WHEREAS, Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS) is a fatal neurological disease that controls muscle movement and neither a cause or effective treatment for ALS is known; and

WHEREAS, Preliminary findings of a joint Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Department of Defense (DoD) study, released in December 2001, of nearly 2.5 million veterans indicated that deployed Gulf War veterans are twice as likely as their non-deployed counterparts to develop ALS; and

WHEREAS, The VA study initially identified 40 Gulf War veterans with ALS and there may be other Gulf War veterans currently suffering from ALS yet to be identified; and

WHEREAS, The Secretary of Veterans Affairs ("Secretary") announced that he would explore VA's options for compensating Gulf War veterans who subsequently develop ALS; and

WHEREAS, VA subsequently directed all VA regional offices to submit all Gulf War ALS cases to VA Central Office for expeditious adjudication; and

WHEREAS, Despite the Secretary's announcement and subsequent action, VA did not have plans to draft a regulation establishing an ALS presumption under current law guaranteeing compensation for Gulf War veterans who develop ALS in the future; and

WHEREAS, The joint VA and DoD study was published in the scientific journal "Neurology" in September 2003, resulting in the Secretary to publicly announce that this "final study" supports his 2001 decision to compensate Gulf War veterans stricken with ALS; and

WHEREAS, Despite this public announcement and the Secretary's initial decision to expeditiously service-connect, on a direct basis, Gulf War veterans diagnosed with ALS, VA informed The American Legion that it would be "premature" at this time to create a regulatory presumption of service connection for Gulf War veterans with ALS; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion pursue specific legislation to establish ALS as a condition presumed to be service-connected when incurred by veterans of the Gulf War.

Resolution No. 131: The American Legion Policy Regarding Community-Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs)
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, A Community-Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) is a health care site in a fixed position that is geographically distinct from the parent medical facility; and

WHEREAS, A CBOC can be a site that is operated by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA); and

WHEREAS, A CBOC site can also be contracted since the Veterans' Health Care Eligibility Reform Act, Public Law 104-262, significantly enhanced VA's sharing authority so that it may now be used to contract for primary care and/or for a CBOC; and

WHEREAS, Since 1995, the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) of the Department of Veterans Affairs has activated hundreds of new CBOCs to more efficiently and effectively serve eligible veterans and provide care in the most appropriate setting; and

WHEREAS, The establishment of CBOCs is subject to multiple criteria including the development of a CBOC business plan and application of national CBOC criteria, VA Central Office approval and notification of Congress, the availability of funds within the Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN), and applicable federal statutes and VA regulations; and

WHEREAS, A CBOC must have the necessary professional medical staff, access to diagnostic testing and treatment capability, and referral arrangements needed to ensure continuity of health care for currently and potentially eligible veteran patients; and

WHEREAS, The VISN Network remains the focal point for CBOC planning, allowing decisions regarding needs and priorities to be made in the context of local market circumstances; and

WHEREAS, CBOC proposals must meet minimum uniform criteria and standards to ensure consistency nation-wide; and

WHEREAS, There has been a major shift in the delivery of mental health services away from inpatient care and towards outpatient care; and

WHEREAS, There has not been a commensurate shift in resources to support the necessary continuum of outpatient care; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion affirm its support for the development of Community-Based Outpatient Clinics that meet established criteria as a means of improving veterans access to high quality health care services in the most appropriate setting and in a cost-effective manner; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion continue to monitor the incorporation of mental health services as an integral component in the planning, development, and activation of CBOCs to promote reasonable access to services, and to ensure sufficient resources and capacity at CBOCs to meet the mental health needs of the local veteran population.

Resolution No. 132: Provide Full Funding for the Department of Veterans Affairs Construction Program
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
(Consolidated with Resolution No. 58 (MA))

WHEREAS, The health care delivery facilities of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) are increasingly aging physical plants in need of replacement; substantial renovation and improvements relating to fire, safety and privacy standards are necessary, as well as modernization and reconfiguration to meet the demands of the advances of medicine; and

WHEREAS, The increasing demands placed upon the outpatient and ambulatory care facilities of VA require substantial alterations to meet changing space requirements; and

WHEREAS, No health care delivery system can be expected to provide quality care if the physical settings that house that care are allowed to deteriorate to a state which places them beyond redemption; and

WHEREAS, VA has undertaken a Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services (CARES) planning process with the stated intent to realign its medical facilities and services more effectively and more efficiently; and

WHEREAS, Major and minor construction appropriations for VA have been consistently targeted for reduction since such funding is regrettably the most vulnerable to annual assault; and

WHEREAS, For several years VA facility directors have been forced to use non-recurring maintenance funds to provide care; and

WHEREAS, The CARES Decision released in May 2004 contained hundreds of construction requests, upgrades, and alterations of current buildings that will require a substantial increase in funding for Major and Minor Construction within VA; and

WHEREAS, Sufficient funding must be provided to maintain, improve and realign VA health care facilities; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion urge Congress to annually appropriate sufficient funds for the Department of Veterans Affairs construction program to ensure the continued provision of quality health care to our nation's veterans and the implementation of the CARES decisions.

Resolution No. 133: Improve the Disability and Death Pension Program
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, Public Law 95-588, the Veterans and Survivors Pension Improvement Act of 1978, provided major changes in the disability and death pension program for the veterans of World War I, World War II, the Korean, Vietnam, and Gulf Wars and their surviving spouses and children; and

WHEREAS, This pension program established different guaranteed annual income levels for necessary economic support; and

WHEREAS, After extensive study, The American Legion concludes that certain inequities exist in the Improved Pension program that need to be addressed by Congress; and

WHEREAS, Under the current Death Pension program, the annual benefit rate for a surviving spouse with no income and no dependents is $7,094 or about only two thirds of the amount received by a veteran with no income and no dependents; and

WHEREAS, In addition, current regulations provide that surviving spouses are not entitled to pension benefits for the month in which the veteran dies, if they are not found eligible for death pension; and

WHEREAS, The majority of these surviving spouses are elderly and disabled and are living below the poverty level; and

WHEREAS, Under the current Death Pension program, the annual benefit rate for a surviving child with no income where there is no surviving spouse is $1,806 or seventeen percent of the amount received by a veteran with no income or dependents; and

WHEREAS, This limited amount may impose a severe financial hardship on the surviving child; and

WHEREAS, Under title 38, United States Code, section 1543 where the surviving child is residing with a person who is legally responsible for such child's support, the income and corpus of estate of that person is countable for the purposes of determining entitlement or continued entitlement to pension benefits; and

WHEREAS, Currently, when two veterans are married to one another where both meet the disability, service and income requirements, basic pension benefits are payable only at the rate of a "veteran with one dependent," which is currently $13,855 annually; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion believes that since each veteran in their own right meets the eligibility criteria for pension with the exception of being married to another veteran, this discriminatory provision of the law should be eliminated and each veteran should be paid at the basic pension rate of a single veteran without dependents which is $10,579, reduced by the amount of countable family income; and

WHEREAS, In the determination of annual income, payments under all Government Life Insurance programs are countable, but proceeds from fire and casualty insurance policies may be excluded; and

WHEREAS, Previous pension programs have excluded the proceeds of Government Life Insurance Policies in the determination of annual income; and

WHEREAS, Currently, the effective date of reduction or discontinuance of pension based on a change of income shall be the last day of the month in which the change occurred; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion believes it would lessen the financial hardship of such adjustments to pension if any such change would be made as of the last day of the calendar year in which the change occurred; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion support amendments to title 38, section 1543, United States Code, to accomplish the following:

1. **Establish the pension rates of surviving spouses at ninety percent of the rate for a veteran without dependents;**
2. **Establish the pension rate for a surviving child where there is no surviving spouse entitled at ninety percent of the rate of a veteran without dependents;**
3. **Delete the requirement that the income and corpus of estate of a person legally responsible for the support of a surviving child be counted in the determination of annual income of such child;**
4. **Provide that when two veterans, who meet the service, disability and income requirements for pension eligibility, are married to one another, each shall be paid at the rate of a single veteran without dependents reduced by the amount of countable family income;**
5. **Exclude in the determination of annual income payments all proceeds from Government Life Insurance policies;**
6. **Change the effective date for reduction or discontinuance of pension based on a change of income from the last day of the month in which the change occurred to the last day of the calendar year in which the change occurred.**

Resolution No. 134: Exempt Purple Heart Recipients from VA Prescription Co-Payment
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
(Consolidated with Resolution No. 207 (IL))

WHEREAS, The American Legion is a national organization of veterans who have dedicated themselves to the service of the community, state and nation; and

WHEREAS, Under the priority category system at Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical centers, those who were awarded the Purple Heart have been singled out as a special group of veterans deserving special consideration for their service and sacrifice to their country; and

WHEREAS, This special group of Purple Heart recipients has been placed in Priority Group Three; and

WHEREAS, Priority Group Three veterans do not have to make any co-payments for any of their inpatient or outpatient care; and

WHEREAS, These same veterans, if they are rated under 50% service-connected disabled or receive prescriptions for a non-service connected condition are charged an $8 co-payment for each 30 day supply of medication; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion shall sponsor and support legislation to exempt all those who were awarded the Purple Heart and are enrolled in the VA health care system, from any co-payment for prescription drugs.

Resolution No. 135: The American Legion Policy on Gulf War Illnesses
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, Approximately 1.7 million members of the United States Armed Forces were deployed to the Southwest Asia Theater of Operations during the Gulf War; and

WHEREAS, More than 160,000 women served in theater during the Gulf War; and

WHEREAS, Over 20 percent of new recruits in the Armed Forces today are women and that percentage is likely to grow in the coming years; and

WHEREAS, The vast majority of Gulf War veterans are in good health, thousands of Gulf War veterans nevertheless suffer from unexplained physical symptoms known as "Gulf War veterans illnesses"; and

WHEREAS, Over 200 scientific studies are investigating these illnesses; and

WHEREAS, Few of the aforementioned studies are focused exclusively on the illnesses experienced by women Gulf War veterans; and

WHEREAS, Misleading information about Gulf War veterans illnesses has spread on the Internet and through the media, and this information has caused a great deal of misunderstanding regarding the severity and prevalence of Gulf War veterans illnesses; and

WHEREAS, The National Academy of Sciences Institute of Medicine is currently preparing reports that evaluate the nature, the likely causes and the Federal Government's response to Gulf War veterans illnesses; and

WHEREAS, These reports directly affect Department of Veterans Affairs compensation programs for Gulf War veterans illnesses; and

WHEREAS, Several independent expert scientific committees and organizations have stated that a number of suspected causes of Gulf War veterans illnesses are not likely associated with those illnesses, whereas others are more likely associated with those illnesses; and

WHEREAS, The Secretary of Veterans Affairs established a committee comprised of doctors, scientists, Gulf War veterans and veteran service organization representatives to provide guidance and advice on future Gulf War-related research efforts; and

WHEREAS, Pyridostigmine bromide was used by the United States and some coalition troops as a nerve agent pre-treatment during the Gulf War although the Food and Drug Administration had not yet approved the drug for that use and some researchers contend that pyridostigmine bromide may be associated with Gulf War veterans illnesses; and

WHEREAS, Several medical studies have found that the unexplained physical symptoms reported by Gulf War veterans are similar to other medically unexplained symptom syndromes like chronic fatigue syndrome, fibromyalgia and irritable bowel syndrome; and

WHEREAS, The President of the United States signed into law legislation amending the Gulf War undiagnosed illness law (title 38, United States Code, section 1117) to include medically unexplained disabilities such as chronic fatigue syndrome, fibromyalgia, and irritable bowel syndrome; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion's contract with a medical consultant from the University of Connecticut proved invaluable in helping the organization strive towards its goal of serving Gulf War veterans; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion encourage the Department of Veterans Affairs to devote the appropriate resources to finding effective medical treatments to alleviate the unexplained physical symptoms of Gulf War veterans; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the Department of Veterans Affairs fund more scientific studies that exclusively investigate the health of women Gulf War veterans; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion encourage the Department of Veterans Affairs to quickly implement any reasonable recommendations contained in Institute of Medicine reports, or recommendations offered by the newly established Research Advisory Committee on Gulf War Veterans Illnesses, regarding its Gulf War veterans programs and research; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion encourage the scientific community to focus its efforts on the most likely causes of Gulf War veterans illnesses and to refrain from supporting or encouraging investigations of risk factors that are not likely related to Gulf War veterans illnesses; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion encourage the Department of Defense to not use investigational drugs on U.S. troops without their informed consent; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion encourage the Department of Veterans Affairs to closely monitor the implementation of the changes to title 38, United States Code, section 1117, to ensure proper application of the law at the Department of Veterans Affairs regional office level; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the Department of Veterans Affairs continue to develop the Gulf Registry; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion will continue to consult with medical experts from time to time in order to ensure the effectiveness of its advocacy.

Resolution No. 136: Increase the Maximum Coverage Under the Service-Disabled Veterans Insurance Program
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
(Consolidated with Resolution No. 206 (IL))

WHEREAS, The American Legion is a national organization of veterans who have dedicated themselves to the service of the community, state and nation; and

WHEREAS, Service-Disabled Veterans Insurance (also known as S-DVI or RH insurance) was established in 1951 to meet the insurance needs of certain veterans with service-related disabilities; and

WHEREAS, The maximum coverage was set at $10,000 back in 1951; and

WHEREAS, What cost $10,000 back in 1951 would cost over $74,000 in 2006 due to inflation; and

WHEREAS, This puts a greater burden on the surviving family members to meet the burial and final expenses of a deceased service-connected disabled veteran; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion shall sponsor and support legislation to increase to $50,000 the maximum coverage a service-connected disabled veteran can purchase under the Service-Disabled Veterans insurance program.

Resolution No. 137: Support Legislation to Place Mariner Medal Recipients in Priority Group 3 for Department of Veterans Affairs Health Care
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, Qualified Merchant Marines are eligible for veterans benefits; and

WHEREAS, Congress authorized the Mariner's Medal, which was awarded to any seaman who while serving in a ship during the war period (World War II) was wounded, suffered physical injury, or suffered through dangerous exposure as a result of an act of enemy of the United States; and

WHEREAS, Enrollment levels for Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health care are set according to eight priority groups established by Congress; and

WHEREAS, Purple Heart recipients are accorded Priority Group 3 status for VA health care; and

WHEREAS, Recipients of the Merchant Medal should be accorded similar priority group status for VA health care; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion support legislation that would place recipients of the Mariner Medal in the priority group 3 enrollment level for Department of Veterans Affairs Health Care.

Resolution No. 138: Request Congress Provide the Department of Veterans Affairs Adequate Funding for Medical and Prosthetic Research
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Medical and Prosthetic Research Service is very productive in advancing medical knowledge and improving health care for veterans and all other citizens; and

WHEREAS, VA has developed the cardiac pacemaker, nicotine patch, the concepts that led to the Computerized Axial Tomography (CAT) scan, and other medical breakthroughs; and

WHEREAS, Basic biomedical research provides the most rational and cost-effective means of preventive health care and provides treatments and cures for many diseases; and

WHEREAS, Advances in biomedical research lead to the creation of new knowledge in biotechnology and serve as a successful model in lowering long-term health care costs; and

WHEREAS, In 1998, VA realigned its research priorities in response to recommendations of the Department's Research Realignment and Advisory Committee to better serve the needs of the veteran population; and

WHEREAS, The Quality Enhancement Research Initiative (QUERI) is a venture undertaken by the VA Medical and Prosthetic Research Service to establish a national system to translate research discoveries, innovation, effective and efficient diagnostic and treatment strategies into patient care; and

WHEREAS, QUERI is a comprehensive, data driven, outcome-based quality improvement program that will ensure excellence in all areas of Veterans Health Administration medical care: in-patient, out-patient and long-term care; and

WHEREAS, Continued research is urgently needed for many diseases if medical science is to overcome cancer, heart disease, AIDS, new strains of tuberculosis, mental illness, hepatitis and others, to help spare veterans and citizens from prolonged illness and permanent disabilities; and

WHEREAS, The need to reduce the nation's budget deficit must not compromise the efforts to maintain and improve health productivity and develop new preventive and therapeutic procedures through the Department of Veterans Affairs and other government agencies; and

WHEREAS, It is essential that Congress and the Administration support strong medical and prosthetic research programs within VA so that veterans and all citizens continue to benefit from the exceptional research capability of the Department; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion support adequate funding for VA biomedical research activities; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That Congress and the Administration encourage acceleration in the development and initiation of needed research on conditions that significantly affect veterans—such as prostate cancer, addictive disorders, trauma and wound healing, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), rehabilitation, and others—jointly with the Department of Defense, the National Institutes of Health, other federal agencies, academic institutions and the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Resolution No. 139: The American Legion Policy on Department of Veterans Affairs National Life Insurance
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, No regular government life insurance program was available to veterans entering and leaving service in the period January 1957 to September 1965; and

WHEREAS, Veterans of the Vietnam War serving on active duty during the period beginning September 29, 1965, through May 7, 1975, were covered under either the Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance (SGLI) program or, later, the Veterans' Group Life Insurance (VGLI) program; and

WHEREAS, Upon discharge or separation from service, individuals had only 120 days within which to convert their government life insurance to a private commercial policy, with Veterans' Group Life Insurance not becoming available until August 1974, with a retroactive open period to 1970 for unconverted active or inactive SGLI policies, but not applying to the major portion of the Vietnam War; and

WHEREAS, Many of these veterans experienced extraordinarily severe readjustment problems and were often financially and/or emotionally unable to take

advantage of the conversion provision within the 120-day time limit after discharge from service; and

WHEREAS, Many Vietnam War veterans who did not convert their government life insurance to a private policy, as well as veterans of the World War II and Korean War period whose National Service Life Insurance (NSLI) polices may have lapsed, and veterans of the Cold War period of 1957-1965 who had no government life insurance coverage for their families' protection, but because of disability may not be able to purchase commercial insurance; and

WHEREAS, There is precedent for the reopening of the National Service Life Insurance program in that it was previously reopened in 1965-1966 for World War II and Korean War veterans with disabilities who had been eligible to apply for NSLI on or after October 8, 1940, through December 31, 1956, (disabilities could have been service-connected and/or nonservice-connected); and

WHEREAS, Many such eligible veterans, due to financial hardships and problems associated with their service-connected disabilities and adjustments to civilian life, or to notification problems resulting from VA procedures, did not apply for NSLI service-disabled insurance within the prescribed eligibility period; and

WHEREAS, Since 1951, veterans granted a service-connected disability and who are otherwise in good health may purchase up to a basic $10,000 of NSLI service-disabled insurance at standard rates within two years from the date the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) notifies them of the grant of service connection (one year prior to September 1, 1991); and

WHEREAS, VA service-disabled life insurance does not permit an eligibility period for increases in previously rated service-connected disabilities, but only for new ratings; and

WHEREAS, Those who may now be able to afford insurance at standard NSLI-disabled rates, and who still would meet the underwriting criteria, cannot apply due to the statutory bar; and

WHEREAS, The continuous inflation of the past four decades has rendered the maximum face value of $10,000 for basic NSLI coverage totally inadequate; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion sponsor and support legislation to amend title 38, United States Code, to provide for the reopening of the National Service Life Insurance program for a minimum of one year for all disabled veterans within underwriting criteria similar to that of the Veterans Reopened Program of 1965-1966, to include a similar reopened period for the service-disabled insurance program for those veterans in good health except for their service-connected disabilities, regardless of the date of their service-connected rating, and that such reopened issues be at a maximum optional face value at a level that appropriately reflects current inflationary experience.

Resolution No. 140: The American Legion Policy on Department of Veterans Affairs Nursing Home Capacity
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Long-Term Care (LTC) has been the subject of discussion and legislation for nearly twenty years. In a landmark July 1984 study, *Caring for the Older Veteran*, it was predicted that a wave of elderly veterans had the potential to overwhelm VA's long-term care capacity; and

WHEREAS, The recommendations of the Federal Advisory Committee on the Future of Long-Term Care in its 1998 report *VA Long-Term Care at the Crossroads*, made recommendations that serve as the foundation for VA's national strategy to revitalize and reengineer long-term care services; and

WHEREAS, Public Law 106-117, the Millennium Act, enacted in November 1999, required VA to continue to ensure 1998 levels of extended care services (defined as VA nursing home care, VA domiciliary, VA home-based primary care, and VA adult day health care) in its facilities; and

WHEREAS, The Millennium Act specifically requires VA to maintain its in-house Nursing Home Care Unit (NHCU) bed capacity at the 1998 level of 13,391. However, VA has never met this mandate; and

WHEREAS, Recent General Accounting Office reports show that VA has failed to fully implement mandates of the Millennium Act that would expand non-institutional long-term care services; and

WHEREAS, VA continues to focus its long-term care treatment on non-institutional care and is projecting a continued decrease in the level of beds for VA nursing homes from 11,151 to 11,100 beds for 2007; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That VA should be required to restore its nursing home care unit capacity as intended by Congress to the 1998 level of 13, 391; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That VA must create incentives and receive appropriate funding to maintain its nursing home care unit beds rather than abandon them to alternative sources; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That VA be prohibited from counting any but their own nursing home care unit beds for the purposes of compliance with the provisions of Public Law 106-117, the Millennium Act; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That Congress should appropriate sufficient funds to support the provisions of the non-institutional long-term care mandates of Public Law 106-117, the Millennium Act, so that VA is not forced to reduce its nursing home care unit capacity in order to comply with said non-institutional care mandates.

Resolution No. 141: Open-Ended Presumptive Period for Undiagnosed Illnesses for Gulf War Veterans
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation (Consolidated with Resolutions No. 29 (SD) and No. 56 (MA))

WHEREAS, Thousands of Gulf War veterans still suffer from chronic unexplained physical symptoms; and

WHEREAS, Many service members who have served in the Southwest Asia theater since the 1991 Gulf War - including those serving in Operation Iraqi Freedom - have also been exhibiting chronic, unexplained physical symptoms; and

WHEREAS, The Gulf War Era has not been officially concluded; and

WHEREAS, There has recently been some progress in research on the long-term health effects of many of the agents Gulf War veterans were potentially exposed to during the Gulf War, but numerous symptoms experienced by sick Gulf War veterans are still not well understood, the causes of such symptoms remain elusive and answers could likely remain evasive for some time; and

WHEREAS, Additional research into the long-term health effects of exposures is needed, a fact confirmed by the Department of Veterans Affairs Research Advisory Committee on Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses; and

WHEREAS, The current presumptive period for undiagnosed illnesses expired January 1, 2007; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion urge that legislation be enacted to reinstate and extend the presumptive period for service connection of Gulf War veterans with undiagnosed illnesses indefinitely.

Resolution No. 142: Oppose any Reduction of Eligibility Criteria for Department of Veterans Affairs Per Diem Payments to State Veterans Homes
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, State Veterans Homes were founded for indigent and disabled Civil War veterans beginning in the late 1800s and have continued to serve subsequent generations of veterans for over one hundred years; and

WHEREAS, Today, there are 133 State Veterans Homes facilities in 49 states and Puerto Rico with over 30,255 total beds providing nursing home, hospital and domiciliary care; with more capacity being added annually; and

WHEREAS, The State Veterans Home Program has proven to be a cost-effective provider of quality care to many of the nation's veterans; and

WHEREAS, This program is an important adjunct to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) own nursing, hospital and domiciliary programs; and

WHEREAS, Title 38, United States Code, authorizes VA per diem payments for veterans residing in State Veterans Homes; and

WHEREAS, There has been consideration of limiting the eligibility for inpatient long term (maintenance) care to veterans in Priority Groups 1 through 3 and Priority Group 4 veterans determined to be catastrophically disabled; and

WHEREAS, Such a change would cause thousands of veterans who are now eligible for per diem to become ineligible; and

WHEREAS, Such a change could cause financial disaster to many State Veterans Homes that now rely on VA per diem for revenue; and

WHEREAS, Such a change could result in a new population of elderly homeless veterans, especially in states that have poor Medicaid nursing home reimbursement rates; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion shall oppose any legislative proposal to reduce the eligibility criteria for VA State Veterans Homes per diem.

Resolution No. 143: The American Legion Policy on Prostate Cancer Research and Treatment
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, Prostate cancer is the most common form of cancer, other than skin cancer, among men in the United States and is second only to lung cancer as a cause of cancer-related death among men; and

WHEREAS, One of six males will develop clinically significant prostate cancer in their lifetime; and

WHEREAS, The American Cancer Society estimates that 186,320 new cases of prostate cancer will be diagnosed white 28,660 will die in 2008; and

WHEREAS, Prostate cancer has been demonstrated to be service-connected to Agent Orange exposure and, pursuant to the Agent Orange Act of 1991, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has determined that a presumption of service connection based on exposure to herbicides used in Vietnam is warranted for prostate cancer, in that VA has found a positive association between the condition and such exposure; and

WHEREAS, Advances in biomedical research are leading to new treatments and cures for all forms of cancer, and will lower long-term health care costs; and

WHEREAS, VA is very productive in advancing medical knowledge, improving health care for veterans and all other citizens; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That federal funding for prostate cancer research, treatment, and therapies at the National Institutes of Health, Department of Defense, and Department of Veterans Affairs be significantly increased and that Congress and the Administration re-double their efforts to find a cure for prostate cancer; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the Veterans Health Administration increase its investment in prostate cancer clinical research by improving and accelerating clinical trials at VA hospitals and affiliated university medical centers and research programs.

Resolution No. 144: Amend the Eligibility Requirements and Extend the Eligibility Time Period for Service-Disabled Veterans Insurance
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The Service-Disabled Veterans Insurance (SDVI) program of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) was founded by Congress in 1951 to provide life insurance coverage for veterans suffering only from disabilities rated by VA as being connected to their military service to the nation; and

WHEREAS, Service-connected disabled veterans are required by statute to not only be in good health except for their service-connected disability, but must apply for SDVI coverage within two years from the date of their last VA rating for a new, original, disability, with increases in prior VA disability ratings not being includible for this purpose; and

WHEREAS, Many veterans in good health except for their service-connected disabilities, and who are granted rating increases because of worsening severity in such disabilities, continue to be denied SDVI coverage at a time when it has become most needful to them, due to the requirement that SDVI eligibility periods begin only with a VA rating for a new disability and last for only two years; and

WHEREAS, Other service-disabled veterans also continue to be denied insurance, due to the strict two year time limit (from the date of their last original rating) to make application; and

WHEREAS, It continues to be the experience of veterans service organizations such as The American Legion that many service-disabled veterans remain unaware of the SDVI program despite automated VA notifications, a fact supported by VA's own casework experience and program studies, and that the insurance benefit remains inadequate and in need of enhancement; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion shall sponsor and support legislation to amend Sec. 1922(a) of title 38, United States Code, to permit that increases in VA service-connected ratings also provide a service-connected veteran with an eligibility period to apply for VA Service-Disabled Life Insurance in the same manner that ratings for new, original, disabilities presently do, and that the time period of such eligibility be increased from the current two years to a period of at least five years from the date of rating determination and notification, and that such amendment also apply to any new similar issue of VA Service-Disabled insurance that may be enacted into law.

Resolution No. 145: Support Medicare Reimbursement for the Department of Veterans Affairs
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
(Consolidated with Resolution No. 27(SD))

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) provides medical care to eligible beneficiaries as authorized by title 38, United States Code; and

WHEREAS, The fundamental branch of VA that administers and operates this medical care delivery system is the Veterans Health Administration (VHA); and

WHEREAS, VHA is the nation's largest comprehensive, integrated health care delivery system that provides excellence in health care value, service, education and research; and

WHEREAS, The mission of VHA is to meet the medical needs of America's veterans by providing specialized care, primary care and related medical and social support services for eligible veterans; and

WHEREAS, VHA consists of hospitals, ambulatory clinics, nursing homes, domiciliaries and readjustment counseling centers located nationwide; and

WHEREAS, VHA continues to be the nation's largest educator of health care professionals through its affiliations with medical schools, academic medical centers and other research institutions; and

WHEREAS, VHA continues to be a major national research asset conducting basic, clinical, epidemiological and behavioral studies across the entire spectrum of scientific discipline; and

WHEREAS, VHA continues to serve as a contingency back-up to Department of Defense (DoD) medical services and, during national emergencies, supports the National Disaster Medical System (NDMS); and

WHEREAS, Enrollment in VHA could be limited by the availability of existing annual federal discretionary appropriations to meet the health care needs of enrolled veterans; and

WHEREAS, VHA continues to seek other revenue streams to supplement limited annual federal discretionary appropriations and meet the growing demands for quality treatment of enrolled veterans; and

WHEREAS, VHA is authorized to bill, collect and retain payments from enrolled veterans and their health care insurers, except Medicare, for inpatient and outpatient care, outpatient medications and long-term care services; and

WHEREAS, Medicare is a prepaid, federally mandated health insurance program for all eligible Americans; and

WHEREAS, Medicare is an entitlement program for nearly forty million Americans; and

WHEREAS, VA is prohibited from billing and collecting Medicare reimbursements for the treatment of nonservice-connected medical conditions of enrolled Medicare-eligible veterans; and

WHEREAS, Indian Health Service has successfully demonstrated the ability to bill and collect Medicare reimbursement; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion's GI Bill of Health proposes Medicare Reimbursement for VA as a realistic health care coverage for enrolled, Medicare-eligible veterans seeking treatment of nonservice-connected medical conditions in VHA health care facilities; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion advocate to Congress amending title XVIII of the Social Security Act, to allow Medicare Reimbursement for VA on a fee-for-service basis for the treatment of nonservice-connected medical conditions of enrolled, Medicare-eligible veterans; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That enrolled, Medicare-eligible veterans be authorized to participate in the Medicare Advantage option by choosing VA as their primary health care provider.

Resolution No. 146: The American Legion Policy on Department of Veterans Affairs Pharmacy Benefits
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) basic Medical Benefits Package includes prescription drugs and supplies; and

WHEREAS, VA has experienced unprecedented demand for prescription drugs since open enrollment in 1998; and

WHEREAS, By law (Public Law (P. L.) 101-508 and P. L. 106-117) VA must charge veterans a co-payment for each 30-day or less supply of medication provided on an outpatient basis for the treatment of a nonservice-connected condition; and

WHEREAS, The Veterans Millennium Health Care and Benefits Act (P. L. 106-117) authorized VA to increase the co-payment amount and to establish an annual cap on the amount of medication co-payment charged; and

WHEREAS, The amount of the medication co-payment and the annual cap may be changed on an annual basis; and

WHEREAS, VA increased the amount of the co-payment from $2.00 to $7.00 dollars effective February 4, 2002; and from $7.00 to $8.00 in 2005; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion opposed the pharmacy co-payment increases citing alternative options; and

WHEREAS, The Office of Inspector General reported an audit of VA regarding pharmacy co-payment levels and restrictions on filling privately written prescriptions for priority group 7 veterans in December 2000; and

WHEREAS, This report raised the issue that the indirect cost of re-writing private prescriptions that are filled by VA physicians can exceed the direct cost of the prescriptions themselves; and

WHEREAS, VA's policy to fill only prescriptions written by VA physicians and the processes that have been developed to comply with this policy affects all veterans receiving or eligible to receive VA health care; and

WHEREAS, VA has been unable to provide all enrolled veterans with services in a timely manner and this has generated interest in filling prescriptions from outside providers; and

WHEREAS, Various legislative proposals have been offered to grant VA the authority to provide veterans with pharmaceuticals prescribed by physicians or other health care professionals who have no affiliation with VA; and

WHEREAS, VA is a managed health care system that requires enrollment; and

WHEREAS, Authorizing VA to fill prescriptions from a private sector physician without the veteran enrolling would fundamentally change the system; and

WHEREAS, VA provides medications and pharmaceutical supplies to veterans, with limited exceptions, only in the course of providing medical care; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion oppose significant pharmacy co-payment increases at the expense of veteran beneficiaries, in lieu of seeking alternative funding sources, such as Mandatory Funding and Medicare Reimbursement, that would generate and provide VA with more adequate system-wide funding; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion support the provision of VA Pharmacy Benefits to enrolled veterans only when prescribed by an authorized VA physician or provider in the course of providing them medical care.

Resolution No. 147: Support the Automatic Waiver of Veterans Benefits Administration Debts of $250 or Less
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
(Consolidated with Resolution No. 83 (NJ))

WHEREAS, Overpayment of Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) benefits is often the result of a lack of understanding of VA regulations and not due to any fraud or misrepresentation; and

WHEREAS, VA processing of collection or waiver of small overpayment amounts requires significant resources and time; and

WHEREAS, Under current regulations, most overpayment waiver requests are granted; and

WHEREAS, Elimination of processing of small overpayment amounts would allow VA personnel to concentrate on other duties, such as claims processing, thus improving the timeliness of VA in delivering benefits; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That the Congress of the United States be requested to amend title 38, United States Code, to state that any alleged overpayment in the amount of $250 or less be granted an automatic waiver.

Resolution No. 148: Include World War II Veterans in Priority Group 6 for Department of Veterans Affairs Health Care
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
(Consolidated with Resolution No. 277 (TX))

WHEREAS, Mexican War and WW I veterans were provided priority medical care on reaching advanced age; and

WHEREAS, The average age of the WW II veterans is 82.6 years; and

WHEREAS, Title 38, United States Code (USC) fails to provide reasonable care to WW II veterans who are passing away at the rate of 1000 a day; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in Department Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion support legislation to amend title 38, USC, to give the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)

the authority to enroll WWII veterans in "Priority Group 6" for the purpose of receiving VA health care service.

Resolution No. 149: The American Legion Policy on the Correction of Military Records
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 provided for the recognition of representatives of The American Legion, and other organizations, to serve as counsel before the discharge and retirement boards of the Armed Forces, and this recognition was extended to cover the Boards for Correction of Military Records (BCMRs) when they were created under the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion was actively involved in the legislative process that established the Correction Boards under section 1552 of title 10, United States Code (USC); and

WHEREAS, Although under provision of title 10, USC, 1552, a three year statute of limitations was created which begins as of the date of discovery of an error or injustice on the military records of a former servicemember, the Boards are also authorized, under statute, to excuse filings beyond the three year period if it is in the interest of justice to do so; and

WHEREAS, For many years, the Boards routinely waived the three year statute of limitation so as to provide veterans the opportunity to correct any error or injustice in their records; and

WHEREAS, In the past, the BCMRs have considered that the effective date of commencement of the three year limit was effective the date of the final separation from service; and

WHEREAS, Congress is investigating the fairness and independence of the BCMRs and the effective date for the commencement of the correction of records by active servicemembers; and

WHEREAS, Section 205 of The Soldiers' and Sailors' Civil Relief Act of 1940 provides for the waiver of periods of limitation for persons in military service with respect to civil proceedings; and

WHEREAS, The U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia ruling in the case of Detweiler v. Pena, held that the three year rule does not apply to active duty personnel; and

WHEREAS, The Discharge Review Board, considered to be a lower review agency, has a 15 year statute of limitation; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That appropriate action be taken in support of legislation to amend title 10, United States Code, section 1552, so as to eliminate all time limitations restricting when a claimant may petition the Boards for Correction of Military Records for relief of an error or injustice.

Resolution No. 150: The American Legion Policy on Department of Veterans Affairs Mental Health Services
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) has a substantial mental health population; and

WHEREAS, According to the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Office of Public Health and Environmental Hazards, of the returning Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OEF/OIF) veterans who have sought care at VHA facilities, mental health problems are the second most common medical problem of these war veterans; and

WHEREAS, There has been significant restructuring of VA mental health services during the past several years; and

WHEREAS, This restructuring has often resulted in a downsizing of in-patient-base care, and the shift of treatment programs from residential-based to ambulatory-based programs; and

WHEREAS, There has not been a commensurate re-investment of resources in alternative treatment modalities to maintain community-based mental health services to treat veterans who were de-institutionalized by the closure of inpatient programs; and

WHEREAS, During the past several years, the number of veterans provided specialized substance abuse treatment has declined, while the funding for such treatment has been significantly decreased; and

WHEREAS, Since the restructuring, the Veterans Health Administration now has more mental health patients seeking treatment with fewer mental health providers; and

WHEREAS, Veterans continue to need increased access to mental health services, including, but not limited to, Community Based Outpatient Clinics, Mental Health Intensive Case Management, Substance Abuse Disorder Programs, and Compensated Work Therapy Programs; and

WHEREAS, VA has published and started implementing a Mental Health Strategic Plan that embraces many of the New Freedom Commission's concepts and recommendations; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion shall monitor the efficiency and effectiveness of the Mental Health Strategic Plan; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge Congress to annually appropriate sufficient funds for the Department of Veterans Affairs to ensure comprehensive mental health services are available to veterans; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge Congress to provide annual oversight of VA's mental health services.

Resolution No. 151: Exempt Certain Income from Pension Rate Determination
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
(Consolidated Resolution No. 211 (IL))

WHEREAS, The American Legion is a national organization of veterans who have dedicated themselves to the service of the community, state and nation; and

WHEREAS, Serving on jury duty is a civic obligation, which all citizens, when called, should take very seriously; and

WHEREAS, At many polling places, there is a shortage of needed supervisory personnel and serving as an election judge helps ensure a fair and impartial election process; and

WHEREAS, Veterans and surviving spouses in receipt of Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) pension benefits under Public Law (PL) 95-588 must report all income received from outside sources, since this directly affects the amount of VA pension to which they are entitled; and

WHEREAS, The amount of financial remuneration received from these types of civic activities is relatively small, but it can result in the reduction in monthly benefits, dollar for dollar, or the complete loss of entitlement to pension; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion shall sponsor and support legislation to exempt income received from jury duty and income from service as an election judge in determining the VA pension rate under PL 95-588.

Resolution No. 178: The American Legion Policy on Agent Orange
Origin: Michigan
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, Agent Orange was the most common herbicide used in Southeast Asia by the U.S. Armed Forces during the Vietnam War from 1962-1971; and

WHEREAS, Agent Orange was contaminated by the carcinogen dioxin (2, 3, 7, 8-tetrachlorodibenzo-*para*-dioxin (TCDD); and

WHEREAS, Over two million veterans served in Vietnam during the Vietnam War and are presumed to have been exposed to Agent Orange; and

WHEREAS, Scientific evidence has linked human exposure to dioxin and certain diseases; and

WHEREAS, A significant number of Vietnam veterans has developed various cancers, neurological disorders, liver dysfunction and other severe diseases; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion supported Public Law 96-151 (1979), which mandates that the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) conduct a major epidemiological study of Vietnam veterans who were exposed to dioxin, unless it is determined to be unfeasible; and

WHEREAS, VA was congressionally mandated by Public Law 102-4 (1991) to contract with the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) to review existing peer-reviewed research on herbicides, to include their components, exposure and medical evidence on related health effects; and

WHEREAS, A committee convened by the Institute of Medicine (IOM) of the National Academies to study the health effects of herbicide exposure had little information about the exposures the Vietnam veterans encountered and recommended in its 1994 biennial report that VA, upon discovering the feasibility of a valid exposure reconstruction model, facilitate epidemiological studies; and

WHEREAS, The Secretary of VA, in response to the recommendation, requested that IOM convene a separate committee to oversee development and evaluation of herbicide exposure models for us in studies of Vietnam veterans; and

WHEREAS, The IOM committee determined, in 2003, that a model created by researchers from Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health demonstrated the feasibility of a valid exposure-reconstruction model of Vietnam veterans' herbicide exposure and recommended that VA and other governmental agencies promote more epidemiological studies of veterans by non-governmental groups and independent researchers; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs has still not funded the major epidemiology study mandated by public law; and

WHEREAS, In view of the current absence of alternative judicial recourse to remedy the injustice perpetuated on so many disabled Vietnam veterans, their families, and survivors, The American Legion will continue to monitor other pending dioxin-related suits; and

WHEREAS, Information has been released by the Department of the Defense on numerous locations other than Vietnam where the herbicide was tested, sprayed, and stored, including: testing at Fort Drum, New York, in 1959; spraying in the Panama Canal Zone in the 1960's and 1970's and in the Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) in 1968-69; and the storage of unused herbicide on Johnson Atoll in the Pacific from 1972-78; and

WHEREAS, VA has recently identified more units that were exposed to herbicide at the Korean DMZ; and

WHEREAS, Title 38, United States Code, Section 1116 and Title 38, Code of Federal Regulations, Section 3.309, set forth certain presumptions that apply to claims for service connection based on herbicide exposure by veterans who served in the Republic of Vietnam during the period January 9, 1962, and May 7, 1975; and

WHEREAS, Veterans who served in other locations during these periods who may have been exposed to the herbicide and who may have developed one of the recognized Agent Orange-related diseases, set forth in Title 38, United States Code, Section 1116, and Title 38, Code of Federal Regulations, Section 3.309, are not entitled to presumptive service connection for their disability, rather they must meet the more stringent requirements for direct service connection; and

WHEREAS, This inequity was not contemplated at the time of the enactment of Public Law 102-4, the Agent Orange Act of 1991, as amended, due to limited available information on the full extent of the United States' Agent Orange testing, spraying, and storage activities; and

WHEREAS, Under Title 38, United States Code, Chapter 18, benefits are payable to children of veterans that served in the Republic of Vietnam during the period January 9, 1962, to May 7, 1975, and who suffer from the birth defect spina bifida; and

WHEREAS, Recent legislation has extended the spina bifida benefits to include the children of veterans who served in or near the Korean Demilitarized Zone during the period of September 1, 1967, and August 31, 1971, and determined by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to have been exposed to herbicides during such service; and

WHEREAS, The children of veterans who served in locations other than Vietnam and Korea who were possibly exposed to Agent Orange would be denied entitlement to compensation for spina bifida under the current statute and regulations; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion continue to urge the completion of the scientific study mandated by Public Law 96-151; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion vigorously support the liberalization of the rules relating to the evaluation of studies involving exposure to dioxin and the adjudication of claims based on Agent Orange exposure; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion continue to closely monitor the development of all ongoing research on the long-term effects of Agent Orange exposure and point out to the proper officials any perceived deficiencies or discrepancies in these projects; and to ensure that government committees charged with review of such research are composed of impartial members of the medical and scientific community; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That veterans reporting to VA medical care facilities claiming exposure to Agent Orange be provided examinations and treatment which are thorough and appropriate, and that VA physicians demonstrate compassion in responding to the medical needs of these veterans; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion seek legislation to amend Title 38, United States Code, Section 1116, to provide entitlement to these presumptions for those veterans who were exposed to Agent Orange while serving in areas other than the Republic of Vietnam where Agent Orange was tested, sprayed, or stored; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion seek legislation to amend Title 38, United States Code, Chapter 18, to provide entitlement to spina bifida benefits for the child or children of any veteran who was exposed to Agent Orange as the result of service in the Republic of Vietnam or in other locations where Agent Orange was tested, sprayed, or stored.

Resolution No. 179: Exempt VA Benefits and Services from Pay-GO Provisions
Origin: Michigan
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The Budget Enforcement Act (BEA) significantly amended the laws pertaining to the budget process by constraining direct spending through a Pay-As-You-Go (PAY-GO) requirement for all legislation affecting the direct spending of all federal agencies and departments; and

WHEREAS, Under this statute, as an example, if Congress wishes to establish a new entitlement or expand an existing program for veterans, it must find the money to fund such change within existing budget limits; and

WHEREAS, Wartime disabled veterans have earned the benefits and services they, their dependents and survivors receive from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) as a result of the injuries sustained during their period of wartime service; and

WHEREAS, The benefits and services received by wartime-disabled veterans as a result of their service-connected disabilities are an extension of the cost of war; and

WHEREAS, This country has a moral obligation to continue to care for these citizen-soldiers who have risen in defense and support of the ideals of this great nation and who have returned to civilian life with service-connected disabilities; and

WHEREAS, Since BEA PAY-GO requires Congress to fund new benefits or services within existing spending limits, this, in effect, requires one group of disabled veterans to give up benefits or services, so that another group of wartime disabled veterans can receive benefits or services to which they are entitled; and

WHEREAS, The budget implications of PAY-GO are often a deterrent to favorable congressional action on major changes in veterans legislation; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion support legislation to exempt VA benefits and services provided to service-connected

disabled veterans, their dependents and survivors from the Pay-As-You-Go (PAY-GO) provision of the Budget Enforcement Act.

Resolution No. 180: Oppose Increased Co-Payments and an Enrollment Fee for Priority Groups 7 & 8 Veterans to Receive VA Health Care
Origin: Michigan
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
(Consolidated with Resolutions No. 25 and No. 26 (SD))

WHEREAS, Since the enactment of Public Law (PL) 104-262, that authorized eligibility reform and open enrollment process, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Veterans Health Administration (VHA), has experienced a dramatic growth from 2.5 million veterans to over 7 million veterans enrolled in VA health care; and

WHEREAS, FY 2002 saw the astronomical growth of Priority Group 7 veterans seeking health care at their local VA medical facility and the creation of a new Priority Group 8; and

WHEREAS, VA, upon creating the new Priority Group 8, placed an immediate suspension on all new Priority Group 8 enrollments; and

WHEREAS, VHA is authorized to bill, collect, and retain co-payments and the third party insurance payment of Priority Groups 7 and 8 veterans; and

WHEREAS, During the past several years, VA has proposed to increase the outpatient co-payment from $15 to $20 and the prescription co-payment from $8 to $15 per 30 day supply, as well as, levy a $250 enrollment fee on Priority Groups 7 and 8 veterans; and

WHEREAS, In 2006, VA proposed to eliminate the co-payment offset (reduction in payment) to Priority Groups 7 and 8 veterans who have third party insurance; and

WHEREAS, The co-payment increases and enrollment fees could suppress the demand for VA services at the expense of Priority Groups 7 and 8 veterans who may not be able to afford the co-payment increases and out-of-pocket enrollment fee; and

WHEREAS, VA believes these initiatives will ultimately drive 1.2 million veterans away from the VA health care system; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion adamantly oppose any effort to increase co-payments or impose an enrollment fee for Priority Groups 7 and 8 veterans to receive VA health care.

Resolution No. 181: The American Legion Policy on Tobacco-Related Disabilities
Origin: Michigan
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, Throughout its history, The American Legion has fought to ensure that disabled veterans receive benefits and medical care for injuries and diseases related to their period of military service; and

WHEREAS, This would include certain diseases developing years after service which can be related to nicotine addiction resulting from the use of tobacco products during service; and

WHEREAS, Over the years, agencies of the federal government, most notably, the Department of Defense (DoD) and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), have promoted, condoned, fostered and encouraged the use of tobacco products by members of the Armed Forces and veterans; and

WHEREAS, DoD continues to be the nation's largest distributor of tobacco products to active duty, reserve, National Guard personnel and their dependents through the military supply system stateside and overseas; to post and base exchanges, canteens, ship's stores and commissaries; and

WHEREAS, Historically, DoD took little or no action to discourage the use of tobacco products by making them readily accessible and affordable (in some instances they were free) to military personnel and has only recently established physical fitness policies to discourage tobacco use by active duty and reserve personnel; and

WHEREAS, VA hospitals up until 1991 continued to provide tobacco products at discounted prices; and

WHEREAS, Although the federal government has required a health warning on cigarette packages and other tobacco products sold to the public beginning in 1965, such warning labels were not required on tobacco products distributed through DoD until 1970; and

WHEREAS, Until the early 1990's, most all claims for disability and death due to smoking were generally denied by the courts and VA due to the lack of scientific evidence of a relationship between nicotine addiction, tobacco use and certain diseases, such as cancers of the lip, mouth, pharynx, esophagus, larynx, lung, pancreas, bladder, urinary tract and kidney; coronary heart disease, cerebrovascular disease, other circulatory diseases, chronic bronchitis and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD); and

WHEREAS, Within the last several years, there has been increasing scientific data establishing a causal link between tobacco use and an increased prevalence of certain diseases among those who used tobacco products; and

WHEREAS, There have been ongoing revelations in the course of recent litigation against the tobacco companies about the addictive effects of nicotine and its consequences and the efforts of the tobacco companies to conceal and withhold such information and scientific data from the public, the federal government, the Congress and the courts; and

WHEREAS, In 1993, the VA General Counsel issued a precedent opinion which held that a claim for service connection for a smoking-related disability or death was legally possible; and

WHEREAS, From 1993 until May 1997 tobacco-related illness claims were held in abeyance while VA officials debated the practical and budgetary implications of this change in VA policy; and

WHEREAS, The four specific evidence requirements for a tobacco-related illness claim were finally set forth in a May 13, 1997, VA General Counsel precedent opinion:

1. There must be a statement from the veteran that he or she used tobacco products (i.e., smoked, chewed tobacco, or used snuff) during service; and
2. There must be a currently diagnosed medical condition, such as emphysema, chronic obstructive lung disease, lung cancer, etc.; and
3. A medical opinion must state this condition is related to tobacco use; and
4. A medical opinion must also state that the veteran was dependent on nicotine; and

WHEREAS, The VA General Counsel Opinion concluded that, providing these four requirements are met, it would be consistent with the historical concept of service connection for VA to grant direct service connection for nicotine dependence and service connection on a secondary basis for a subsequently developing tobacco-related disease; and

WHEREAS, VA has estimated there would be some 2.5 million smoking-related claims filed over the next five years resulting in additional benefit costs of some $15 billion, which VA believes would have a devastating impact on the VA budget, in particular, and the federal budget, as a whole, while ignoring the plight of veterans who used tobacco on active duty and especially those who were introduced to tobacco during such service; and

WHEREAS, The President's FY 1999 budget request for VA was predicated on legislation barring the grant of service connection of any disability or death due in whole or in part to tobacco use, as well as entitlement to VA medical care for such disability; and

WHEREAS, Congress, in the course of debate on the FY 1999 federal budget, used the $15 billion identified as savings resulting from the bar to veterans claims for tobacco-related illnesses as a funding source for the "Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century" (TEA-21); and

WHEREAS, TEA-21, signed by President Clinton as PL 105-178 on June 9, 1998, made veterans use of tobacco products in service synonymous with willful misconduct; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion believes that action should be taken by Congress to overturn this anti-veteran legislation that violates veterans constitutional rights, since

no other group of citizens, who are ill from tobacco-related causes, is being singled out and stripped of their eligibility for federal benefits and medical care; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion support legislation to restore entitlement to service connection for disability, or death, related to the veteran's use of tobacco products during the period of active military service from June 9, 1998, the date of the enactment of Public Law 105-178, the "Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century;" and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion also support congressional appropriation of sufficient funds to pay compensation benefits for tobacco-related illness claims.

Resolution No. 182: Oppose Lump Sum Payments of VA Disability Compensation
Origin: Michigan
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, Disability compensation is paid monthly to an eligible veteran on account of and at a rate commensurate with diminished earning capacity resulting from the effects of service-connected disease or injury; and

WHEREAS, Such compensation, by design, continues to provide relief from the service-connected disability for as long as the veteran continues to suffer its effects at a compensable level; and

WHEREAS, By law, the rate of compensation is determined by the level of disability present, thereby requiring reevaluation of the disability upon a change in its degree; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Office of the Inspector General, in a May 2005 report on variances in VA disability compensation payments, specifically recommended that VA consider establishing lump sum payments for veterans with disability ratings of 20 percent or less and the Veterans' Disability Benefits Commission, created by Congress to study the VA claims processing system, will undoubtedly be making recommendations regarding the lump sum issue in its report to Congress and the President in October 2007; and

WHEREAS, Such lump sum payments would not, on the whole, be in the best interests of disabled veterans but would be for Government savings and convenience; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion oppose any recommendation, legislative or otherwise, to establish lump sum payments of VA disability compensation.

Resolution No. 183: VA Involvement in the Department of Homeland Security
Origin: Michigan
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The Department of Homeland Security provides a single source of authority, at the highest level, for all homeland defense programs and policies; and

WHEREAS, The role of the Department of Homeland Security is to coordinate national strategy to strengthen protection against terrorist threats or attacks; and

WHEREAS, One of the critical missions of the Department of Homeland Security is emergency preparedness and response "to minimize the damage and recover from future terrorist attacks;" and

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical system serves as a primary back up to the Department of Defense (DoD) in the event of military casualties; and

WHEREAS, VA and DoD have a Contingency Hospital System Plan as part of the Federal Emergency Management Agency; and

WHEREAS, VA is prepared to augment the DoD's network of hospital and health care facilities in the event of a crisis, with 155 medical centers and a significant medical staff, many of whom are veterans; and

WHEREAS, VA also acts as a federal support organization during major disasters, as one of four partners in the National Disaster Medical System; and

WHEREAS, VA provided medical and psychological support to those in need during the months following the September 11, 2001, attack; and

WHEREAS, VA also maintains radiological response teams and decontamination systems should radioactive materials ever be used; and

WHEREAS, VA manages the largest health care program and is the largest medical education and health professional training program in the United States; and

WHEREAS, VA is a federal presence in virtually every local community in the country; and

WHEREAS, VA has the ability to move health care professionals to the site of a disaster and provide medical care quickly and efficiently; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion believes that the contingency plan for disasters developed by VA and DoD should be integrated as a part of the primary health care procedures of Homeland Security; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion urge Congress and the Administration to include VA in all strategic planning of the Department of Homeland Security; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That Congress take into account any additional requirements of VA as a result of involvement in Homeland Security obligations when developing VA's annual budget.

Resolution No. 184: Restore and Increase Burial and Plot Allowance
Origin: Michigan
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
(Consolidated with Resolution No. 51 (MI))

WHEREAS, The American Legion is an organization of war veterans who have dedicated themselves to the service of the community, state and nation; and

WHEREAS, Benefits for deceased veterans include a burial and a plot allowance to assist families in providing a proper burial of their loved one; and

WHEREAS, The National Cemeteries Act (Public Law 95-73) enacted in 1973 established a burial allowance of $250 for eligible wartime veterans and a $1,500 burial allowance for veterans who died of a service-connected condition; and

WHEREAS, The Omnibus Reconciliation Act of 1990 limited the payment of the burial plot allowance of $150, which was previously paid to all honorably discharged wartime veterans, to only those veterans who are indigent or who are in receipt of VA disability compensation or pension; and

WHEREAS, Although there have been subsequent increases in the allowances, the infrequent incremental increases have meant that the current $300 burial plot allowance and respective $300 and $2,000 burial allowances have not kept pace with inflation and increases in the cost of living throughout the years; and

WHEREAS, Public Law 95-73 originally covered 13% of a private burial plot and, now, only covers 2%; and

WHEREAS, The $250 burial allowance under Public Law 95-73 represented 22% of the cost of an average funeral of a wartime veteran, at the time, and the current burial allowance reflects only 4% of the cost; and

WHEREAS, The corresponding allowance for veterans who died of a service-connected condition covered 73% of the same average burial; now it only covers 39% of the current average funeral cost; and

WHEREAS, Increases, based on VA's Price-Waterhouse-Cooper Study, "Assessment of Burial Benefits Administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs" (December 2000), would help to restore the amount and percentages of the allowance payments relative to current burial and plot costs; and

WHEREAS, Tying these allowances to the Consumer Price Index, thus requiring VA to adjust the allowance for inflation annually, would eliminate the need for periodic legislative action to bring the allowance in line current with burial and plot costs; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion shall sponsor

and support legislation to return the burial allowances and burial plot allowance to all veterans who served during a time of war or conflict; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the burial allowance for veterans now eligible under 38 United States Code (USC) 2302 and 2303 be increased from $300 to $1,350; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the burial allowance for veterans who died as a result of a service connected condition as set forth in 38 USC 2307 be increased from $2,000 to $4,000; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the burial plot allowance be increased from $300 to $800; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That VA be required to annually adjust burial allowances and burial plot allowance for inflation by tying the increased allowances to the Consumer Price Index.

Resolution No. 185: Indiana-Ohio Center for Traumatic Amputation Rehabilitation Research
Origin: Michigan
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, Many veterans of the War on Terror have been subjected to high-energy, penetrating blasts or high-velocity gunshot wounds and many survive their injuries, due to advancements in protective gear and improvements in medical treatment available in theater; and

WHEREAS, Those injured in Iraq and Afghanistan have required more than twice the number of amputations needed in previous conflicts; and

WHEREAS, Those with traumatic amputations require extensive physical rehabilitation and functional prosthetics to enable them to live autonomously and care for their dependents; and

WHEREAS, There is a need for research addressing long term outcomes of military personnel who experienced war-related traumatic amputations; and

WHEREAS, Conditions related to blast injuries and amputations, like heterotropic ossification, a rare and understudied condition where bone growth occurs during recovery at the amputation site, have already begun to manifest in some recovering Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) veterans; and

WHEREAS, The Indiana-Ohio Center for Traumatic Amputation Rehabilitation Research (The Indiana-Ohio Center) was established to specifically promote research that will address the needs of veterans with war amputations; and

WHEREAS, Data on Vietnam War veterans with amputations related to blast trauma has not been widely collected and their rehabilitation experiences would be valuable in illustrating the long term health effects of traumatic amputations; and

WHEREAS, The Indiana-Ohio Center seeks to develop a databank to capture the long term health care and rehabilitation experiences of Vietnam War veterans to improve care for future veterans who sustain traumatic amputations and to increase knowledge of war-related amputations for the scientific community; and

WHEREAS, The Indiana-Ohio Center's initiative will also address issues affecting war amputees, such as use of prosthetic devices and access to health care, as well as psychological, social, and economic outcomes; and

WHEREAS, Information gathered during the course of this research would be beneficial in determining possible outcomes in current and future war veterans; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion provide public endorsement for the efforts of Indiana-Ohio Center researchers; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion provide input to highlight issues relevant to war amputees; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion disseminate information (i.e. via publications and the website) about the war amputation research project to the membership in an effort to solicit participation from eligible Vietnam War veterans who may be interested in providing information for the databank; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion provide support for efforts of Indiana-Ohio Center researchers to collect information that would improve the knowledge of the long term effects on traumatic amputations, at no direct cost to The American Legion.

Resolution No. 193: The American Legion Oppose VA Medical Center Sharing Arrangements at the Fitzsimmons VA Medical Center
Origin: Colorado
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, There have been numerous changes in the dynamics of Veterans Affairs (VA) health care delivery that have also shifted care from a distinct inpatient setting to various mediums of outpatient care; and

WHEREAS, VA continues to experience an unprecedented growth in the number of veterans enrolling for VA health care services; and

WHEREAS, That fact also serves true within the VA Eastern Colorado Health Care System (ECHCS), also known as the Denver VA Medical Center (VAMC); and

WHEREAS, In accordance with the original Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services (CARES) plan, as approved by then VA Secretary Anthony Principi, the outdated Denver VAMC was scheduled to be replaced with a new and larger facility; to be constructed on a new campus near the site of the now defunct Fitzsimmons Army Hospital; and

WHEREAS, The Denver VA facility was identified by CARES as the third worst in the nation, and still is; and

WHEREAS, The original plan for construction of a replacement facility located in a separate VA tower to be attached to the CU Anschutz Center on the Fitzsimons campus was turned down by the VA as not a feasible plan and that a stand-alone facility was the only solution to a replacement hospital; and

WHEREAS, A second plan called "Project Eagle" was proposed by then VA Secretary Nicholson that included a stand-alone hospital with a nursing home, 30 bed Spinal Cord Injury Unit and joint operations with Buckley Air Force Base; and

WHEREAS, The current VA Secretary Peake has declared the second plan also unworkable and has now proposed a third plan that includes utilizing rented space within a new tower to be built by the University of Colorado Hospital defined as a "hospital within a hospital" and a separately located Ambulatory Care Center and a split Spinal Cord Injury Center with 12 acute beds located in the bed tower and 18 restorative care beds in the Ambulatory Care Center; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion Department of Colorado consisting of more than 25,000 members representing the more than 450,000 veterans in Colorado has reviewed the proposal and has called it an "abomination" and not acceptable nor sufficient to meet the needs of the veterans in Colorado and the Rocky Mountain Region; and

WHEREAS, This latest VA proposal is a policy change that creates a model that can lead to the elimination of all stand-alone veterans hospitals throughout the VA Health Care System in favor of "hospital within a hospital" facilities; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion go on record opposing the latest VA proposal for a "hospital within a hospital" plan for a replacement facility for the Denver VA Hospital; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge the Congress to oppose any efforts to fund the proposed "hospital within a hospital" plan and argue and vote against any bill or amendment offered for the same; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion demand the VA reinstate the plan for a stand-alone replacement hospital and immediately begin construction of a Denver VA Hospital that includes a single site SCIU with at least 30 beds and a VA Veterans Nursing Facility; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That this resolution be delivered to the entire Congressional Delegation.

Resolution No. 195: Support Legislation to Institute Mandatory Psychological Screening for all Returning Global War on Terror, Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) Reserve and Guard Troops
Origin: Colorado
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, With the Global War on Terror, and the two current components, Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraq Freedom, there are more non-traditional soldiers to include Reserves and National Guard; and

WHEREAS, According to the Department of Veterans Affairs, there are currently approximately 150,000 servicemembers deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan; and

WHEREAS, Approximately, 67,525 Operation Iraqi Freedom/ Operation Enduring Freedom veterans have been diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder at Veterans Affairs Medical Centers; to include 16,851 at Vet Centers; and

WHEREAS, Along with Traumatic Brain Injuries (TBI), Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is a major by-product of these operations; and

WHEREAS, PTSD is an insidious disease from which no known resolve exists; only treatment; and

WHEREAS, the earlier the treatment, the better chance veterans will have a more productive life; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Department of Defense (DOD) have yet to do an effective job of screening reserve and guard troops for PTSD; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion petition Congress, the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Defense to institute mandatory psychological screening for all returning reserve and guard troops, and that this screening be mandated at 30, 90, 180 and 365 day intervals; and also prior to the expiration of their current entitlement to health care from the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Resolution No. 237: Support Legislation that the Department of Veterans Affairs Include and Treat Family Members of Veterans with Illnesses and Injuries
Origin: New York
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The nature of combat wounds suffered by our troops has changed dramatically during the current period of conflict; and

WHEREAS, Injuries such as Traumatic Brain Injury, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, and poly-trauma often impact families as well as veterans; and

WHEREAS, Many family members are the primary care givers for these veterans; and

WHEREAS, The modern all-volunteer force is more likely to be married with dependents than their historic predecessors; and

WHEREAS, Title 38, United States Code currently allows only treatment for wounded veterans at VA Medical Center facilities; and

WHEREAS, Under certain circumstances it would be advantageous to provide certain types of care to family members in the course of treating a veteran; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That it urge Congress to amend Title 38, United States Code to allow the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to include family members in comprehensive mental health therapy.

Resolution No. 311: Department VAVS Coordinators
Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The American Legion is a highly regarded member organization of the Department of Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service (VAVS) program and holds membership on its National Advisory Committee; and

WHEREAS, In the last program year over 7,574 Legion regularly scheduled volunteers provided 909,137 hours of service on behalf of our hospitalized veterans, valued in excess of $17 million dollars; and

WHEREAS, This is an huge responsibility and as the need for volunteers continues to grow, The American Legion must increase our level of commitment, not only to recruit additional volunteers but to ensure the responsible management of those volunteers; and

WHEREAS, In 2007, a survey was distributed to all VAVS Representatives and Deputy Representatives, which indicated that communication between National Headquarters office and their local communities could be improved; and

WHEREAS, The current requirements of state leadership over the VAVS Representatives and Deputies vary by state and in some cases, Department Service Officers, Commanders and/or Adjutants do not have a single coordinator to act as a liaison for the Department to ensure the flow of communication from local levels and national; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That the Departments now be required to submit the name and contact information of a duly appointed VAVS Department Coordinator, under the Department Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation (VA&R) Department Committee who will provide leadership and support for all Certified Representatives and Deputies within their respective departments; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the contact information for the VAVS Coordinator should be forwarded to the National Headquarters as soon as possible after the Department elections, but not later than 14 days after said event.

Resolution No. 312: The American Legion Policy on the National Cemetery Administration
Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) National Cemetery Administration (NCA) was established by Congress and approved by President Abraham Lincoln in 1862 to provide for the proper burial and registration of graves of Civil War dead; and

WHEREAS, NCA is currently comprised of 125 national cemeteries in 39 states and Puerto Rico, as well as, 33 soldiers' lots and monuments; and

WHEREAS, More than 2.8 million Americans including veterans of every war and conflict are buried in VA's national cemeteries; and

WHEREAS, More than 24 million veterans and Reservists and National Guard members have earned the honor of burial in a national cemetery; and

WHEREAS, Annual interments in national cemeteries have annually increased and are projected to increase for the next several years due to an aging veteran population; and

WHEREAS, Appropriate land acquisition is a key component to providing continued accessibility to burial options; and

WHEREAS, Operations, maintenance, renovation, and construction funding must continually be adjusted to reflect the true requirements of the National Cemetery Administration; and

WHEREAS, NCA administers a program of grants to states to assist them in establishing or improving state-operated veterans cemeteries in locations where there are no nearby national cemeteries; and

WHEREAS, In 2007, there were 69 operating state cemeteries that performed more than 22,000 interments; and

WHEREAS, Congress must provide sufficient major construction appropriations to permit NCA to accomplish its stated goal of ensuring that burial in a national or state cemetery is a realistic option by locating cemeteries within 75 miles of ninety percent of all veterans; and

WHEREAS, In addition to providing a grave site, NCA provides a headstone or marker, a Presidential Memorial certificate, a U.S. Flag, and perpetual care for the grave; and

WHEREAS, The 1990 Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act eliminated the then-headstone allowance of $85, which was paid to all eligible veterans in lieu of a government-provided headstone or marker and now directly provides a standard government headstone or grave marker to eligible veterans anywhere in the world; and

WHEREAS, VA pays a burial allowance of $2,000 for veterans who die of service-related causes. For veterans who were receiving VA compensation or pension, VA pays $300 for burial and funeral expenses and $300 for a plot. The plot allowance would still be payable to state veterans cemeteries; and

WHEREAS, If a veteran passes away in a Department of Veterans Affairs hospital, nursing home, or domiciliary, or in an institution at which the individual was receiving hospital or nursing care at the expense of the United States at the time of death, VA will pay for the cost of transporting the remains to the place of burial; however, a veteran who passes away in a State Veterans Home is not allowed transportation cost for the remains to the place of burial by VA; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion support the establishment of additional national and state veterans cemeteries and columbaria wherever a need for them is apparent and petition Congress to provide required operations and construction funding to ensure VA burial in a national or state veterans cemetery is a realistic option for veterans and their eligible dependents; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion support restoration of a veterans burial allowance and an increase in the burial benefit; along with restoration of the pre-1990 Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act criteria to provide eligibility for a government-furnished headstone or marker allowance and restoration of the burial plot allowance for all honorably discharged veterans; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion support action to provide, when an eligible veteran, dies in a state veterans hospital or nursing home, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall pay for the cost of transporting the remains to the place of burial determined by the family within a 75 mile radius.

Resolution No. 313: Support Budget Reform of Annual Appropriations for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Health Care Funding
Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The funding for VA health care under the Federal budget is a discretionary program, meaning that it is within the discretion of Congress to determine when and how much money it will allocate each year for veterans' medical care; and

WHEREAS, Title 38, United States Code, section 1710(a), provides that the Secretary of Veterans Affairs "shall" furnish hospital care and medical services, but only to the extent Congress has provided money to cover the costs of the care; and

WHEREAS, The partnership of nine veterans service organizations supports VA healthcare budget reform to achieve sufficient, timely, and predictable funding for VA health care that is reflective of the rising cost of health care and increasing need for medical services; and

WHEREAS, Despite our continued efforts, the cumulative effects of insufficient and inconsistent health care funding endangers the overall viability of the system and the specialized programs VA has developed to improve the health and well-being of our Nation's service-connected disabled veterans; and

WHEREAS, VA reports that it has now reached capacity at many of its health care facilities and is unable to provide timely access to quality health care to many of our Nation's most severely disabled service-connected veterans; and

WHEREAS, It is disingenuous for our government to promise health care to veterans but then make it unattainable because of inadequate and unreliable funding; and

WHEREAS, Providing sufficient, timely, and predictable funding would ensure the government meets its obligation to provide health care to service-connected disabled veterans and ensure all veterans eligible for care in the VA health care system have access to timely quality healthcare; and

WHEREAS, Sufficient, timely, and predictable funding would eliminate the year-to-year uncertainties about funding levels that have prevented VA from being able to adequately plan for and meet the constantly growing number of veterans seeking treatment; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion supports legislation to guarantee Congress provide sufficient, timely and predictable resources to cover the expenses of the veterans' health care program.

Resolution No. 317: Income Tax Deduction for Volunteer Mileage
Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The American Legion is a staunch supporter of the VA Voluntary Service (VAVS) Program, the largest centralized volunteer program in the federal government; and

WHEREAS, Of the 7,527 regularly scheduled American Legion VAVS Volunteers that contribute over 900,000 hours of service annually, rising gas prices is the most significant barrier to their recruitment and retention; and

WHEREAS, The reliance upon volunteer-supported services will continue to grow as government services are reduced because of budgetary reductions; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion, as one of the nation's largest and most active community service organizations, recognizes the need to create an environment which would promote a greater level of volunteerism; and

WHEREAS, The federal government should take the lead in developing policies to produce such an environment; and

WHEREAS, One of the most tangible ways to promote volunteerism is to defray out-of-pocket expenses incurred by volunteers; and

WHEREAS, In 2008, standard mileage rates for business have changed from 50.5 cents to 58.5 cents per mile, medical/moving mileage rates have changed from 19 cents to 27 cents per mile; and

WHEREAS, The optional standard mileage rate for volunteers providing service to a government or charitable organization is set by § 973(a) of the Taxpayer Relief of the Taxpayer Relief Act of 1997, changed the mileage rate from 11.2 cents per mile to 14 cents per mile, effective for taxable years beginning after December 31, 1997; and

WHEREAS, The Internal Revenue Code, continues to provide a $.14 per mile income tax deduction for persons who use their own automobiles in volunteer activities, a deduction which has not been increased since December 31, 1997;" now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion urge Congress to approve legislation to increase the volunteer mileage income tax deduction and to authorize regular CPI-based adjustments to that deduction on an annual or bi-annual basis thereafter.

Resolution No. 323: To Clarify the Conditions and Issuance of National Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service (VAVS) Awards
Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service Program furthers the "individual obligation to the community, state and nation," one purpose for which The American Legion was founded; and

WHEREAS, The Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service Program also fosters the aspiration of "consecrating and sanctifying our comradeship by our devotion to mutual helpfulness," for which The American Legion was also founded; and

WHEREAS, The need continues to thank and recognize the volunteers involved in Voluntary Service at VA hospitals and to stimulate the recruitment of others; and

WHEREAS, Young people are invited to participate in volunteerism through the VolunTeen Program, and their efforts should be acknowledged and commended; and

WHEREAS, This recognition is done, among other ways, through tangible means; and

WHEREAS, The time has come to clarify these mechanisms; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That the request of VAVS awards be conducted after the Chief of Voluntary Service of the VA hospital facility has certified with his/her signature the number of hours accrued by the volunteer and both request and certification are forwarded to the National Headquarters at 1608 K Street, NW, Washington, DC 20006, to the attention of the Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Division; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the petition for the awards and the resulting shipment from National Headquarters be channeled through the office of the Department Adjutant; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the National Headquarters will only send bars that represent the highest number of hours earned if the Departments have delayed in progressively requesting said awards; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the request for those awards for which the VA is responsible be done directly to VA from Department Headquarters; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That VolunTeens be awarded a 8' 11 ½" certificate, pin and bars once they have met the conditions set forth in the Voluntary Service Handbook; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That volunteers in VA medical centers receive 100 hour 8' 11 ½" certificates; 300 hour 8' 11 ½" certificates, pins and bars; 500 hour 8' 11 ½" certificates and bars; and, after this, a Volunteer Hospital Worker pin when they meet 1,000 hours, with a corresponding bar, and thereafter, bars in increments of 1,000 up to a maximum of 20,000 hours; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the 100, 300, and 500 hour certificates are signed by the Chairman of Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission and then mailed to the respective volunteers local VA Medical Center for signature by the VAVS Program Manager (Chief of Voluntary Service) and presentation to the volunteer; and, be it further

RESOLVED, Service Stars are to be ordered directly from Emblem Sales by the Department Headquarters; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That all Departments of The American Legion be notified of the contents of this resolution.

Received and Recorded

Resolution No. 258 (NY): Oppose Processing of Original Pension Claims by Department of Veterans Affairs Pension Management Centers

Referred to the Standing Commission on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

Resolution No. 47 (WA): Support Department of Veterans Affairs Establishing a New National Cemetery in Washington
Resolution No. 65 (ID): Pre-Stabilization Disability Rating
Resolution No. 188 (CO): The American Legion Policy on Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease
Resolution No. 194 (CO): The American Legion Support America's Huey Foundation
Resolution No. 197 (WI): VA Build Separate VA Women's Center at Zablocki VA Medical Center
Resolution No. 202 (WY): Pre-Stabilization Rating

Resolution No. 214 (IL): Methicilin-Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus Testing and Counseling
Resolution No. 215 (IL): VA to Update Bulletin 2-151 Annually
Resolution No. 218 (IL): Reinstate VHA Directive 98-052 Allowing Veterans to Receive Necessary Medical Evidence from VA Treating Physicians in Order to support Disability Claims
Resolution No. 219 (IL): Pre-Stabilization Disability Rating

Resolution No. 239 (OH): Support Legislation to Allow Receipt of VA Pension Without Including Social Security Disability or Retirement Benefits or Other "Unearned Income" as Sources
Resolution No. 246 (MN): VA Grant WWII Veterans Same Hospital and Medical Entitlements as Previously Granted to WWI and Spanish American War Veterans
Resolution No. 247 (MN): VA Build New Regional Office Facility in St. Paul, Minnesota
Resolution No. 250 (MI): Emergency Travel Accident and Medical Insurance
Resolution No. 259 (NY): Oppose Efforts by Department of Veterans Affairs to Create a Virtual Information Center

Rejected

Resolution No. 2 (KS): The American Legion Policy on Atomic Veterans
Resolution No. 46 (MA): State Veterans Home Improvements
Resolution No. 84 (NJ): Increase Maximum Department of Veterans Affairs Pension Benefits Amounts
Resolution No. 191 (CO): VA Conduct Study on Creating Database Management System to Handle Backlog of Claims
Resolution No. 192 (CO): Support Legislation for VA to Implement a Special Team of Employees Dedicated to Solely for Processing Korean and Vietnam Veterans Claims
Resolution No. 196 (WI): VA Release Information to County Service Officers
Resolution No. 213 (IL): Annual Reporting Requirement for Veterans in Receipt of Individual Unemployability Benefits
Resolution No. 252 (MO): Encourage Posts to Establish a "Heroes in Our Hearts" Program
Resolution No. 255 (AZ): Encourage Use of Name "Operation Wounded Warrior"
Resolution No. 260 (TX): World War II Merchant Marines and "Just Compensation"
Resolution No. 280 (WV): Support Improvements to the Department of Veterans Affairs

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Mr. Commander, I, K. Robert Lewis as a duly elected and registered delegate to this convention move for the adoption of this report.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: I have a motion and I believe I got a second. Seeing no discussion. All those in favor by the normal sign of aye. Those opposed? Same sign. The Report of the Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation is adopted.

Presentation: William F. Lenker National Service Trophy
Martin Conatser, Illinois, National Commander

With the adoption of the Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation report it is an appropriate time to announce the winner of the William F. Lenker National Service Trophy. This trophy is awarded annually to the department that best supports and implements programs to benefit veterans, their families, and their survivors. For the 2007-2008 program year the trophy is awarded to the Department of Idaho.

NECMAN RICE: On behalf of the Department of Idaho, we appreciate this award. It's the award that's won by those people back in Idaho that are not here, doing the work of VA&R. We also have a check of $500 we'd like to the national treasurer on behalf of the National Emergency Fund, and we thank you for this award, and thank you for all you out there do for veterans. Thank you. (*Applause*)

Presentation: Resolution No 1: Bestow Upon Robert W. Spanogle The Title Of 'Past National Commander'

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: The Chair recognizes Larry Besson of Illinois, Chairman of the National Convention Committee on Credentials & Internal Affairs for the purpose of making a report.

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN BESSON: Mr. Commander, it is my pleasure, my extreme pleasure to read this Resolution No. 1, but I believe there are other people more distinguished than I, who deserve the honor more than I as the chairman of this committee. Therefore it is my honor and my pleasure to ask that this resolution be read in its entirety by Past National Commander John Geiger from Illinois.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: Permission granted. Past National Commander Geiger.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER GEIGER: Thanks fellows. Commander Conatser, Chairman Larry Besson from Illinois, my good friends of Past National Commanders, the staff, the distinguished officers among you, the veteran leaders of your departments, our ladies of the Auxiliary, Sons of the American Legion, and fellow conventioneers all. This is a very historic convention for one event. It's been some time since the subject might have been important. Thirty-seven years ago, 1971 National Convention in Chicago, Illinois, where I was your, what do you call them, Commander, we had at that time a Vietnam War. An ugly time in the history of America, but we found in The American Legion that we sought out across the colleges campuses, groups, not well-organized because they were new, of Vietnam veterans on the campus. And we, and the staff in Indianapolis, thought there is something happening out there. These young men who are organizing are the kind of people we want and we need in general, but we wanted to find that leadership they had, and we sent our Internal Affairs people out to survey the campuses. From that survey they identified a whole series of young men, and a few women too, who were leaders in a veterans movement on a campus, and from that group we recruited 12 young men who came to National Headquarters. One of them is still on the platform with us. And I'd like to read a resolution I have here.

Resolution No. 1: Bestow Upon Robert W. Spanogle The Title Of 'Past National Commander' With All The Privileges And Rights Pertaining To Such Office
Origin: Convention Committee on Credentials and Other Internal Matters, (Section II)
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Credentials and Other Internal Matters, (Section II)

WHEREAS, Robert W. Spanogle has earned the deep respect and sustained admiration of all those who know of his dedicated efforts on behalf of American Legion activities and the American Veteran; and

WHEREAS, For approximately thirty-six (36) years at the national level, his profound and dynamic leadership is well known and is greatly appreciated by all Legionnaires; and

WHEREAS, National Commanders have consistently recognized and utilized his perception and unique administrative and organizational talents and have sought and heeded his advice and counsel in fulfilling the principles of programs of The American Legion; and

WHEREAS, On July 1, 1981 he was appointed National Adjutant of The American Legion and has dedicated twenty-seven (27) years of outstanding and devoted service in this position; and

WHEREAS, Precedent has been established to bestow honor, as hereafter provided, upon Legionnaires who have performed a most unusual service or services to The American Legion; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That the title of "Honorary Past National Commander" with all privileges and rights pertaining to such office be and hereby is bestowed upon Robert W. Spanogle in view of his long and noteworthy performances and outstanding and extraordinary contributions to The American Legion; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That appropriate ceremonies shall be observed and that this honor be conferred upon Robert W. Spanogle at the completion of his term of office.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER GEIGER: It is my honor on behalf of the Past Commanders and all of you in effect, I'm sure, to move the adoption of this Resolution by this convention.

…Second. *(This was seconded by several delegates)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: The Chair recognizes microphone 3 for the purpose of a second.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER COMER: Commander, as a duly elected delegate from the Department of Massachusetts, Past National Commander John P. Comer I rise to second the motion to adopt the resolution, and to briefly indicate the depth of our sentiments in this matter. By this resolution, we expressed our heartfelt appreciation and profound respect to Robert Spanogle for his many years of devoted and dedicated service to The American Legion principles and the purposes of our national organization. By his outstanding leadership, by his innumerable and great contributions to its welfare, he has significantly enhanced the image and character of our beloved American Legion. My comrades, this is a most deserved tribute in recognition to a truly great Legionnaire, and as a friend for so many years to myself and certainly to my former Eileen, who he loved dearly, I respectfully and sincerely urge upon you your adoption of this resolution by acclimation.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: I've got a motion and a second. Hearing no further discussion. All those in favor by the normal sign of aye. All those opposed? Same sign. Let the records show it was unanimous. (*Long Applause and Cheering*)

Address: National Adjutant Robert W. Spanogle

It is with sincere, deepest, deepest appreciation of the highest honor that this organization could bestow upon anyone. I want to thank John Geiger. I want to thank all of the Past National Commanders, but I want to thank some of the people who are not here today. One was the temporary chairman of the Paris Caucus back in 1919, because as a young Legionnaire, never thinking I'd be on the staff, I had the honor to meet him at the Washington Conference at the old Sheridan Park, in about 1968 or '69. I'm getting old. I can't remember, but his name was Tom Miller. And he took two of us into his room one afternoon and told us about his years as a Congressman before resigning from Congress to enter into the service in the United States Army in World War I.

I want to remember Don Smith, who died this last year, from Michigan. Don was a Chairman Emeritus of the Internal Affairs Commission, but like Tom Miller he was a mentor to a young man. Michigan had an Adjutant way back in those days, the last century, Tom Kouri, who was very kind to me. Got me to put on a tuxedo, and present ROTC medals at Michigan State University. I wasn't too interested in tuxedos at that time.

Jerry Reeves, Tom Cadmus, Jack Carey, Past National Commander Roy Stone, Ralph Godwin, Church Williams of Iowa, George Boucek of Illinois, the last two who served as Chairman of the Finance Commission, and Bert Davis, the Past National Judge Advocate. Some of them are not here with us, but they're here in this hall and they'll always be with me. And there is always a danger here when you start mentioning names. Certainly to John Geiger, and Jake Comer, and Dick Pedro; to all of the 27 National Commanders I've had the opportunity to serve for and with, and each added value. Each added value to The American Legion, but they added value to my life because they were my comrades, and they were my friends. Though we came from different backgrounds, different generations, different everything, their commitments were such that it inspired me and the rest of the staff.

To Ken Danilson on the Finance Commission and the other six members of that commission, I can't leave this podium, and I couldn't leave this convention without telling you, that your Finance Commission that you've appointed over this 27 plus-odd years that I've dealt with them, they're conservative, some liberal in nature, not really liberal, but liberal with—some of them are salty. But they've always had the intention of the financial health of The American Legion, uppermost in their mind. Talented men, and the only thing that they might have in common, if they weren't veterans in their town

they wouldn't have anything in common. Because some are bankers, some are barbers, some are butchers, the baker and the candlestick maker, but I've always been amazed at their wisdom. And one of the most basic wisdoms, not only with the Finance Commission, but the NEC, they understand values. They understand that trust law predates English common law. That if it isn't your money and somebody gives it to you in trust you use it for the right reason.

To my staff, some who are no longer here. I've had the privilege of serving. Some have gone to Post Everlasting, some are with me on the stage, some are with me here. I'll give you just one simple example. When I was a very young veteran, you know, just handing out the papers out there and all that, then on Thursday afternoon when you go over there to the staff offices, and after the Post Convention Executive Committee meeting, National Executive Committee meeting, all this material you see here will be on a truck headed for Indianapolis and Washington. A friend of mine at that first convention was amazed. He says, "Who does this for The American Legion, do you have some planner, some corporation that comes in and does it?" I said, "No, everybody pitches in, gets it done." I would submit to you that there is no finer group of people, no finer group of members, no finer group of people that can just get the job done because we're in the military service. It's taught me values.

I had the opportunity yesterday, I talked to a young man that's a staff member for a Congressman, and he said, "My Congressman believes in veterans benefits, and every resolution The American Legion passes, but he won't support the Flag Amendment." I don't know why I did it, because I have a big mouth, but I looked at him and I said, "Which one of the Ten Commandments doesn't he support?" Because if you don't support the basic values that this organization stands for and what this country stands for, you can't make trade offs." I've never worn this cap, and I've heard everyone of these commanders say the same thing, and Commander Conatser said it today, "We are nothing when we wear our red cap except that it basically turned from blue to red and mine will turn from red to blue."

I thank you for your wisdom. I thank you for your friendship, I thank you for your comradeship, and I thank you for your persistence because 99.9% of the time the resolutions that we pass that come from you are right on the money. It is about the values. It is about the mentors. It is about the Four Pillars of The American Legion. You took me from the 6th District of Michigan as a collegiate vet, one who ran job fairs, went to college under the GI Bill, took me off the line of Oldsmobile, and another veteran took me into last-chance college. Ralph Johnson, World War I service officer at Post 205 said, "I think I'll let you join because you look like you've got the heart." And I took him up on that offer.

My wife Ruth Ann, my sons John and Steven, and Amy are better people because of you. You're their heroes. In a sense, a wonderful wife who was at home when I was on the road a little bit, but when they go through this hall, I've watched them, at 30-some odd years old now, it's hard to believe that my son in the Army has got about 19 years in. I figured I'd better retire before he retired, it'd make me feel bad. But my point is that you raised them, so when I, by your influence, by your kindness, by your willingness to sit down and talk to them on the different view of the diversity of all of you being from different states, they have benefited greatly. And for that you will be in my heart, you will be in my heart and you will be in my memory, all of those I mentioned, and I know I've missed some and I apologize to them. All of you, all of you have made such an impact on my family and my friends, and there's no way that I could ever repay you.

So with that, I want to thank John, Marty Conatser, and members of the Internal Affairs Commission, but most of all, the nearly 3,000 delegates to this convention, don't ever, ever, ever, ever in your life let anyone tell you that you're a lesser person than they are because they went to Harvard or they happen to be in a congressional office. As John Geiger told me a long time, "Keep your coat buttoned and smile and be persistent, because we're right, and you're right as rain, and you're the soul of this nation." So with that, I've said enough, and I want to thank each and everyone of you and a 2.6 million members of the Legion, and the 900,000 members of the Auxiliary, and 300,000 members of the SAL, the 3.8 million members of this Legion family, and all of those who have gone to Post Everlasting since 1919. It is a wonderful honor. It's the highest honor in my life. So I thank you so much. (*Applause*)

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: I now call back to the microphone for the purpose of his report, Larry Besson from Illinois.

Report: Convention Committee on Credentials and Other Internal Matters (Section II of Convention Committee on Credentials and Other Internal Affairs) Larry J. Besson, Illinois, Chairman

Forty-three members of the Credentials and Internal Affairs Committee, Section II, elected Larry J. Besson of Illinois as Permanent Chairman, and George V. West of New Hampshire as Permanent Secretary, and considered 22 (twenty-two) resolutions, 21 (twenty-one) of which originated with Departments of The American Legion and 1 (one) which was created by the committee. Of these, 3 (three) were approved; 1 (one) approved as amended; 8 (eight) were referred; 3 (three) were received and recorded and 7 (seven) were rejected.

Approved

Resolution No. 337: Appreciation to Host City
Origin: Convention Committee on Credentials and Other Internal Matters, (Section II)
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Credentials and Other Internal Matters, (Section II)

WHEREAS, The 90th National Convention has been held in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26-28, 2008; and

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

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26-28, 2008, That we express our deep appreciation to the Department of Arizona, Governor Janet Napolitano; Mayor Phil Gordon; the city of Phoenix, Arizona, including the Fire Department, Police Department, and other Public Safety Officials, and to the 2008 National Convention Corporation Officers, Neal S. Sundeen, President. Around this nucleus has been built the moving force that provided for every necessity that made for a successful and enjoyable convention.

Resolution No. 226: Flight 93 National Memorial
Origin: California
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Credentials and Other Internal Matters, (Section II)

WHEREAS, The 40 passengers and crewmembers of United Airlines Flight 93 collectively chose to intercede when their plane was hijacked as a coordinated effort to attack symbols of the American landscape on September 11, 2001, and fought back in the skies over western Pennsylvania before their plane reached its Washington D.C. destination; and

WHEREAS, Five of the passengers and crewmembers aboard Flight 93 served in the United States Armed Forces and defended the Nation's Citizens from threat or harm; and

WHEREAS, Public Law 107-226 recognizes the passengers and crewmembers of Flight 93 as heroes who courageously gave their lives, thereby thwarting a planned attack on our nation's capital; and

WHEREAS, The Flight 93 National Memorial, located in Somerset County, Pennsylvania, will commemorate the collective acts of courage of the passengers and crewmembers of Flight 93 and present the comprehensive story of the events of September 11, 2001, and a detailed account of the events aboard Flight 93 for future generations through an interactive visitor experience and a thoughtful and reverent design; and

WHEREAS, The Flight 93 National Memorial design was adopted through an international design competition, open to the public and judged by two independent juries comprised of family members, industry peers, and local leaders and residents, and once completed, will encompass over 2,000 acres in western Pennsylvania's Laurel Highlands as one of the newest units of the National Park System; and

WHEREAS, The Flight 93 National Memorial Project is a public/private partnership between the Families of Flight 93, Flight 93 Federal Advisory Commission, Flight 93 Memorial Task Force, National Park Service, and National Park Foundation, in which $30 million will be raised from private sources to fund construction of the Flight 93 National Memorial, which will be dedicated in 2011; now, therefore, be it,

RESOLVED: By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That the national organization support and endorse the creation of the Flight 93 National Memorial, to be located in Somerset County, Pennsylvania, without any financial obligation.

Resolution No. 279: Frank Woodruff Buckles Highway
Origin: West Virginia
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Credentials and Other Internal Matters, (Section II)

WHEREAS, Far too often we wait too long before honoring one of our own who sacrificed part of their youth and who lived to make history that must be remembered; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Frank Woodruff Buckles is a West Virginian who at the age of 16 years, offered his life during World War I to preserve the freedom of America and to help a people he did not know to secure a freedom for their people. He served his country with honor and performed his duties with dignity; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Buckles was later captured as a civilian and held as a prisoner by the Japanese in the Philippines for many months all during World War II, again placing his life in jeopardy. His devotion to duty and America is symbolic of his life; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Frank Woodruff Buckles has lived a life of adventure and devotion to his family, community and country. His life has spanned a total of 107 years placing him in history as the oldest American World War I Veteran living in 2008, and the oldest West Virginia Veteran living today; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That Mr. Frank Woodruff Buckles, the oldest living World War I veteran, has earned a place in history and warrants the recognition that will preserve his place in history by designating highway WV (9) from the Virginia border to I-81 in Berkeley County West Virginia as the "FRANK WOODRUFF BUCKLES HIGHWAY, America's Longest Living World War I Veteran"; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, Because of the advanced age of Mr. Buckles, action should be taken to get the highway designated at the earliest possible date. Upon adoption, the erection of the signs designating the highway in his name should be placed immediately so that Mr. Buckles may have the honor of attending the ceremony to enjoy his deserved recognition.

Resolution No. 244: Support Creation Of Vietnam Veterans Memorial Center On The National Mall
Origin: Ohio
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Credentials and Other Internal Matters, (Section II)
(As Amended)

WHEREAS, The American Legion is established "to preserve the memories and incidents of our association in the Great Wars"; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion's constitution further pledges, "to safeguard and transmit to posterity the principles of justice, freedom, and democracy"; and

WHEREAS, The Vietnam Veterans Memorial, "The Wall," in Washington D.C., is recognized as a worthy tribute to the men and women who served and sacrificed in the Vietnam War; and

WHEREAS, The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund is building a visitors center authorized by Congress to remind current and future generations of those who answered their country's call to duty during that war; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion support the creation of a Vietnam Veterans Memorial Center on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., through verbal and written statements without financial obligation to The American Legion National Headquarters.

Referred to the Standing Commission on Internal Affairs

Resolution No. 68 (ID): World War II Memorial Registry Of Remembrance
Resolution No. 79 (VA): Manual Of Guidelines For American Legion Websites
Resolution No. 90 (FL): Endorsement Of James K. Roberts III For National Commander Sons Of The American Legion

Referred to the Standing Commission on National Convention

Resolution No. 4 (NC): Recommendation For North Carolina To Host The National Convention Of The American Legion

Referred to the Standing Committee on Trophies & Awards

Resolution No. 190 (CO): Officer's Guide And Manual Of Ceremonies And The Salute In Places Of Worship
Resolution No. (WY) 203: Gold Star Service Banner Program
Resolution No. 204 (WY): Amending Empty Chair Ceremony

Referred to the Standing Committee on Emblem Sales

Resolution No. 60 (MT): Increase Female Recognition Apparel In Emblem Sales Catalog
Resolution No. 254 (MO): Quality Of Emblem Sales American Flags

Received and Recorded

Resolution No. 17 (VT): Recommendation Of Linda M. Perham For National Commander
Resolution No. 45 (MA): Endorsement Of Mark Avis For National Vice Commander

Rejected

Resolution No. 5 (MX): Recommend The Renaming Of The Department Of Mexico To The Department Of Latin America
Resolution No. 87 (FL): Amendment To The 2007 American Legion Riders Resolution
Resolution No. 89 (FL): Killed In Action Flag (KIA) Memorial Flag
Resolution No. 189 (CO): Official American Legion Riders Colorado Logo
Resolution No. 216 (IL): Referrals To Post Service Officer
Resolution No. 227 (CA): Veterans Remembered Flag
Resolution No. 249 (MN): World War II Memorial And The Words "So Help Us God"

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

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

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN BESSON: Mr. Commander, as a duly elected and registered Delegate from the Department of Illinois, I move for the adoption of my Report.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: I've got a motion and a second. Hearing any discussion? Hearing no discussion. All those in favor by the normal sign of aye. Opposed same sign? A Report of Credentials & Internal Affairs is adopted.

The Chair recognizes the Honorable Vincent M. Gaughan of Illinois, Chairman of the Convention Committee on Constitutional Amendments for the purpose of a report.

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

To the 90th National Convention of The American Legion, Phoenix, Arizona August 26, 27, 28, 2008.

The Committee on Constitutional Amendments met at 9:00 a.m., Sunday, August 24, 2008 in the Hyatt Regency, Remington Rooms A-C, 2nd Floor. Committee Liaison Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr. (MD) called the roll and announced that 41 members of the Constitutional Amendments Committee were present. The following report was authorized by the members and is hereby submitted to this Convention.

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

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

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

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

A motion was duly made by Charles G. Mills (NY) and duly seconded by Cecil Phillips (SC) that all members of the Standing Committee on Constitution and By-Laws and Past National Commander Anthony G. Jordan who were present at the meeting, but not actual delegates to the Convention Committee be seated with voice but no vote. The motion was carried by the members.

The Chair then stated, based upon the National Judge Advocate's report to the Committee with regards to the requirements for consideration of resolutions to amend the Constitution of The American Legion, and the details as stated in the Standing Committee's report, he would rule out of order those resolutions which did not meet those requirements.

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

Resolution No. 217 (IL) was considered. The Chair announced that this resolution was out of order because it does not provide the revised language on which the National Convention could vote.

Art Lustig (OH) made a motion, seconded by John Titus (PA) that the committee adopt the Chair's ruling on Resolution No. 217 (IL). Motion was carried unanimously.

Resolution No. 253 (MO) was next considered.

Accordingly, the Chair ruled Resolution No. 253 (MO) in order because the wording for the convention to vote on was provided. This resolution would change the Preamble to the National Constitution by changing the reference to "Great Wars" to "all wars."

Charles Armbruster (DE) made a motion, seconded by Tony Rabbia (NH) to reject. Motion carried.

Resolution No. 256 (NE) was next considered.

Accordingly, the Chair ruled Resolution No. 256 (NE) in order. This resolution would open up eligibility from April 16, 1917 and would end The American Legion's status as a war time organization to the great detriment of the various Posts and Departments. This also would have horrific financial collateral damage.

Mary Lepley (GA) made a motion to reject Resolution 256 (NE), seconded by J. D. Roehrig (NM). Motion carried.

The Chair then asked for a motion that the Chairman and Secretary be permitted to sign the report to the Convention on behalf of the members of the Convention Committee. Ron Roberts (MS) made the motion and it was seconded by Terry Rice (KY). The motion carried.

Charles Schmidt (OR) made a motion to recess, subject to the call of the Chairman. The motion was seconded by Doug Goodwin (MO).

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

Mr. Commander, as a delegate to the 90th National Convention of The American Legion, I move that this report be adopted.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: I got a motion and a second. Any discussion? Hearing none. All those in favor by the normal sign of aye. Opposed same sign. Ayes have it. Thank you Vince.

The only announcement that needs to be made is that the Convention will reconvene at 9:00 tomorrow morning, there will be no magnetometers. The only person carrying a gun will probably be me. Nothing else?

Please rise and join me in a salute to our National Colors. One! Two!

…The Delegates rose and saluted the Colors.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: It is now 3:42 p.m. We stand in recess until 9:00 in the morning.

...At 3:42 p.m., the Convention recessed to reconvene the following day, Thursday August 28, 2008 at 9:00 a.m.

PROCEEDINGS
THIRD DAY

Thursday, August 28, 2008

…At 8:30 a.m. the Delegates were entertained by Mr. Peter Ole, our organist.

…At 9:00 a.m. the Delegates assembled for the third day of the 90th Annual National Convention, and the following proceedings were conducted.

…Announcer introduces National Commander Martin "Marty" Conatser.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: As we begin our program, please join me in a round of applause for Maestro Peter Ole. (*Applause*)

Call to Order
Martin "Marty" Conatser, Illinois, National Commander

The Convention will come to order. Sergeant-At-Arms, lead us to a salute to the Colors of our country. By the numbers. One, two.

…The delegates stood and rendered a right-hand salute to the Colors.

I now call upon the National Chaplain the Reverend Elliott L. Foss, Georgia.

Invocation
Reverend Elliott L. Foss, Georgia, National Chaplain

Let us pray. Father, it has been a wonderful, wonderful convention. We've had the opportunity to have a family reunion to be with friends that we see occasionally, share stories kind of like back at the Legion post. Father, we thank you for this friendship, this fellowship, this family, and we thank you for all that we are able to do because you give us the strength and courage to do it each and everyday.

Now, Father, as we come before this last morning of work, would You continue to guide us and protect us. Give us the courage and the strength to do the right things at the right time and always for the right reason. Watch over our young men and women serving throughout this world, and be with our veterans and their families. May we always be found working like a lighthouse in our community, drawing people unto us so that they might support them, but more importantly, that we might love them.

Father, we give You the honor and the glory. For God and for country. Amen.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: Remain uncovered and join me in the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag of the United States of America.

…The delegates stood and recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Presentation: The American Legion Fourth Estate Award
Martin "Marty" Conatser, Illinois, National Commander

The Convention is now in session. We begin this morning by recognizing an outstanding achievement in journalism that had a positive impact on a community. The American Legion Fourth Estate Award is difficult to earn. It is a testament to the demanding nature of a competition in the quality of entries. This year's award goes to KRIV-TV, Houston, Texas. We have a short excerpt from the program. Please run the video.

…*At this time the Delegates viewed a video.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: KRIV has announced that $1,500 of the stipend for the award will be donated to the Houston Fisher House. A representative of KRIV is not able to be with us today. They have asked Emmy award-winning journalist Jim Mallory to accept the award on their station's behalf. (*Applause*)

ANNOUNCER: The award reads: Fourth Estate Award for outstanding achievement in the field of journalism is presented to KRIV Fox 26 News, Houston, Texas. For the riveting documentary that chronicled the rehabilitation of America's wounded warriors

from Iraq and Afghanistan, "The Intrepid: Texas Lifeline," presented at the 90th National Convention, August 28, 2008, in Phoenix, Arizona.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: And the correction is it's Jim Manley.

MR. MANLEY: First, I don't get this opportunity to address this many veterans very often. So I want to say from a civilian, thank you, thank you, thank you for all the years of service, and everything that you do to keep us safe. Thank you.

KRIV couldn't be here. The hurricane is coming down on them. Let's hope it doesn't get too close. But they've sent me a statement that I'm going to read that to you. Then Mr. Dave Muncie is going to address you also.

KRIV's *Intrepid* coverage was inspired by the father of the vice president of news, Kathy Williams. Her father, Clinton, a 35-year Air Force veteran, encouraged Kathy's mom, Henrietta, to join him in doing volunteer work for the opening of the hospital in San Antonio. Mr. Williams retired at Randolph Air Force Base, just outside San Antonio and had watched with pride as the *Intrepid* project unfolded. After hearing about her parents' passion for the project, Kathy discussed it with KRIV reporter, Greg Groogan, who was quite familiar with it. He took the ball and spearheaded a series of stories in the half-hour special *The Intrepid: Texas Lifeline*. Greg was deeply touched by the personnel he met at the hospital and enlisted newsroom staffers who cared about the effort just as much.

Greg, Kathy, producer Michael Baugh, and photographer Mark Muller are very, very proud of the Fourth Estate American Legion Award. They plan to work hard toward doing more work that is worthy of Fourth Estate consideration next year. They regret that they were unable to come today. Thank you very much.

And now I'd like to introduce 35-year veteran from Fox News, Mr. Dave Muncie. He is also a Vietnam War veteran. (*Applause*)

DAVE MUNCIE: How many fellow Vietnam veterans do we have in the audience today? Can you believe we're getting older? I looked in the mirror the other day and I went, huh? I made the big mistake of looking back. Don't ever look back when you're walking away from the mirror at this age. It's not good.

I'm going to speak to you without a script today. I don't like to do that because after I turned 60 I get halfway through what I want to say, and I start wandering off on my hernia operation. It was horrible. They asked me if I could talk a little bit about my military career. Since I can't remember what I did last weekend that's not going to happen. What I do know about is Fox News and I know about documentaries. This documentary was incredible. News stations don't make a lot of money on documentaries. They do them to give back to the community. It takes a lot of people. It takes the talent. It takes the camera people. It takes lighting. It takes producers and writers. It takes people to set things up. It takes logistics. Sometimes you have to travel. You move from here to there. It takes a lot of people, and it takes a lot of time. But it's the way that we give back to the community, and we are so proud throughout the Fox family of the documentary that you've seen here this morning, the documentary that was done in Houston. We do them though the Fox family, and we do them so that we can give something back to the community. What I find somewhat ironic is the fact that you are honoring us, when we should be honoring all of you. Thank you very much. (*Applause*)

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: What Legion Post do you happen to belong to?

DAVE MUNCIE: I'm not a member of the Legion. Oh look, he's got me.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: I'd be happy to sponsor your first year membership in The American Legion.

DAVE MUNCIE: And it's all dues free. I can't believe it.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: For the first year. The Chair now recognizes Michael D. Helm of Nebraska, Convention Committee on Foreign Relations for the purpose of making a report.

Report: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations
Michael D. Helm, Nebraska, Chairman

At 8:30 a.m. Sunday, August 24, 2008, 49 delegates and alternates assigned to the Convention Committee on Foreign Relations met in the Phoenix Convention Center, Phoenix, Arizona. Mr. Michael D. Helm (NE) was elected Chairman and Melvin "Doc" Simon (VT) was appointed Secretary.

At this meeting, motions were approved authorizing the committee chairman and secretary to make technical corrections to the resolutions reported out of the committee to ensure proper wording and form without changing the substance or meaning of the resolutions and to sign the report on behalf of the delegates. A total of 30 resolutions were assigned to the convention committee on foreign relations. Following this initial meeting an Ad Hoc Administration Convention Committee met in rooms 155-156, South Building, Street Level, of the Phoenix Convention center to consider the resolutions that had been assigned to the Convention Committee on Foreign Relations. The following were appointed Chairman and Secretary: Foreign Policy: Chairman Michael D. Helm (Nebraska) and Secretary Melvin "Doc" Simon (Vermont).

The Ad Hoc Committee report contains resolutions that will, in conjunction with resolutions previously adopted, provide and an effective viable foreign relations program for the American Legion. This program will fully support a strong dynamic US Foreign policy to promote democracy around the world and discharge America's responsibility as leader of the free world in the continuing struggle to defend and promote liberty.

General Foreign Policy

Approved

Resolution No. 18: Support for New JPAC Headquarters Facility
Origin: Vermont
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations

WHEREAS, The American Legion has long been deeply committed to achieving the fullest possible accounting for US personnel still held captive, missing and unaccounted for from all of our nation's wars; and

WHEREAS, It is the responsibility of the US government to account as fully as possible for America's missing veterans, including—if confirmed deceased—the recovery and identification of their remains when possible; and

WHEREAS, The headquarters and laboratory facilities currently utilized by the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) at Hickam AFB, Hawaii, are inadequate to handle existing requirements, now including the expanded mission to recover and identify all possible US personnel unaccounted for from wars and conflicts prior to the Vietnam War; and

WHEREAS, The US Congress has a duty and obligation to appropriate funds necessary for carrying out all relevant tasks to solve this issue and obtain answers for the POW/MIA families and our nation's veterans; and

WHEREAS, This accounting effort must be expedited and must not be considered complete until all reasonable actions have been taken to achieve the fullest possible accounting; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion supports and commends Admiral Timothy Keating, Commander, US Pacific Command, for his commitment to seek US Navy funding in the amount of $105 million to begin construction of a new JPAC headquarters, including a state-of-the-art laboratory in FY 2010, to be completed in FY 2011; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the US Congress is urged to fully fund this US Navy military construction project to ensure that those who serve our nation—past, present, and future—are returned and accounted for as fully as possible; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion renews its longstanding commitment to the goal of achieving the fullest possible accounting for all US military and designated civilian personnel missing from our nation's wars.

Resolution No. 19: Support for Increased Personnel and Funding
Origin: Vermont
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations

WHEREAS, The American Legion has long been deeply committed to achieving the fullest possible accounting for US personnel still held captive, missing and unaccounted for from all of our nation's wars; and

WHEREAS, The shortage of personnel and funding for the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command have not been increased at a level commensurate with the expanded requirement to obtain answers on Americans unaccounted for from wars and conflicts prior to the Vietnam War; and

WHEREAS, It is the responsibility of the US Government to account as fully as possible for America's missing veterans, including—if confirmed deceased—the recovery of their remains when possible; and

WHEREAS, The US Congress has a duty and obligation to appropriate funds necessary for all government agencies involved in carrying out strategies, programs and operations to solve this issue and obtain answers for the POW/MIA families and our nation's veterans; and

WHEREAS, This accounting effort should not be considered complete until all reasonable actions have been taken to achieve the fullest possible accounting; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion calls upon Congress to support personnel increases and full funding for the efforts of the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command, the Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office, the Life Sciences Equipment Laboratory, the Armed Forces DNA Laboratory, including specific authorization to augment assigned personnel when additional assets and resources are necessary; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, By The American Legion that we remain steadfast in our commitment to the goal of achieving the fullest possible accounting for all US military and designated civilian personnel missing from our nation's wars.

Resolution No. 23: US-Russia Joint Commission on POW/MIA Affairs
Origin: Vermont
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations

WHEREAS, The American Legion has confidence in the mission, ability, commitment and unique expertise of the staff of the US-Russia Joint Commission (USRJC) on POW/MIAs, known as JCSD (Joint Commission Support Directorate); and

WHEREAS, The American Legion commends US Chairman General Robert Foglesong, USAF (Ret), Senator Saxby Chambliss (R-GA) for serving as the Senate Republican Commissioner and Representative Sam Johnson (R-TX) for his long-time service as the House Republican Commissioner, but regrets the lack of active involvement by the Senate Democrat Commissioner and the vacancy that now exists in the House Democrat Commissioner; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion calls on Russian Federation President Vladimir Putin and President Dmitry Medvedev to increase the priority within and responsiveness of their government on the humanitarian mission pursued by the US-Russia Joint Commission on POW/MIA Affairs; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges Senator Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) and Speaker of the House Representative Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) to act immediately to name a qualified Member of the House and of the Senate to serve as Commissioners to pursue the important interests and objectives of the POW/MIA families and our nation's veterans.

Resolution No. 154: Defense POW/MIA Accounting Office (DPMO) Funding
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations

WHEREAS; Many American Service-members are reported as Missing in Action or otherwise unaccounted for from World War II, the Korean War, the Cold War and the War in Southeast Asia, the Persian Gulf Region and Afghanistan; and

WHEREAS; The families of the Prisoners of War, Missing Captured, and Missing in Action still suffer untold grief and uncertainty due to the lack of any accurate accounting in spite of the heroic efforts of US search teams; and

WHEREAS; The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Office (DPMO) is the direct agency responsible for the administration and policy for military personnel accountability; and

WHEREAS; The American Legion believes US Government POW/MIA and personnel accountability operations are still inadequate, and that the President's budget and appropriations provided for by the Congress has not been sufficient to fund research and development for new or improved personnel accountability programs; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion urges the President of the United States and the US Congress to designate and provide adequate and appropriate funding for the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Office (DPMO) for their current and future mission to ensure the accountability for our Nation's servicemen and servicewomen; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion continues to exert the maximum effort for reasonable accountability for MIA's from World War II, Korea, Southeast Asia, the Cold War and those missing and captured in our current conflicts around the world.

Resolution No. 155: The American Legion's Support for World Press Freedom
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations

WHEREAS; In a democratic society the essential role of the press (News Media, print and electronic) to report on government activities, social movements, scientific developments and other significant events or breakthroughs are one of the basic pillars of our Bill of Rights; and

WHEREAS; Such reporting and expression of speech help to ensure the transparency of the political and social systems that are in place and that an informed and educated public can more effectively participate politically; and

WHEREAS; The American Legion recognizes that oppressive and restrictive regimes around the world work to deter, manipulate or out-rightly deny their citizens to get unfettered information, or to allow free press to investigate and report in those countries; and

WHEREAS; Department of State and US Government News Media Organizations under the Broadcast Board of Governors such as: The Voice of America, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Radio Free Asia, Radio Marti TV, and Middle East Broadcasting Network (MBN), are essential news resources to countries; whose domestic news sources are oppressed or restricted; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion urges the President of the United States and the US Congress to designate and provide adequate and appropriate funding for the Department of State and US Government News Media Organizations under the Broadcast Board of Governors such as: The Voice of America, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Radio Free Asia, Radio Marti TV, and the Middle East Broadcasting Network (MBN); and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion supports international press freedom and the protection of international journalists who report and investigate news throughout the world; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion recognizes the great value and contributions these unique individuals have made to society and the global

community to draw attention to oppression, injustice and tyrannies that threaten open and free societies around the world.

Resolution No. 156: Interagency Policy Coordination & Cooperation
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations

WHEREAS, Since formation of the Defense POW/MIA Office (DPMO) in 1992, there has been a marked decrease in interagency coordination and cooperation on POW/MIA accounting matters; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion urges the President and the Congress of the United States, to call upon the National Security Council, Department of Defense and Department of State to reenergize interagency coordination in support of criteria for unilateral actions by the Socialist Republic of Vietnam regarding POW/MIA issues.

Resolution No. 159: Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command Funding
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations

WHEREAS, The Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) was forced to reduce field operations to account for missing US personnel in early 2006 due to a failure of the Defense Department to provide adequate funding; and

WHEREAS, The mission of JPAC has been expanded by Congress to include investigation and recovery operations dating back to and including unaccounted for WWII personnel and funding levels were not increased to meet this requirement; and

WHEREAS, The headquarters currently utilized by JPAC, previously the headquarters of the Central Identification Laboratory, prior to its merger with the Joint Task Force-Full Accounting to become JPAC, and is no longer capable of housing the expanded command nor the expanded laboratory requirements for forensic identifications; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion calls on the Secretary of Defense to ensure that the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) have at least $62 million in operation funds; and, be it further

RESOLVED, An additional $62 million in military construction funds be included in the Department of Defense (DoD) budget for FY2008 and a minimum of $64 million per year for FY2009 through FY2010 for JPAC; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion calls on the Congress to ensure that such funds be approved and restricted for use for no purpose other than those included in the mission statement of the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command, Hickam AFB, Hawaii.

Resolution No. 161: POW/MIA Policies
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations

WHEREAS, Many Americans are reported as missing in action or otherwise unaccounted for from World War II, the Korean War, the Cold War and the war in Southeast Asia; and

WHEREAS, The families of these Prisoners of War and Missing in Action still suffer untold grief and uncertainty due to the lack of any accurate accounting in spite of the heroic efforts of US search teams. Some reports indicate that some of these Americans could be alive in the former enemy areas; and

WHEREAS, It appears that certain information from these areas has been deliberately and cruelly withheld from their families; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion is convinced for example, based on available evidence, that American POWs were detained by Vietnam after Operation Homecoming in 1973, and there is sufficient evidence to lead us to believe that there is still a probability of American POWs still being held in Indochina today; and

WHEREAS, Specific locations of alleged remains of US servicemen have now been identified by the US Government; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion believes US Government POW/MIA operations are still inadequate, and the President's normalization of relations with Vietnam has not achieved substantially greater progress; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion urges the President of the United States of America and every member of the US Congress to speak out on every occasion to expedite the return of those US servicemen who remain Missing in Action; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion continues to exert the maximum effort to account for MIAs from World War II, Korea, Southeast Asia and the Cold War; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion believes the following priority actions should be taken by the US Government:

Continue to provide sufficient personnel and resources so that investigative efforts of World War II, Cold War, and Korean War POW/MIA situations can be broadened and accelerated.

- **Continue to provide necessary resources so field operations can be conducted at a maximum rate of activity with more timely follow-up of live sighting reports.**
- **Continue to declassify all POW/MIA information (except that revealing intelligence sources or methods) in a form readily available to public review.**
- **Initiate or strengthen joint commissions with Russia, the People's Republic of China, and Democratic People's Republic of Korea to increase POW/MIA recovery efforts.**
- **Establish a joint standing congressional committee on POW/MIA affairs to ensure continued action by the executive branch in addressing the POW/MIA issue.**
- **Take further favorable actions toward the Socialist Republic of Vietnam only after Hanoi provides the fullest possible accounting for POW/MIAs in Vietnam or in areas of Laos and Cambodia it controlled during the Vietnam War.**
- **Take favorable actions toward Laos or Cambodia only after those nations provide the fullest possible accounting for POW/MIAs.**
- **"Fullest possible accounting" is defined as turning over live prisoners, repatriating remains of those who were killed in action or died in captivity, or providing a valid, conclusive report when neither is possible.**

Resolution No. 162: The American Legion's United Nations Policy
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations

WHEREAS, The American Legion played a significant role in helping to establish the United Nations after World War II, believing it would help prevent the outbreak of future wars; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion has remained generally supportive of the United Nations over the succeeding years, although it has been critical of particular ineffective, wasteful or undesirable activities of the United Nations; and

WHEREAS, Although the United Nations in half a century of operation has not fulfilled the lofty purposes of international peace and human betterment envisioned by its founders, it continues to be in the national interest for the United States to function as a member of the United Nations; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion urges the US Government to seek the following reforms in the United Nations and to use American leverage to obtain these desired ends:

- **Encourage the United Nations to focus on limited, necessary, achievable tasks that truly better the lot of humankind in a sensible, cost-effective manner.**
- **Encourage the United Nations not to infringe on national sovereignty when operating economic and social programs.**
- **Adopt weighted voting procedures in the General Assembly, allotting voting power in relation to funds contributed by each member nation to the United Nations.**
- **Provide truly independent authority to the Inspector General and ensure that UN agencies become subject to periodic, unannounced auditing, the finding of such audits to be reported to member nations.**
- **Establish an equitable fiduciary relationship between the United States and the United Nations.**

Resolution No. 164: Support for Foreign Exchange Education Programs
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations

WHEREAS, The United States and Mexico, Central and South America are historic, regional neighbors with a common heritage and thousands of miles of common boundary; and

WHEREAS, The United States Congress and the Executive Branch have entered into the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) with Mexico; and

WHEREAS, College scholarships and educational exchanges help reduce social, cultural and international barriers and promote good will and understanding; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion urges the Congress to increase financial and political support for existing international education exchange and scholarship programs, such as: the Fulbright, Gilman Programs and others offered through the Departments of State and Education, which will increase cooperative endeavors on all fronts to enhance the prosperity and security of those nations participating; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges the U. S. Government to expanded the number of scholarships for Mexico, Central American and South America, particularly for those highly qualified students, who lack funds to attend undergraduate and appropriate vocational-technical programs, provided said students promise to abide by the current or future immigration student visa policies, after completing their education or program requirements.

Resolution No. 165: The American Legion Global Trade Policies
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations

WHEREAS, Continued escalation of import energy prices tied to America's unrelenting consumptions of foreign import goods has resulted with balance of trade deficits unheard of in our past history of world trading; and

WHEREAS, Last year's imbalance of over $790 billion is another disturbing example of the economic trend that has contributed to the loss of over 3 million US - based manufacturing jobs including some related to our military and national security supplies since the year 2000; and

WHEREAS, It's a known fact China and other trade countries have purchased billion of dollars worth of US Government bonds, stock market shares, and individual companies with their windfall money from our trade deficit as a result of Congress approving the "World Free Trade" policy a number of years ago; and

WHEREAS, China and other trade countries have not adhered to the global trade rules initially agreed to in the treaty relating to import fees and tariffs resulting with below reasonable costs of the products in the US and higher prices of US products sold in their territories; and

WHEREAS, Revenues realized by other countries from these trade imbalances have resulted in greater purchasing power and the potential for foreign ownership of essential industries and corporations vital to our basic national security interests and infrastructure; now; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, on August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion urge the President and Congress to reign in run-a-way trade deficits by pursuing the enforcement of the conditions of the trade negotiations made in good faith with these nations, and support the efforts of our trade negotiators and diplomatic officials to use every avenue available through the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to pursue our Nation's claims for fair trade practices.

Resolution No. 167: The American Legion Foreign Policy Objectives
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations

WHEREAS, Members of The American Legion, as veterans of wartime service in the defense of liberty, have a special concern for maintaining peace with freedom and recognize that a strong US foreign policy is vital in that regard; and

WHEREAS, The official concern of The American Legion stems from that part of the Preamble to the Constitution of The American Legion which states: "We associate ourselves together...to make right the master of might; to promote peace and goodwill on earth; to safeguard and transmit to posterity the principles of justice, freedom and democracy;" now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion believes that the following objectives should be incorporated into US foreign policy in order to maintain peace with freedom while preserving and promoting democracy:

1. **Recognition that the US has great and multiple responsibilities as a leader of the Free World**
2. **Dedication to achievement of world peace with freedom, secured by a peace through strength posture**
3. **Support for a global fight on multiple fronts to end the scourge of terrorism**
4. **Support for democracy and human rights in other countries when such is consistent with US national interests and national power**
5. **Participation in essential collective security alliances, provided our allies contribute their fair share**
6. **Negotiation of equitable, verifiable arms control agreements, which improve US national security**
7. **Opposition to the spread of nuclear, chemical or biological weapons or long-range ballistic missiles which may be used by terrorists, terrorist organizations, communists or aggressor nations**
8. **Determined opposition to international terrorism and drug trafficking**
9. **Support for responsible international organizations that are consistent with US sovereignty and serve US national interests**
10. **Participation in an increasingly interdependent Free World trading system based on fair and equitable trading practices**
11. **Recognition that the President must be the chief architect of US foreign policy as envisioned in the US Constitution, while Congress performs important functions of advice, oversight and funding**
12. **Support for the appropriate resources to promote and protect US vital national interests world-wide.**

Resolution No. 170: Enhanced Funding for USAID
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations

WHEREAS, The United States Department of State is the first line of defense of the nation in combating the myriad security threats that face America from abroad, and is charged with a number of missions that are vital to the nation; and

WHEREAS, These missions include: diplomatic relations with foreign nations, promoting peace and stability in regions of vital interest, bringing countries together to address global challenges, creating jobs at home by opening markets abroad, and helping developing nations establish stable economic environments that provide investment and export opportunities; and

WHEREAS, The State Department has been allocated little more than 1% of the total federal budget to accomplish many of these development tasks through the US Agency for International Development (USAID) in contrast to the approximately 16% spent on defense; and

WHEREAS, In recent years the State Department's responsibilities have expanded enormously to include combating threats from terrorism, international crime, and narcotics trafficking, and that development programs through USAID are in the frontline to offer solutions and alternatives for emerging states to prevent their economic and democratic failure; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion supports policies and legislation that will enhance funding for the US Agency for International Development (USAID) within the Department of State and seeks use of that funding towards targeted states whose failure to provide for its people could result in the expansion of international terrorism; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That USAID because of its technical knowledge and expertise be given a greater role in the decision making process for the disbursement and usage of funds targeted for reconstruction in nations where our military presence has resulted in the need for infrastructure redevelopment.

Resolution No. 171: Support for US-Russia Joint Commission on POW/MIA
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations

WHEREAS, The American Legion has confidence in the purpose, ability, commitment and unique expertise of the DPMO-based and Moscow-based staff of the US-Russia Joint Commission (USRJC) on POW/MIAs, known as JCSD (Joint Commission Support Directorate); and

WHEREAS, The American Legion commends Representative Sam Johnson (TX) for his long-standing service as the House Majority Commissioner and applauds Senator Saxby Chambliss' recent appointment to serve as the Senate Majority Commissioner, but regrets the slow involvement by the House and Senate Minority Commissioners, and urges greater participation or replacement; and

WHEREAS, General Robert H. 'Doc' Foglesong, USAF (Ret) of West Virginia has been named to be the US Chairman of the US-Russia Joint Commission on POW/MIA Affairs; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion urges the President and Congress to quickly appoint and confirm a qualified, high level and experienced policy person, not currently working in the US Government, to serve as US Chairman of the USRJC; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion calls on the leadership of the House and Senate to ensure that its representatives on the US-Joint Commission on POW/MIA Affairs are able to serve actively as US Commissioners in pursuing the important interests and objectives of the POW/MIA families and our nation's veterans; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion calls on the leadership of the Commonwealth of Independent States to increase the responsiveness of their

government in the humanitarian mission pursued by the Joint Commission; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the President and Congress provide the necessary and adequate funding needed for the Commission to pursue its mission for full accountability of all our country's servicemembers.

Resolution No. 172: Social Security Survivor Benefits for Non-resident Alien Spouses and Dependents
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations

WHEREAS, From its inception The American Legion has been dedicated to guarding the well being of the surviving spouses of members and veterans of the armed services; and

WHEREAS, All Legionnaires pledge themselves to "devotion to mutual helpfulness"; and

WHEREAS, The survivors of veterans living in countries where appreciable numbers of US military forces are based presently benefit from treaties and administrative agreements which are not applicable to other foreign domiciled "nonresident alien beneficiaries"; and

WHEREAS, Existing Public Law and administrative regulations of the Social Security Administration require Mexican and Central American nationals who claim survivor benefits to provide proof of physical presence inside the territory of the United States either:

a) 30 days every six months or
b) one day per month every month of the year,

but such physical presence may not be required of Social Security beneficiaries of other nationalities when residing outside the United States depending upon whether or not the Social Security Administration has entered into international agreements with the governments of those beneficiaries; and

WHEREAS, Establishing a physical presence in the United States requires considerable expense and disruption of family life when a Mexican or Central American beneficiary lives anywhere except along the US-Mexico border; and

WHEREAS, The US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), a bureau of DHS (formerly the "Immigration and Naturalization Service or "INS") exercises the ability to legally deny entry to non-U.S. citizens even when such persons hold valid visas issued by the US Department of State; and

WHEREAS, Since the events of September 11, 2001 the INS and USCIS have increased the level of its control of persons attempting to enter the United States; and

WHEREAS, The USCIS and INS have denied entrance into the United States by visa-holding surviving beneficiaries of veterans based solely upon their apparent lack of means of support even though they would have enjoyed a decorous level of income once they had met the physical presence requirements of the law; and

WHEREAS, The regulations implementing Public Law relating to Social Security Survivor Benefits are inherently unfair because they impose different conditions upon surviving spouses which may vary according to the location of that person's domicile; and

WHEREAS, Existing law allows an individual USCIS officer to be the arbitrator as to whether or not a potential recipient may enter the US for the purpose of meeting the physical presence requirements of the Social Security legislation; and

WHEREAS, Proposed new Department of Homeland Security regulations would limit visitor visas to a period insufficient to establish physical presence under the requirements of the Social Security legislation; and

WHEREAS, Mexican and Guatemalan surviving spouses of American veterans have requested that The American Legion assist them in gaining relief from these unfair and country-specific regulations; and

WHEREAS, Section 233 of 42 US Code 433 allows for the establishment of agreements between the social security system established by the act and the social security system of any foreign country; and

WHEREAS, Section 404.463 of the Social Security Act contains a listing of the countries which meet the social insurance or pension system requirements which may result in relief from Section 404.460 "nonpayment of monthly benefits"; and

WHEREAS, The countries of Costa Rica, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, and Panama are included in this listing; and

WHEREAS, The present situation can be remedied by administrative action by the Office of International Programs of the Social Security Administration without the necessity of any new legislation; and

WHEREAS, The Social Security Administration's own Internet web site indicates that in some cases bilateral negotiations are being conducted or are being planned, but that such negotiations are not currently planned for all countries of Central America and negotiations with Mexico have been postponed on more than one occasion; and

WHEREAS, The Social Security Administration has responded in writing to requests for information by Legion staff indicating that no discussions are even contemplated with the governments of Costa Rica, Guatemala, Nicaragua, or Panama; and

WHEREAS, Rules of The American Legion relating to resolutions requiring Social Security legislation are different from resolutions which do not require legislative action by the Congress, the following is submitted as a separate resolution from any other resolution relating to Non-Resident Alien Survivor Beneficiaries; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion petition The Social Security Administration's "Office of International Programs" to expedite the negotiation of international agreements with the governments of Costa Rica, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, and Panama necessary to permit the recession of the nonpayment provisions of Section 404.460 of the Social Security Act, thereby allowing the payment of survivors' benefits and any other legally accrued benefits to the non-resident alien spouses and children of US veterans residing in the above named countries; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That such expedited negotiation apply only to the matter of survivor benefits payments and that other matters related to interests of the Social Security Administration not be included if such negotiation would delay the realization of bilateral agreements relating to survivor benefits payments; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge the Congress with the Social Security Administration to establish uniform eligibility requirements applicable to all foreign nationals receiving Social Security survivor benefits so that all such persons shall be subject to the same eligibility requirements regardless of the location of the recipient's domicile.

Resolution No. 173: The American Legion's Cuban Policy
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations

WHEREAS, The communist government of Cuba has ruined the Cuban economy, repressed the Cuban people, provided a base area for forces inimical to the United States, and committed aggression in many lands; and

WHEREAS, Following the demise of the Soviet Union and the liberation of Eastern Europe, Cuba has lost the sources of foreign subsidies that alone sustained its inefficient communist economy; and

WHEREAS, If the Free World remains firm in its rejection of communism in Cuba, many economic, social, and political indicators point to the likely collapse of the Castro dictatorship in Cuba; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion urges the U. S. Government to continue to maintain control of Guantanamo Bay Naval Base, continue intelligence over flights over Cuba, remain firm in opposition to export of revolution by Cuba, continue broadcasting true news and information to the Cuban people, and encourage the development of democracy and a free market economy in Cuba.

Resolution No. 174: Latin American Interdiction Policy
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations

WHEREAS, At the Cartagena Drug Summit in 1990 in Cartagena, Colombia called by then President Barco of Colombia, the United States and six Latin American nations (Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Peru and Venezuela) agreed to a comprehensive plan of action to reduce the supply of illegal narcotics and the demand for them within the Western Hemisphere; and

WHEREAS, The Cartagena agreements, reaffirmed and expanded in the San Antonio Drug Summit in February, 1992, in San Antonio, Texas, called by then President Bush of the United States, encompass a vast array of weapons in the battle to stop the devastating traffic in illegal drugs including eradication, crop substitution, education, police training and economic assistance; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion urges the U. S. Government Executive Branch to cooperate fully with Latin American nations to destroy the international traffic of illegal drugs and to provide appropriate economic assistance to aid in this vital endeavor; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges the U. S. Congress to provide adequate funds to support this program.

Resolution No. 175: Central America's Democracy Promotion
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations

WHEREAS, Over the past decade Central America has made great strides toward establishing democratic societies; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion has taken a great interest in supporting democracy, development, and security in this area so close to our borders and strategically situated between the naval lifeline between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, the Panama Canal, and one of our major trading partners, Mexico; and

WHEREAS, In the light of the decreasing threat from subversion in Central America as well as budget restrictions in the United States, it is inevitable that U. S. aid to Central America must be reduced; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion urges the U. S. government to continue economic aid to friendly, democratic Central American nations which are seeking to develop democratic societies with market economies; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion recommends the U. S. Government provide minimal amounts of military aid while urging nations in the Central American region to adopt the model of Costa Rica and Panama, disbanding military forces and relying solely on police forces for internal security, thus freeing funds for development and contributing to peaceful relations in the region.

Rejected

Resolution No. 187 (CO): Repeal U.N. Participation Act

Far Eastern Affairs

Approved

Resolution No. 20: Unilateral Action for Vietnam POW/MIA
Origin: Vermont
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations

WHEREAS, The Administration's 7 March 2008 determination, submitted through the Department of State to Congress, concerning the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (SRV)'s level of humanitarian cooperation on the POW/MIA issue, defined unilateral steps needed to increase results that account for Americans still missing from the Vietnam War; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion calls on the US Government to encourage the SRV Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung and other Vietnamese leaders to immediately authorize subordinates in all ministries to locate and make available records related to Americans still missing and unaccounted for from the war between our countries, including case-specific records on US personnel lost in areas of Laos and Cambodia controlled during wartime by Vietnamese forces; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion call on these leaders to also immediately authorize their subordinates to locate and make available remains of Americans last known alive in captivity or in immediate proximity to capture by Vietnamese forces—if no longer living—that have not yet been returned and cannot be recovered by joint teams in the field.

Resolution No. 21: Use of Navy Vessel for Underwater Accounting
Origin: Vermont
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations

WHEREAS, Since November of 2003 US Navy warships have made numerous port calls to Vietnam, steadily improving the military-to-military relationship; and

WHEREAS, The fall of 2006, there has been agreement in principle between the governments of Vietnam and the United States to utilize the capabilities of US Navy ships in the accounting effort; and

WHEREAS, Our nation's humanitarian POW/MIA accounting effort should utilize the safest, most effective and most efficient means to achieve our humanitarian objectives; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion calls on the President, the Secretaries of State and Defense and the PACOM Commander to seek immediate implementation of the agreement reached with the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (SRV) for using a US Navy vessel to conduct humanitarian survey, investigation and recovery operations along Vietnam's coastline; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion calls on the Government of the SRV to honor its commitment and agree to schedule a US Navy vessel in its territorial waters for the purpose of conducting humanitarian actions that could help account for Americans lost in the war between our two countries.

Resolution No. 22: Renew Korean War POW/MIA Discussions
Origin: Vermont
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations

WHEREAS, The American Legion has long been and is now deeply committed to accounting for U.S. personnel previously listed as prisoner, missing and unaccounted for from the Korean War and all of our nation's past wars; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion recognizes the progress in bilateral discussions with North Korea, also known as the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) on strategic issues; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion recognizes the lead time required between renewing bilateral discussions and restoring actual operations; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion supports renewing direct bilateral humanitarian talks with the DPRK regime for the sole purpose of restoring the processes required to account for these unreturned Korean War Veterans.

Resolution No. 152: Republic of China
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations

WHEREAS, The Republic of China is a long-time friend, allied, and a major trading partner of the United States; and

WHEREAS, The Republic of China, closely cooperated with the United States against Japanese Imperialism during World War II and in the fight against Communism during the Cold War; and

WHEREAS, Taiwan is strategically located and is extremely important to the peace, prosperity, and stability of the Pacific Rim; and

WHEREAS, It is in the best interest of all the parties on both sides of the Taiwan Strait to resolve political differences peacefully; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That the United States Government encourages the parties on both sides of the Taiwan Strait, the Peoples Republic of China (PRC) and the Republic of China (Taiwan) to promote peaceful dialogue and avoid any negative actions by either side to change the status quo, which might lead to military conflict.

Resolution No. 153: Policy Regarding Support of Republic of Korea
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations

WHEREAS, The security of the Korean Peninsula is vital to the stability of the Asia-Pacific region as well as to the security of the United States, and The Republic of Korea (ROK) - United States security alliance based on the ROK-US Mutual Defense Treaty has made, and continues to make, significant contributions to the deterrence of was on the Korean Peninsula and to the peace and stability of Northeast Asia; and

WHEREAS, The government of the Republic of Korea embraces a forward-looking engagement policy toward North Korea based on three principles; (1) deterrence of any armed provocation, (2) denial of unification by absorption (by North Korea), and (3) promotion of reconciliation and cooperation from the six party talks. In so doing, the ROK Government is pursuing the peaceful coexistence of South and North Korea as well as the dismantlement of the Cold War Structure on the Korean peninsula; and

WHEREAS, Despite serious food shortages and economic failures, it is indicative that North Korea continues to build up its military capabilities, particularly long-range ballistic missiles and weapons of mass destruction including nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons which weapons of mass destruction pose a grave threat to the peace and stability of Northwest Asia as well as to the security of the United States; and

WHEREAS, The six party talks; the United States, Japan, South Korea, North Korea, Russia and The Peoples Republic of China, are negotiating to resolve the nuclear issue, such as access to the suspect underground facility in North Korea and to resolve the issue of North Korea's development, production, deployment and export of missiles; and in addition the talks are being pursued in an attempt to reduce tensions and to build confidence on the Korean Peninsula and to eventually replace the current Armistice Agreement with a lasting peace arrangement; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That the government of the United States render prompt and effective assistance to the Republic of Korea to repel any external armed attack against the Republic of Korea in accordance with the ROK-US Mutual Defense Treaty, and to maintain solid ROK-US combined defense readiness, and make efforts toward the long-term development of the ROK-US security alliance; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the government of the United States implement and maintain a determined and effective policy to bear on North Korea to keep its pledge in the US-DPRK Agreed Framework to freeze and eventually dismantle its existing nuclear facilities, by means of faithful implementation to the "1992 Joint Declaration of the De-nuclearization of the Korean peninsula," smooth implementation of the light-water reactor (LWR) project in North Korea and clarification of the suspect underground construction in North Korea; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the government of the United States increase its efforts to reduce the North Korean threat of weapons of mass destruction and reach an agreement with North Korea on the control of its development, production, deployment, and export of ballistic missiles and to encourage North Korea to

participate in international non-proliferation programs including the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and that the US Government take determined steps toward North Korea's missile threats with close consultations with the ROK Government; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the Government of the Unites States continue its efforts for the further progress of the Six Party Talks with the thought that positive progress in the Six Party Talks is important to the reduction of tensions and establishment of a peace regime on the Nation edicts until the Armistice Agreement is superseded by a durable peace arrangement.

Resolution No. 157: Vietnam Underwater Recovery Policy
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations

WHEREAS, Vietnam's Minister of Defense Pham Van Tra stated on November 10, 2003, that use of a US Navy vessel for underwater recovery operations must be the result of agreement between the US Department of State and Vietnam's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, an agreement that his Ministry of Defense would support; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion witnessed testimony by the National League of Families of American Prisoners and Missing in Southeast Asia at the US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations Hearing entitled "The United States and Vietnam: Examining the Bilateral Relationship" held on March 12, 2008, explaining that Under Water investigations not going well and that US Navy has not been speedy in its efforts regarding this undertaking, in addition to balks from the Government of Vietnam in connection with the idea of this mission; and

WHEREAS, There is increasing cooperation between the US and Socialist Republic of Vietnam (SRV) military, and US Navy ships, now routinely make official port calls in Vietnam; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion encourages the President, and the Congress of the United States, to call upon the Secretaries of State and Defense to press for agreement by the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (SRV) to allow US Navy vessels to conduct humanitarian operations related to POW/MIA accounting efforts; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion calls on all US Government Departments and Agencies with POW/MIA accounting responsibilities, especially Defense POW/MIA Office and Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command, to actively press Vietnam for unilateral actions to locate and recover remains and work out procedures for unilateral recovery of remains in areas considered sensitive by the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.

Resolution No. 158: Vietnam POW/MIA Policy Objectives
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations

WHEREAS, The Socialist Republic of Vietnam (SRV) government has consistently pledged to provide the US with POW/MIA-related documents and records that could help accounting America's unreturned veterans still missing from the Vietnam War; and

WHEREAS, President Bush, Secretary of State Powell, and Secretary of State Rice have repeatedly defined the criteria for the SRV leadership to unilaterally provide such cooperation, but the SRV continues to withhold documents assessed by US experts to be readily available; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion calls on the US Government to encourage the Socialist Republic of Vietnam's leadership to deliver archival records and documents in relation to POW/MIA issues to the US government prior to the President's visit to Hanoi; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That significant unilateral actions regarding POW/MIA issues by the Socialist Republic of Vietnam continue to be priority objectives in efforts to obtain the fullest possible accounting for US personnel still missing from the Vietnam War; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion calls on the President and the Secretaries of State and Defense to ensure that the need for unilateral responsiveness on archival records and repatriation of remains is consistently and accurately conveyed to counterpart Vietnamese officials at every level and opportunity.

Resolution No. 163: Vietnam Human Rights
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations

WHEREAS, The American Legion recognizes the comradeship and loyalty of the ethnic minorities of Vietnam to include, Montagnards and Hmong hill people, whose assistance was invaluable during the Vietnam War; and

WHEREAS, Members of The American Legion, as veterans of wartime service in the defense of liberty, have a special concern for maintaining peace with freedom and recognize that the protection of Human Rights are vital in that regard; and

WHEREAS, The official concern of The American Legion stems from that part of the Preamble to the Constitution of The American Legion which states: "We associate ourselves together...to make right the master of might; to promote peace and goodwill on earth; to safeguard and transmit to posterity the principles of justice, freedom and democracy;" now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion urges the President and the Congress to support legislation and policies that will compel the Socialist Republic of Vietnam to meet the international standards of Human Rights; and be it finally

RESOLVED, That the ethnic and religious minorities within the country of Vietnam be extended those protections and rights to live and worship in peace without threat of imprisonment or retribution from their government.

Resolution No. 168: Taiwan Defense Arms Sales
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations

WHEREAS, The Republic of China, also known as Taiwan, is a long-time friend having fought with the United States against Japanese Imperialism during World War II and against Communism during the post-war period; and

WHEREAS, The Republic of China is a major trading partner and democratic ally of the United States; and

WHEREAS, Taiwan is strategically located and is extremely important to the peace, prosperity, and stability of the Asia-Pacific region; and

WHEREAS, Under the provisions of the Taiwan Relations Act (Public Law 96-8), the United States is committed to provide defense equipment and defense services, in such quantities that the Government of the Republic of China may maintain a sufficient self-defense capability; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion supports the sales of the latest American weapon systems, including naval vessels, submarines, military aircraft, high-tech electronics, communications equipment and air-defense missile systems to Republic of China of such quality and in such quantities so as to enable the Government of the Republic of China to maintain a sufficient self-defense capability; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion supports the continued sales of sophisticated US weapon systems, including, but not limited to, F-16 fighter aircraft, anti-submarine equipment and torpedoes, anti-aircraft/anti-missile systems, and electronics and communications equipment to Republic of China; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the Government of the Republic of China be given preferential pricing for these items but not equal to that given to the US government, to enable the Republic of China to purchase sufficient quantities of these items for their defense needs.

Middle East and African Affairs

Approved

Resolution No. 160: Middle East/Gulf States Foreign Policies
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations

WHEREAS, The end of World War One brought about the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and the arbitrary delineation of middle eastern states of the former Turkish held territories of, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, Palestine (Israel), Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Aden, Oman (United Arab Emirates) and the Gulf of Aden states of Ethiopia, Somalia, Eritrea and Sudan and to include the sovereign states of Egypt and Libya; and

WHEREAS, Many of these nations continue to struggle with reforming from authoritarian regimes to more democratic and representative forms of governance, and that the call by their own populations to seek greater freedoms and the protection of individual human rights and universal suffrage, and that states which fail to provide the basic needs of their people creates an opportunity for extremists and terrorists to flourish and grow; and

WHEREAS, That as each of these nations strive to reform their governments will need the technical and economic support of more developed and advanced Representative Democracies, and these needs will include: creating **diplomatic coalitions with other countries and international institutions,** creating jobs, open market reforms, developing and establish stable economic environments, internal and international security cooperation; and

WHEREAS, The President and the United States Congress have both identified in statements and in proposed legislation and have called for policy that will help promote and assist nations seeking to establish greater democratic reforms in the Middle East; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion supports legislation and foreign policy that specifically targets diplomatic, economic and educational programs to promote greater and peaceful democratic reforms in Countries within the Arabian Gulf and Middle Eastern Region.

Resolution No. 166: Policy on Africa
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations

WHEREAS, Decades of colonization, authoritarian rule, severe economic disparity, internal conflicts, rampant corruption and in many cases great resistance to change has overwhelmed the African continent; and

WHEREAS, Today some African nations are beginning to develop strong economic markets, and are making determined efforts to put the continent towards a solid democratic course with multi-party systems and other significant political changes; and

WHEREAS, Promoting policies that support democracy, conflict resolution, economic development, free and open trade and disease prevention in African countries are in the national interests of the United States, understanding that a major contributing factor to terrorism are failed states; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion supports bipartisan policies and legislation that identify areas and authorize and fund programs where the United States can provide economic, political and social development in Africa; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion believes that such US policies toward African nations must be intertwined with our nation's overall strategy to promote democracy throughout the world; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That any African nation that clearly demonstrates open democratic reforms, human rights protection and cooperation in the fight against international terrorism, will have the support of the US government.

CHAIRMAN HELM: Mr. Commander, this concludes our report and as a delegate to this Convention from the Department of Nebraska, I move for the adoption of this entire report.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: I have a motion and a second. Any discussion? Hearing none. All those in favor by the normal sign of aye. Opposed? Same sign. The Report of the Foreign Relations Committee is adopted.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: The Chair recognizes Fang A. Wong of New York, Chairman of the National Convention Committee on National Security for the purpose of making a report.

Report: Convention Committee on National Security
Fang A. Wong, New York, Chairman

At 9:00 a.m., Sunday, August 24, 2008, 226 delegates and alternates assigned to the Convention Committee on Security met initially in Rooms 160-162, Street Level, at the Phoenix Convention Center. Mr. Fang A. Wong (NY) was elected Chairman and Mr. Edward L. Mallicoat (NY) was appointed Secretary.

General Security Ad Hoc
Douglas C. Haggan, France, Chairman
Doug Malin, New York, Secretary
Conservation of Natural Resources
E. C. Toppin, North Carolina, Chairman
William Mack, New Jersey, Secretary
Aerospace
Michael E. Harris, Virginia, Chairman
Cliff Griffiths, New Jersey, Secretary
Homeland Security and Civil Preparedness
Timothy M. Tetz, Nevada, Chairman
Mel Goslar, Iowa, Secretary
Law and Order
Terence E. Nolan, Florida, Chairman
Harvey Daggett, Connecticut, Secretary
Merchant Marine
Thomas Schottenbauer, Minnesota Chairman
Charles Powell, Virginia, Secretary
Military Affairs
Clayborn Lofton, Illinois, Chairman
Marie Rhyne, Virginia, Secretary
Naval Affairs
William B. Goede, Minnesota, Chairman
James Casey, New York, Secretary

On Sunday afternoon, August 24, 2008, the delegates again assembled in Rooms 160-162, Street Level, at the Phoenix Convention Center, for a final meeting of the Convention Committee on National Security. Reports of all Convention Committees were read and their recommended actions on resolutions considered. A total of 71 resolutions were assigned to the Convention Committee on National Security or prepared by the Committee to meet problems which were held to be of concern to The American Legion and germane to its principles and objectives. The Convention Committee authorized the Chairman and Secretary to sign the report of the Convention Committee on National Security on behalf of its delegates and make technical corrections to the resolutions reported out of the Committee.

General Security Ad Hoc Committee
Douglas C. Haggan, France, Chairman

Approved

Resolution No. 91: Buy American
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The American Legion is an organization of veterans which pledges to foster and perpetuate a one hundred percent Americanism; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense contracts with large corporations for the construction and repair of military hardware to include ground systems, armament, aircraft and other systems for all of our military branches; and

WHEREAS, These large corporations must rely on subcontractors for the production of, and overhaul, of individual components and subsystems to be used in the construction of these pieces if equipment; and

WHEREAS, The corporation constructing a system or systems may choose to enlist the services of subcontractors located in foreign countries over those which have comparable equipment and comparable costs; and

WHEREAS, The choices made by the corporation not only can affect the security of our Nation as well as the employment of many Americans and veterans who may work at these subcontractors at both the originating and overhaul facilities located in the United States; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion urges Congress to require government contractors to utilize American-made components and subsystems in construction of their equipment over those made by foreign subcontractors for use by the United States military services to ensure the defense of the country as well as the continued employment of Americans and veterans at subcontractor facilities.

Resolution No. 92: Combating Cyberspace Threats
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The security of the United States is being challenged increasingly by non-traditional threats which may extend the fields of battle and terrorism to computer cyberspace and in which inexpensive nuclear, chemical and biological weapons of mass destruction, including disease as a weapon of war, may be employed; and

WHEREAS, The President of the United States unveiled the formation of a comprehensive and integrated system of federal agencies, including the Armed Forces, law enforcement, intelligence and public health, to detect, deter and defend against cyberspace threats to critical government and private infrastructures; and

WHEREAS, The President also has appointed a National Coordinator for Security, Infrastructure Protection and Counterterrorism; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion urges the Congress to appropriate the necessary funding and resources to combat the continuing cyberspace and other threats to the United States in the 21st Century; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion also urges the American public to be vigilant of cyberspace attacks, and that all efforts be made to detect, deter and defend against the threats of cyber warfare, and to prosecute violators to the fullest extent of the law.

Resolution No. 93: Foreign Investments In The American Defense Industry
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, In this era of changing technology, the United States must maintain ownership and control of critical defense industries so that U. S. technological secrets can be protected and adequate production facilities can be maintained to meet any national emergency; and

WHEREAS, The generally declining strength of the dollar and the downsizing of our industrial base in the 1990's and the continuing decline in the 2000's have made it very lucrative for foreign entities to purchase U. S. firms, including those involved in national defense production; and

WHEREAS, In recent years, three of the largest 36 foreign business investments in the United States were manufacturers of electronics and semiconductors, both of which are areas of vital importance to maintaining U. S. national security; and

WHEREAS, The Administration's waiver of sales of space satellite technology to the Peoples' Republic of China (PRC) as well as proposed sales of supercomputers and aerospace technology to that potential adversary needs to be thoroughly investigated; and

WHEREAS, Some Allies of the United States, which lease or purchase U. S. advanced technology, may transfer or resell to actual or potential enemies of the United States; and

WHEREAS, Such proposed actual sales threaten the security of sensitive U. S. military technologies and U. S. technological superiority; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion urges the U. S. Government to ensure that foreign entities are not permitted to own critical industries, especially those involved in producing defense items; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion opposes the transfer and sales of sensitive technologies which may endanger our national security and economic interests; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges the Congress to thoroughly investigate the sales of aerospace and satellite technology to the PRC, or any actual or potential adversary of the United States, which could seriously jeopardize national security interests of the U. S. and her allies.

Resolution No. 94: National Missile Defense System
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty of 1972 between the United States and the Soviet Union had placed a cap on deploying missile defense systems and limited more advanced research on such defensive systems; and

WHEREAS, The Bush administration in January 2002 had given Russia and our allies the required six-months notice of U.S. intent to withdraw from the 1972 ABM Treaty and did so that past June; and

WHEREAS, Work on the underground silos for the first missile interceptors in Alaska began in June 2002 which reflected the urgency to begin moving on a missile defense system; and

WHEREAS, As unreliable, hostile nations such as North Korea and Iran seem determined to acquire the capability to deliver a nuclear strike over long distances, including striking the continental United States, the need for a national missile defense as an essential ingredient of our Homeland Security for the continental United States has become as urgent as ever; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion urges the United States Government to develop and continue to deploy a national missile defense system which is in the national interest of the United States and the American people and an essential ingredient of our Homeland Security.

Resolution No. 95: National Security Principles
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, Over two centuries ago, our distinguished forefathers wrote the Preamble to the Constitution which began with the words: "We the People" shall "provide for the common defense..." and by so doing, they established the principle that protecting our nation from hostile threats was the fundamental purpose of the Government of the United States; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion since its founding in 1919 has always supported a strong national defense which is reflected in its own Preamble to the Constitution, namely, "To uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States of America," and "to inculcate a sense of individual obligation to the community, state and nation"; and

WHEREAS, Although the threat posed by the former Soviet Union is diminished, the United States is faced with a myriad of short and long term threats and challenges which are far more complex, perplexing and difficult to deal with than was the more predictable and unified threat posed by the former Soviet Union; and

WHEREAS, It is urged that the Department of Defense conduct a global posture review; and

WHEREAS, Although the two-war National Security Strategy has been amended, the Armed Forces are fighting the war on terrorism, maintaining homeland security and conducting peace enforcement operations with a reduced strength of 1.5 million and

active military force structures composed of only 10 Army Divisions, 11 active Navy aircraft carriers and 13 Air Force fighter wing equivalents; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion upholds the following national security principles as fundamental to the best interests of the United States:

1. **The National Security Strategy needs to be reassessed so that missions and resources are more closely aligned.**
2. **The credibility of the United States in an unstable world needs to be maintained by retaining the requisite military capabilities to deal with actual and potential threats. Such a strategy requires that the Armed Forces be more fully structured, equipped and budgeted to achieve this strategy. Active and reserve military end strengths should be increased to an absolute minimum of 2.1 million for the foreseeable future. At least 18 full-strength Army Divisions or 72 Brigade Combat Team equivalents, an enlarged Special Operations Force, 11 deployable Navy aircraft carrier battle groups, 3 or more Marine Corps Expeditionary Forces, and 13 or more active Air Force fighter wing equivalents should be retained as the minimum needed baseline foundation. Defense budgets should be funded at least 4 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) during time of peace, 5 percent during time of war.**
3. **The National Guard and Reserves must be realistically manned, structured, equipped, trained, fully deployable and maintained at high readiness levels and not over-utilized in order to accomplish their increasing and indispensable missions and roles in our national defense.**
4. **Peacetime Selective Service registration should be retained so as to maintain our capability to rapidly reconstitute forces in the event of emergencies or war.**
5. **Force modernization for the Services needs to be realistically funded, and not further delayed, or the United States is likely to unnecessarily risk American lives in the years ahead. Production of airlift and sealift assets needs to be expedited.**
6. **The American people expect that whenever U.S. forces are committed, that they will be committed only when America's vital national interests are threatened and only as a last resort after all reasonable alternatives have been explored and tried.**
7. **The support of peacekeeping, peace enforcement, peace-making and humanitarian operations as they are becoming more frequent and necessary in waging the sustained war on terrorism.**
8. **The honorable nature of military service should be upheld as it not only represents fulfillment of American patriotic obligation but is also a privilege and responsibility that embodies the highest form of service to the nation.**
9. **The United States Government must honor its obligations to all service members, veterans, military retirees and their families, and lasting compensations and incentives should be equitable.**
10. **Major incentives for military service should include an enhanced GI Bill for education and training, improved quality of life features, and a reduced operational tempo in order to recruit and retain a quality and fully-manned force which is professionally-led.**
11. **Urge the United States Government to retain the necessary deployed forces worldwide to accomplish both short term as well as long term commitments and contingencies.**

Resolution No. 96: Rebuilding America's Defense Industrial Base
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, Past defense budget share included limited funding for technological research and development which resulted in a production shortfall in a time of national emergency; and

WHEREAS, Developing new technologies for the Armed Forces can be hindered by budget shortfalls despite the fact that the U. S. is currently the world leader in development of new technology, thereby disrupting materiel development vital to national security; and

WHEREAS, Much of our defense industrial base, including weapons production and revitalization of the ship-building industry, has been eroded by plant closures and layoffs; and

WHEREAS, The United States fighting forces must be equipped with state-of-the-art technological advances such as armored Humvees to assure their capability to win on the modern battlefield, whether on land, sea, or in the air; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion urges the Administration and the Congress to rebuild America's industrial base by continuing to adequately fund research, development and acquisition budgets to assure that our military production can meet national requirements especially when U. S. military power is committed; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the Administration and the Congress encourage the rebuilding of America's defense industrial base by having a proper balance of policies that:

1. **Increase and then sustain domestic production at levels that maintain a robust and internationally competitive defense industry.**
2. **Keep the arms industry internationally competitive.**
3. **Ensure that the U.S. is not putting itself at risk by having our armaments produced offshore.**

Resolution No. 97: Support For The American Battle Monuments Commission
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The American Legion is an organization of war veterans who have dedicated themselves to the service of the community, State and Nation; and

WHEREAS, The American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC), was established by law in 1923, as an independent agency of the Executive Branch of the United States Government; and

WHEREAS, The American Battle Monuments Commission was charged to erect suitable memorial shrines, for designing, constructing, operating and maintaining permanent United States Military Cemeteries and Memorials in foreign countries; and

WHEREAS, These United States Military Cemeteries have been established throughout the world; and

WHEREAS, These cemeteries are hallowed grounds for America's war dead; and

WHEREAS, Funding reductions for the maintenance of the United States Military Cemeteries in foreign countries has created reductions in human resources, equipment and supplies; and

WHEREAS, United States Military Cemeteries exist in foreign countries today, which are in need of adequate funding for repair, maintenance, additional manpower and other functions necessary to preserve the integrity of all World War I and World War II cemeteries; and

WHEREAS, Visitation numbers are increasing annually at United States Military Cemeteries overseas; and

WHEREAS, This resolution had been approved by the National Executive Committee at the Spring 1998 meetings; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion urge the United States Congress to appropriate adequate funding and human resources to

the American Battle Monuments Commission in order to properly maintain and preserve the final resting place of America's war dead located on foreign soil.

Resolution No. 98: Armed Forces Retirement Homes
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The United States Soldiers' and Airmen's Home (USSAH) and the United States Naval Home (USNH), jointly called the Armed Forces Retirement Home (AFRH), are continuing care facilities which were created more than 150 years ago to offer retirement homes for distinguished veterans who had served as soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines in our Nation's conflicts; and

WHEREAS, The AFRH system, which is available to retiree veterans from all the Armed Services whose active duty was at least 50 percent enlisted or warrant officer, has been supported by a trust fund resourced by 50 cents a month withheld from active duty enlisted and warrant officer paychecks as well as from fines and forfeitures from disciplinary actions, resident fees and interest income; and

WHEREAS, The extensive downsizing of the Armed Forces has resulted in a 39 percent decrease in revenue and, coupled with rising nursing home care costs, the Homes have been operating at a $8-10 million annual deficit which would reportedly require both Homes to close their doors; and

WHEREAS, The Congress has authorized the Department of Defense to raise service members' assessments from 50 cents to $1.00 per month which has yet to be exercised; and such an increase could raise revenues by about $7.5 million annually; and

WHEREAS, Even if these potential sources of income reach fruition, they will not likely provide the permanent, long-term funding which is vital to assure the solvency and viability of the U.S. Soldiers' and Airmen's Home and the U.S. Naval Home; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion urges the Congress to support and fund those measures, to include annual Congressional appropriations, which will provide for the long-term solvency and viability of the United States Soldiers' and Airmen's Home and the reconstruction of the United States Naval Home; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, The American Legion strongly supports the rebuilding of the Armed Forces Retirement Home at Gulfport, Mississippi.

Resolution No. 99: Transformation Of The Armed Forces
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The current national security strategy, contained within the Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR), continues to transform American's defense strategy that embraces uncertainty and the need for flexibility and easier adaptability is to be effective abroad; and

WHEREAS, A central objective of the strategy is to shift the basis of defense planning from a "threat-based" model to a "capabilities-based" model while simultaneously better defining the Department of Defense's (DOD) responsibilities for homeland defense within a national framework; and

WHEREAS, The strategy requires adapting existing military capabilities to new threats and circumstances, while experimenting with the development of new capabilities or the transformation of U.S. forces, capabilities and institutions to extend America's asymmetric advantages well into the future; and

WHEREAS, Transforming America's defense for the 21st Century will require a long-standing commitment from our Country and its leaders, but the challenges are here and now: They include protecting our critical bases of operation, including the U.S. homeland, and projecting and sustaining U.S. forces in distant environments as well as preemptive actions to confront threats before they emerge; and

WHEREAS, Transformation includes assuring our information systems and providing persistent surveillance, tracking and rapid engagement of adversarial forces by U.S. and allied joint operations; and

WHEREAS, The QDR particularly emphasizes the following five areas:

1. Department institutional reform and governance
2. Irregular warfare
3. Building partnership capacity
4. Strategic communications
5. Intelligence; and

WHEREAS, Over time, the promise of transformation will be realized as resources translate into new concepts, capabilities and organizations that maximize our warfighting effectiveness; and

WHEREAS, The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, confirmed the Government's strategic direction as well as the soundness of such planning principles to include its emphasis on homeland defense, on offensive action against global terrorism, on surprise, on preparing for asymmetric threats like terrorism, on developing new concepts of deterrence, and the need to balance the different dimensions of risk; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion urge the United States Government and our Armed Forces, as we contend with the difficult challenges of the war on terrorism, to continue to proceed on the path of transforming America's armed forces into a modern force capable of providing for the security of all Americans, strengthening and expanding military capabilities, and in honoring America's commitments worldwide as well as on the home front.

Resolution No. 100: Uniformed Services University Of The Health Sciences
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The American Legion has supported the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USU), since its establishment in 1972 as the Nation's Federal Academic Health Center dedicated to providing uniquely educated and trained uniformed officers for the United States Army, Navy, Air Force and Public Health Service. USU alumni are currently serving over 20-year careers and thus providing continuity and leadership for the Military Health System (MHS) as physicians, advanced practice nurses and scientists; and

WHEREAS, The USU F. Edward Hébert School of Medicine has a year-round, four-year curriculum that is nearly 700 hours longer than found at other U.S. medical schools. These extra hours focus on epidemiology, health promotion, disease prevention, tropical medicine, leadership and field exercises. Doctoral and Masters degrees in the biomedical sciences and public health are awarded by interdisciplinary and department-based graduate programs within the School of Medicine. Programs include infectious disease, neuroscience, and preventive medicine research; and

WHEREAS, The USU Graduate School of Nursing offers a Master of Science in Nursing degree in Nurse Anesthesia, Family Nurse Practitioner, Perioperative Clinical Nursing, Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner, and a full and part-time program for a Ph.D. degree in Nursing Science. The university's continuing education program is unique and extensive, serving and sustaining the professional and readiness requirements of the Defense Department's worldwide military healthcare community; and

WHEREAS, The university's nationally ranked military and civilian faculty conduct cutting edge research in the biomedical sciences and in areas specific to the DoD health care mission such as combat casualty care, infectious diseases and radiation biology. The university specializes in military and public health medicine, focusing on keeping people healthy, disease prevention, and diagnosis and treatment. USU faculty offer significant expertise in tropical medicine and hygiene, parasitology, epidemiologic methods and preventive medicine; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense (DOD) and the United States Congress have recognized that the extensive military-unique and preventive health care education provided in the multi-Service environment of USU ensures Medical Readiness and Force Health Protection for the MHS; USU is recognized as the place where students receive thorough preparation to deal with the medical aspects of Weapons of Mass Destruction, including chemical, radiological and biological, nuclear and high yield explosive

(CBRNE) terrorism or other catastrophe. USU has developed similar training for civilian first responders, medical professionals and emergency planners. USU is also uniquely qualified and experienced in simulation technology, education and training; and

WHEREAS, USU, recognized by DOD as the Academic Health Center for the MHS, has graduated 4227 uniformed physician officers who represent approximately one-quarter of the total physicians on active duty in the Armed Forces; the current Secretary of Defense refers to the USU alumni as the *backbone* of the MHS; in addition, the USU Graduate School of Nursing has conferred 369 Masters of Science in Nursing Degrees to uniformed, critically required advanced practice nurses during the current Nation-wide nursing shortage; and, the University has conferred 1080 Master and Doctoral Degrees through its Graduate Education Programs in essential areas requested by the MHS; and

WHEREAS, With the establishment by the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) of a Joint Medical Command in Fiscal Year 2008 with plans to establish the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center (WRNMMC) by 2011 and the close collaboration between the Armed Services Flag Officers and the President of USU to create a world-class military academic health center, expanding the role of USU; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion urges the Congress to: continue its demonstrated commitment to USU, as a national asset, for the continued provision of uniquely educated and trained uniformed physicians, advanced practice nurses, and scientists dedicated to careers of service in the Army, Navy, Air Force, and the United States Public Health Service; support timely construction at the USU campus during Fiscal Years 2009-2010; continue funding the University's collaborative effort for sharing its CBRNE expertise and training; support development of the USU Immersive, Wide Area Virtual Environment (WAVE) Simulation for CBRNE/WMD Medical Readiness Training; support funding for the Graduate School of Nursing Teaching/Educational Programs and, encourage continued close collaboration and progress towards the OSD-proposed Joint Medical Command and WRNMMC with USU as the core academic health center.

Resolution No. 111: Fully Funding The U.S. Army
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The United States Army is serving a nation at war and, as America's strategic and decisive land and expeditionary combat force, is a proud member of the Joint Force providing combatant commanders with relevant and ready campaign power; and

WHEREAS, The Army's compelling needs include providing landscape power, training and equipping soldiers and adaptive leaders for the vigors of war, sustaining the All-Volunteer Force, and providing the infrastructure and support systems to ensure the Army is able to execute its missions; and

WHEREAS, The momentum of Army transformation and modernization needs to be maintained so as to deal with irregular, catastrophic, disruptive and traditional challenges; and

WHEREAS, The Army vision is to remain the preeminent land power, the ultimate instrument of national resolve, that is both ready and relevant to the challenges of the dangerous and complex 21st century security environment; and

WHEREAS, Support and funding is required to achieve critical recruiting and retention goals for all Army components; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That the Army's budget and wartime demands be fully funded and that supplemental funding is required for combat and contingency operations and to reset and replace battle losses of equipment; and, be it further

RESOLVED, The Congress will ensure that the Army is fully staffed, trained, and equipped to achieve victory in the War on Terrorism; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That Congress enables the Army to maintain the momentum of key programs while accelerating transformation.

Received and Recorded

Resolution No. 50 (MA): Donating Blood For Emergencies
Resolution No. 62 (MT): National Defense Budgets

Referred to the Standing Commission on National Security

Resolution No. 81 (SC): All Defense Budgets Be Awarded To Companies within The United States

Conservation of Natural Resources
E. C. Toppin, South Carolina, Chairman

Approved

Resolution No. 7: Domestic Energy Production
Origin: Utah
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The United States continues to import approximately 60 percent or more of its oil while its domestic production continues to drop to its lowest levels in over 28 years, thus further compounding our foreign trade deficit at a time when our energy demands continue unabated; and

WHEREAS, The United States' continued reliance on foreign sources of energy places our national security, our economic well-being, and way of life at risk; and

WHEREAS, Continued deficit spending caused by reliance on foreign sources of energy is known to fund States and non-government factions who are inimical to the United States and our vital national interests; and

WHEREAS, The war on terrorism and the continuing conflict in the volatile Middle East has brought into sharp focus the heavy reliance of the United States on imported foreign oil which necessitates a re-evaluation of our current and long-range energy policies; and

WHEREAS, Like our domestic oil and gas resources, nuclear energy, solar, hydroelectric, geothermic, biomass, and wind are resources where price and supply are not subject to manipulation by foreign countries; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008 , That The American Legion urge the Congress and the administration to pursue further development of domestic sources of energy to include:

1. Increasing U.S. petroleum exploration and production in an environmentally sensible manner so as to reduce America's reliance on foreign petroleum;
2. Building new nuclear energy plants and renovating America's electrical grid;
3. Implementing domestic oil and gas exploration;
4. Full development of biomass, solar, hydroelectric, geothermal, and wind sources of energy;
5. **That the provisions of the Energy act of 1992 be fully implemented and carried out as mandated by the Act.**

Resolution No. 10: Alternative Energy Resources
Origin: Utah
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The need for development of alternate sources of energy is critical and vital to America's maintaining competitive advantage in the world economy; and

WHEREAS, Our growing dependence on foreign oil adversely affects the United States and world economics as was discovered during the oil embargo in 1973 and interruption in the supply of foreign oil during the years of conflict between Iran and Iraq; and

WHEREAS, The United States has the opportunity to take the initiation and lead in developing new and alternate sources of energy; and

WHEREAS, There is a growing need for creating new employment for the American people and developing new skills especially for our veteran population, as well as for removing the dangers now attendant to continued use of nuclear power by development of further safeguards; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion urges Congress and our industrial complexes to favor legislation or plans for funding research and development of all alternative sources of energy including the utilization of our coal reserves and our vast supply of natural gas and/or methanol and ethanol as well as nuclear energy, wind, solar, geothermal, and biofuels so as to ensure that our Nation will never be an economic hostage; and we can always meet the ever growing competition in the world market; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That our Federal Government be strongly encouraged to substantially expand its incentive to industry, either through tax incentives or through research and development grants, in a greatly expanded effort to develop and use alternative energy resources, including substitute power and heating supplies.

Resolution No. 12: Recycling Spent Nuclear Fuel Rods
Origin: Utah
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, Our national nuclear power plants are running out of space to store used nuclear fuel rods when nuclear power plants in the United States will need to increase their record breaking production of billions of kilowatt hours of electrical power to fill the increasing needs of a growing population; and

WHEREAS, Due to increasing air environmental population standards coal fired plants are under heavy regulation along with shortage of natural gas supplies for those generation facilities; and

WHEREAS, Our nation's climbing rate of dependence for foreign import of oil and gas continues to grow compounded by an overwhelming balance of trade deficit with foreign producers; and

WHEREAS, Presently there are a number of nations in the world that are expanding their nuclear power with programs in place to research and implement spent fuel rod recycling for an additional energy source helping to alleviate some of the problems of long term spent fuel rod storage; and

WHEREAS, Domestic nuclear power plants will continue to produce an increasing number of unwanted used fuel rods that no state or territory wants to accept including the Yucca Mountain Storage Center along with Utah's Deseret area, both option only move the problem, not solve it; and

WHEREAS, Technology for spent nuclear fuel rods has existed since the 1960s to reprocess an additional energy source for spent fuel rods but congress and Department of Energy has not made research a top priority in the past; and

WHEREAS, Advanced Fuel Cycle Initiative (AFCI) is a focused research and development program that includes developing technologies for recycling spent nuclear fuel rods; and

WHEREAS, AFCI received $179.4 million in the Fiscal Year 2008 budget; and

WHEREAS, Under present world energy problems Congress should make spent fuel rods, other energy development, and conservation a top priority to help alleviate American's reliance on foreign supplies of energy; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion petition the President and Congress to provide adequate funding without delay to implement comprehensive scientific research and engineering programs for recycling spent nuclear fuel rods to produce an additional energy source to help solve some of America's energy needs and also resulting in the reduction of the persistent long term storage problems of nuclear waste.

Resolution No. 13: Energy Conservation
Origin: Utah
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, War and conflict in the Middle East coupled with the rising world oil prices and rising oil demand are giving rise to renewed domestic oil and gas exploration; and

WHEREAS, Despite these noted concerns, excessively high energy consumption continues unabated in the United States; and

WHEREAS, It is in our national interests to develop and utilize diversified alternate sources of energy so to conserve our primary source of energy and to minimize any potential disruption of energy sources targeted by terrorist attacks on our Homeland Security; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion urge the Administration and the Congress to encourage energy conservation by accomplishing the following, as an example:

1. Continuing to require the production of fuel efficient automobiles
2. Continuing to encourage through tax incentives better insulation in new homes and other building and upgrading insulation in existing structures
3. Maintaining and expanding mass transit systems
4. Encouraging research, along with greater practical usages, of solar, nuclear, wind, geothermal and hydroelectric energy
5. Encouraging the continued development and usage of efficient, cost beneficial, coal gasification and liquefactions process
6. Expand research and possible development of new technology to find possible uses in the energy consumption field
7. That conservation of energy and natural resources be more actively pursued in the American private and public sectors
8. **Developing and implementing sources to separate and recycle domestic recyclable materials thus preserving our natural resources for future generations.**

Resolution No. 14: National Plan For Energy Independence
Origin: Utah
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The United States continues to import approximately 60 percent or more of its oil while its domestic production continues to drop to its lowest levels in over 28 years, thus further compounding our foreign trade deficit at a time when our energy demands continue unabated; and

WHEREAS, The United States' continued reliance on foreign sources of energy places our national security at risk; and

WHEREAS, Continued reliance on foreign sources of energy places our economic well-being and way of life at risk; and

WHEREAS, Continued deficit spending caused by reliance on foreign sources of energy is known to fund States and non-government factions who are inimical to the United States and our vital national interests; and

WHEREAS, The war on terrorism and the continuing conflict in the volatile Middle East has brought into sharp focus the heavy reliance of the United States on imported foreign oil which necessitates a re-evaluation of our current and long-range energy policies; and

WHEREAS, Like our domestic oil and gas resources, nuclear energy, solar, hydroelectric, geothermic, biomass, and wind are resources where price and supply are not subject to manipulation by foreign countries; and

WHEREAS, The facts as represented here expose how past and current energy policies have been inadequate in meeting our nation's energy needs and security; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion urge Congress and the administration to have comprehensive, transparent, interagency, nationally

inclusive planning for the short and long-term energy welfare of the country; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That this process result in a national campaign to achieve energy independence with the sufficient and suitable production of energy to maintain our national security and way of life; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That this national campaign addresses specifically the issues of production, conservation, environmental impact, and safety.

Resolution No. 15: Nuclear Energy and Nuclear Waste
Origin: Utah
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, Nuclear energy has contributed greatly to U.S. energy independence, having displaced over 2.4 billion barrels of oil and saved over $81 billion in oil payments since the 1973 Arab oil embargo and 1999; and

WHEREAS, Oil imports remain the single largest contributor to the U.S. trade deficit; and

WHEREAS, The United States must have a secure reliable supply of energy to fuel our economy and to protect our national security; and

WHEREAS, A growing supply of electricity is essential to U.S. economic growth, U.S. industry and the general well-being of the American people; and

WHEREAS, With a moderately growing economy, the U.S. will still need about 200,00 megawatts of new generating electrical capacity by 2010; and

WHEREAS, The virtues of using a diversity of energy sources including nuclear energy, to produce our electricity are well-recognized; and

WHEREAS, Nuclear energy is a growing source of electricity providing about 20 percent of our electricity supply safely, reliably and without damage to the environment; and

WHEREAS, The National Energy Policy Act of 1992 calls for new, safer, plant design and standardization, as well as Nuclear Regulatory Commission certification, continued studies of proposed sites, and modernized licensing procedures; and

WHEREAS, Since 1982, over $28 billion has been committed to the Nuclear Waste Fund, and DOE has indicated it is unwilling to accept used fuel until at least 2010, and perhaps as late as 2017; and

WHEREAS, The U.S. Court of Appeals has ruled that the federal government has a legal responsibility to take used fuel from the nation's commercial reactors; and

WHEREAS, Nuclear power plants are running out of space to store used fuel and at least 27 of the nation's 109 nuclear power plants will run out of on-site storage space. By 2010, 80 nuclear plants will have no space to store fuel; and

WHEREAS, Re-licensing of nuclear power plants is subject to a rigorous program of Nuclear Regulatory Commission oversight, inspection, preventive, and corrective maintenance and extensive equipment testing ensuring required safety safeguards are met; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion calls on the President and Congress to compel the Department of Energy to comply with the requirements of the Nuclear Waste Policy Act by establishing a process to develop an integrated used fuel management system and find sites for interim, centralized storage; making timely progress in the characterization of any proposed repository sites at various locations; and increasing funding to allow critical science and engineering studies to proceed on schedule; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the local government directly affected by interim storage and/or permanent disposal should be involved in planning and receiving appropriate benefits from such facilities.

Aerospace Committee
Michael E. Harris, Virginia, Chairman

Approved

Resolution No. 72: Management Of Space Assets

Origin: Virginia
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, Military assets in space are essential to all levels of conflict and all military services; and

WHEREAS, The development of an overall national policy for the deployment of space assets and for the defense of such assets will require vigorous, dedicated, advocacy by the military users of space assets; and

WHEREAS, Successful advocacy of space issues will require the long term development of knowledge and doctrine as experience is gained and requirements evolve in the face of present and future risks as that presented by the recent Chinese anti-satellite missile test; and

WHEREAS, There is a long and success history of the Department of Defense assigning single manager responsibility for essential, long lasting, evolving military assets that reach across service boundaries as exemplified by the establishment of single management responsibility for transportation; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion advocate to Congress that the United States Air Force be given single manager responsibility for the nation's military space programs.

Resolution No. 73: Procurement Of Sufficient F-22 Aircraft
Origin: Virginia
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, As a result of the last Quadrennial Defense Review, planned procurement of F-22 Raptors is at 183 as opposed to the stated USAF requirement of 381; and

WHEREAS, Reduced procurement has resulted in lesser aircraft per squadron as well as the inability to upgrade squadrons currently equipped with the aged F-15C; and

WHEREAS, The lesser number of aircraft will not only reduce squadron size from 24 to 18 but fail to equip 3 of the 10 Air and Space Expeditionary Forces (AEF); and

WHEREAS, Current limitation on numbers consign the Raptor to a low density-high demand status for decades to come with attendant and ever increasing maintenance, personnel and operational limitations; and

WHEREAS, With continued initial operational experience the Raptor program has demonstrated remarkable performance as shown in Operation Northern Edge defeating a "red threat" of F-15s, F-16s, and Navy F/A-18 Hornets by ration of 241 to two; and

WHEREAS, The lopsided ratio of kills is a warning that the USAF must be equipped to deal with other versions of 4th generation air superiority fighters such as the MIG-35; and

WHEREAS, Such performance is essential to establish and maintain air dominance that has prevented the American soldier from being exposed to the threat of enemy air since 1953; and

WHEREAS, Nations capable of fielding competitive aircraft have unfortunately displayed an historic tendency to sell such aircraft to any buyer on the international scene; and

WHEREAS, The United States must be ready to fight traditional conflicts as there has been no decline in the threats facing the U.S. that are not irregular or terrorist in nature; and

WHEREAS, Build-up of Army and Marine strength to fight the present long term irregular conflict is vital, it should not be done at the expense of our air and space capabilities that are vital across the entire spectrum of potential conflicts; and

WHEREAS, Potential adversaries whether China, Iran, North Korea or other nation states, will most likely be engaged by air and space assets which will once again require assured air dominance; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion advocate to the Congress that the procurement of F-22 Raptor aircraft be approved and funded for the stated USAF requirement of 381; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That such procurement be funded through additional appropriations even if that should result in an increase in the overall National Defense Budget.

Resolution No. 74: Supporting The National Space Program
Origin: Virginia
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The national security, technology and economic welfare of the United States are of paramount importance to the people of America; and

WHEREAS, U.S. progress in aerospace research has had a profound impact on our Nation's quality of life and its economic, social, environmental and political institution and made possible communication on a global scale; and

WHEREAS, The dissemination and use of space systems technology, the research programs on which it is based, and the spin-off products, techniques and services derived from the U.S. space program are vital components of the nation's economy and the well-being of its citizens; and

WHEREAS, The U.S. space program has kept the nation on the leading edge of the technology frontier, has created jobs, improved communications, electronics, material, diagnosis and treatment of medical care for veterans and all Americans, fostered new scholastic interest in space science, provided insight into the evolution of the universe and current state of the earth, its environment and its solar system, and has provided visions and objectives for the future for business, industry and academia and the nation's youth; and

WHEREAS, In view of changes in domestic and international priorities in the areas of geopolitics, foreign policy, national security, economics and science, affirmation of new long range and lasting objectives are required for the manned and unmanned U.S. national security, civil and commercial space programs; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion urges the Congress to adopt the following objectives with regard to the National Space Program:

1. **Full funding support for the president's Space Exploration Initiative (SEI) including NASA's other important roles in aeronautics research and science; and**
2. **A balanced NASA program that maintains U.S. preeminence in science and aeronautical technologies as a high priority while returning to the Moon and exploring Mars. Aeronautics research and science should not be sacrificed in order to meet an arbitrary date for return to the Moon; and, be it finally**

RESOLVED, That The American Legion believes that as we move into the 21st century, we must continue to support science, aeronautics research and venture beyond and into the promises of space.

Resolution No. 75: Funding National Aeronautics And Space Administration Budgets
Origin: Virginia
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, In the pioneering days of aviation, this nation recognized the important values for aeronautics research. Therefore Congress established the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics (NACA the predecessor to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration NASA), with follow-on investment in national aeronautics research laboratories and wind tunnels, which amounts to billions of dollars since 1915. The result was that every US aircraft, used NASA technology; and

WHEREAS, The aeronautic advances we currently enjoy have provided this nation with leading edge technology, world leadership and air superiority in the civil and military arena, some of which has taken 10 to 20 years of extensive research. Now the Nation's aeronautics research programs are in serious decline and NASA aeronautics research appropriations have declined about 50% since FY 1994. The proposed FY09

budget request further reduces to approximately a mere $446.5 million out of the agency's $17.6 plus billion; and

WHEREAS, The September 11 terrorist attacks resulted in a complete shutdown of the US air transportation system for several days. The impact emphasizes just how dependent we all are on air transportation. Air travel has now returned to pre9/11 levels, and the capacity of our air transportation system is again approaching its maximum capability. Continued U.S. economic growth is dependent on further expansion of air transportation system which requires further investments and aeronautical research. In addition, the stunning success of air power in Afghanistan and Iraq is the result of research performed a decade or more ago and reminds us that continued emphasis on military aviation R&T is essential to future US air superiority; and

WHEREAS, NASA's top priority, the space exploration initiative (SEI), threatens to consume even larger portions of the agency's budget with potentially disastrous consequences for the aeronautics research program. Two recently published National Research Council (NRC) reports, "Decadal Survey of Civil Aeronautics: Foundation for the Future" and "NASA Aeronautics Research's an Assessment", both re-emphasizes the importance of aeronautics research to the nation and recommends 51 high-priority R&T challenges. Unfortunately, at current budget levels, NASA will not be able to develop these technologies to a sufficient level of technical maturity to hand them off to U.S. industry ready for commercial application; and

WHEREAS, In civil air, less than 10 years ago Boeing and McDonnell Douglas had more than 70% of the world market. Europe's AirBus now has about 50% and is focused on 60-70% with a goal of total domination of global aeronautics. This Nation needs to awaken to the fact that competitive nations have recognized the importance of aeronautics for economic and technology reasons and have built new wind tunnels and have greatly expanded their research; and

WHEREAS, Critics who view aeronautics research as "corporate welfare" do not recognize the long-lead-time research and technology advances vs. market realities or the national stake (economy, jobs, trade, balance, prestige) in this technology. NASA's aeronautics laboratories have the research facilities, including wind tunnels and technical expertise to conduct the cutting-edge scientific inquiry need to advance the state-of-the-art military and civil aircraft. In addition, much of the research is directed toward issues of protecting the environment, maintaining safety and security, and expanding the national airspace system, which are all government responsibilities; and

WHEREAS, In April 2005, the National Institute of Aerospace issued its report "Responding to the Call: Aviation Plan for American Leadership". The report was developed by over 250 of the nation's top engineers from industry and academia at the request of Congress. It defines the most important technical need and provides specific program goals, milestones, and budget recommendations required to meet these needs. It is important for Congress to act now to ensure that the essential first steps are taken to implement these recommendations. NASA must be directed to develop a national program plan to realize the technologies needed to achieve these goals; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion urges the Congress to restore full funding to the NASA budget and mandate an amount equal to ten percent of NASA's budget for aeronautics research programs; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That Congress direct NASA to achieve the national aeronautics-related outcome goals and 51 challenges announced in the recent NIA and NRC reports, and that Congress mandate that all military aircraft research, engineering and development be performed within the boundaries of this Nation while upgrading research facilities of this Nation and encouraging civil-aero testing within these facilities; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That with the decline of the United States global commercial aircraft market of 90% to about 50%, the aging of our military aircraft, and the increased investment by other countries in aeronautics, that NASA aeronautics budget be fully restored to 1994-1995 funding levels to meet the challenges of the

21st Century in military and civil aeronautics and NASA commit 10% of budget directly to aeronautics; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion shall employ maximum effort to make this Nation and the Congress rectify the serious decline in aeronautics research which is critical to the Nation's continued world leadership prosperity and military superiority.

Resolution No. 77: Support For The United States Air Force
Origin: Virginia
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, People are the United States Air Force's top priority: the Air Force is the world's premier aerospace force because its great people—active-duty, Guard, Reserve and civilian—continue to serve selflessly as a total force under increasingly difficult circumstances, and in order to grow the force, recruiting and retention are among its highest priorities; to continue attracting and retaining dedicated men and women, the Air Force recognizes that it must continue its efforts to improve pay, benefits, and quality of life; and

WHEREAS, In the past four years, America's Air Force has accelerated its post-Cold War high operations tempo despite a 40 percent force size reduction since 1986; and to maintain this pace while minimizing the adverse impact on its people, equipment, and infrastructure, the Air Force; and

WHEREAS, To meet the challenges of adversaries at home and abroad, Air Force strategy calls for a capabilities—based approach to defense planning: This enables the Service to answer a broad range of challenges posed by potential adversaries, while also developing the capabilities it needs for the future; and

WHEREAS, In assessing existing and potential adversaries' capabilities against our own, the Air Force is developing Task Forces for a variety of mission requirements, from strategic response to homeland security: For example, Global Strike, Task Force, which describes how we will operate in an anti-access scenario, is the next step in the journey to fully achieve Air Force missions, while also opening doors to adaptive and innovative operational plans, and relevant organization structure; and

WHEREAS, Continued investment in the core competencies of aerospace power—aerospace superiority, global attack, precision engagement, information superiority, rapid global mobility, and agile combat support—will continue to be the key to preserving the Air Force's ability to respond to threats to America's national security whenever and wherever they occur; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion urge the Congress to fully fund the United States Air Force and to appropriately support the United States Air Force's commitment to attract, retain, and train quality people and to mold them into an expeditionary aerospace force capable of flexibly responding to threats to America's national security; to enhance readiness through its continued focus on total force integration and the integration of air and space systems; and to build and implement a transformation and modernization program that will maintain America's dominance in air and space well into the 21st Century.

Resolution No. 78: Aeronautical And Space Exploration
Origin: Virginia
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security
(Consolidated with Resolution 64 (MT))

WHEREAS, The United States has been the world leader in aeronautics for almost 90 years, since the creation of the Nation's first aeronautical research laboratories; and

WHEREAS, The United States has become the global pacesetter in military and commercial aircraft and space technology through long-range research and development; and

WHEREAS, U.S. progress in aviation and space research has had a profound impact on our Nation's quality of life and its economic social and political institutions; and

WHEREAS, U.S. advancements in aeronautics and space technology have made all areas of our earth more accessible and made possible communication on a global scale; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion has committed itself to the advancement of aeronautics and space exploration and the necessary research, engineering and development to propagate these technologies by creating within the National Security Commission an Aerospace Committee; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion deems it imperative that the United States, in the face of increasing competition, maintain its hard won status as the world leader in aeronautics and aircraft production and in space exploration and research. To realize this goal, we urge the Congress to provide:

1. **Adequate funding for the nation's civilian and military aerospace research and development programs to maintain U.S. technological leadership.**
2. **Adequate funding to build, upgrade and enhance the nation's civilian and military aerospace research facilities and wind tunnels.**
3. **A renewed national commitment to education involving academia in aeronautical and aerospace engineering research and technologies insuring a state of the art educated work force.**
4. **Overwatch and investigating functions and related activities with respect to the transfer of American aerospace technology abroad.**
5. **Provide that all of our military aircrafts are design, manufactured and assembled within the borders of the United States; and, be it finally**

RESOLVED, That the Nation must sustain its commitment to aerospace engineering research and development if it is to maintain its role as the world leader as we move into the next century.

Rejected

Resolution No. 76 (VA): Development And Expansion Of The Hyper-X Aerospace Program

Homeland Security and Civil Preparedness Committee
Timothy M. Tetz, Nevada, Chairman

Resolution No. 101: Financial Anti-terrorism Law Enforcement
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The United States Departments of Justice, Homeland Security, U.S. Customs, Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Internal Revenue Service are the first line of defense of the nation in combating the financial security threats that face America from both home and abroad, and is charged with a number of missions that are vital to the security of the nation; and

WHEREAS, These missions include: policing, investigation and enforcement of the financial laws to ensure the integrity and stability of our nation's banking and financial institutions from both foreign and domestic abuse or manipulation, and to ensure a stable economic environment that provides for legal investment and export opportunities; and

WHEREAS, These Agencies are charged with the role of securing both the physical and cyber borders of our nation, and while mindful of the constitutional rights of individuals; and

WHEREAS, Financial investigations and prosecutions by the Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigations and Internal Revenue Services have uncovered illicit financing schemes and revenue accounts of listed terrorist organizations through knowing or unknowing individuals, investment development groups, associations, charitable and other legitimate organizations; and

WHEREAS, These Agencies must have the ability to use every legal tool and policy at their disposal to ensure that terrorist organizations do not have the ability to be financed through our domestic and the international financial systems; and

WHEREAS, The National Executive Committee adopted this resolution at its Spring 2005 meeting; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion supports legislation that strengthens the abilities of the United States Departments of Justice and Homeland Security and the Internal Revenue Service to police, investigate and prosecute financial institutions or individuals within the parameters of the U.S. Constitution that use legitimate and illegitimate financial means to help support both domestic and international terrorism.

Resolution No. 102: Funding Homeland Security
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security
(Consolidated with Resolution 61 (MT))

WHEREAS, The September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on American soil have made Americans painfully aware of their vulnerability to violence from international terrorism; and

WHEREAS, These terrorists were able to carry out their attacks because previous emphasis by the U.S. Government on homeland security and intelligence collection, while improving over recent years, had been inadequate and incapable of preventing such attacks; and

WHEREAS, The National Defense Authorization Act of 2003 established the new Department of Homeland Security as well as a new cabinet position designed to be the single source of authority, at the highest levels, for all homeland defense programs and policies; and

WHEREAS, Although the Congress has appropriated funding for the Department of Homeland Security and its numerous agencies and functions, appropriations continue to be required to fund homeland security tasks and functions at regional, state and local levels across the Nation; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion urges the Congress to fully fund the Department of Homeland Security so as to harmonize the many agencies and offices with Homeland Security responsibilities into a viable and credible deterrent to those who seek to inflict violence on the United States and the American people; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the Congress also fully fund those homeland security tasks and functions being performed at regional, state and local levels.

Resolution No. 103: Support For Homeland Security And The War On Terror
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on American soil have made Americans painfully aware of their vulnerability to violence from international terrorism; and

WHEREAS, These terrorists were able to carry out their attacks because emphasis by the U.S. Government on homeland security and intelligence collection, while improving over recent years, have been inadequate and incapable of preventing such attacks; and

WHEREAS, The multiple federal and local government agencies responsible for safeguarding the United States homeland are disjointed, have had multiple chains-of-command, inadequate communications links and were incapable of effective coordination; and

WHEREAS, On September 20, 2001, President Bush announced the establishment of the Office of Homeland Security, a new cabinet position designed to be the single source of authority, at the highest levels, for all homeland defense programs and policies; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion supports the War on Terrorism and the Department of Homeland Security and urges the United

States Government to make the security of the United States the top national priority; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges the Congress to arm the Department of Homeland Security with the legal powers and fiduciary tools to harmonize the many agencies and offices with Homeland Security responsibilities into a viable and credible deterrent to those who seek to inflict violence on the United States and the American people.

Resolution No. 104: Support For The Non-Federal Roles Of The National Guard
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, Members of the National Guard swear dual allegiance to support and defend the United States as well as the individual states in which Guardsmen reside and serve; and

WHEREAS, In the history of our country, activated National Guard units have served with distinction in all of our Nation's wars, and in combination with Reserve units, composed approximately 50 percent of the total United States' forces deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan; and

WHEREAS, National Guard units also perform such invaluable non-federal roles as quelling domestic civil disturbances to include, providing relief assistance in man-made or natural disasters, as well as civil defense and drug interdiction functions, and other vital missions as determined by state authorities; and

WHEREAS, National Guard units are often the first relief or rescue forces to provide immediate on-scene response in the event of such emergencies; and

WHEREAS, Past large scale natural and man-made disasters could be repeated across the country requiring the immediate intervention of military units to supplement and assist state and local authorities and our citizenry; and

WHEREAS, With the extended deployment of National Guard units, and their increasing employment in numerous overseas missions, their participation in these traditional non-federal roles may be severely limited or even eliminated in some cases; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion urges the Congress to retain National Guard units at reasonable readiness levels so that in addition to their active duty missions they may continue to provide civil disturbance and natural and man-made disaster assistance; perform civil defense and drug interdictions functions as well as other essential state or federal roles as required to include border security.

Resolution No. 105: Support For The U.S. Coast Guard In Homeland Security
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, By public law the United States Coast Guard is at all times one of the Armed Forces of the United States; and

WHEREAS, The Coast Guard was able to respond to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, within hours and its homeland security missions have doubled; and

WHEREAS, Included in the numerous peacetime and wartime missions of the Coast Guard are law enforcement in its many facets to include drug interdiction and interception of illegal aliens; environment protection, maritime safety including search and rescue responsibilities and inspecting and licensing Merchant Marine ships; and National Security to include port security and serving as an essential wartime and peacetime partner of the U.S. Navy; and

WHEREAS, Each year the Coast Guard saves about $2.5 billion in property, saves 4,000 lives, repaying to the American taxpayer about seven times their annual operating budget for search and rescue. During 2002, the Coast Guard seized drugs worth more than $3.9 billion—five times more than the Coast Guard's annual operating expense budget for drug interdiction; and

WHEREAS, Since Fiscal Year 1997 to present, the Coast Guard has seized 806,469 pounds of cocaine and 333,285 pounds of marijuana; and

WHEREAS, The Coast Guard was transferred from the Department of Transportation to the Department of Homeland Security, these homeland security missions will continue during the War on Terrorism; and

WHEREAS, To carry out these critical missions, it is essential that highly skilled and motivated men and women continue to be attracted and retained by the Coast Guard and its Reserves and that cutters, aircraft, and required facilities be fully funded; and

WHEREAS, Without adequate resources, the United States Coast Guard will be unable to meet its national and international commitments to the detriment of the American people and other democratic nations; and

WHEREAS, The Coast Guard has proposed an "Integrated Deepwater System" to modernize and recapitalize its deepwater assets that was strongly endorsed by the President's Interagency Task Force on Coast Guard roles and missions as a "near-term national priority." The Deepwater Program compromises the acquisition of integrated surface, air, sensors and communication assets that will allow the Coast Guard to efficiently and effectively support national maritime security interests well into the 21st century; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion urges the Administration and the Congress to fully fund the United States Coast Guard to achieve its numerous vital missions including homeland security, law enforcement, environmental protection, maritime safety and other missions as assigned as well as the funding of its "Deepwater" initiatives; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion also urges the annual Congressional passage of the Coast Guard Authorization Act; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges the Congress and the Department of Homeland Security to support pay and benefits equity for Coast Guard men and women as well as the same quality of life features as authorized for the other Armed Forces of the United States.

Resolution No. 106: The American Legion Role In Homeland Security
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, Since before September 11, 2001, our Nation has been at risk to the new and changing invisible threat of terrorism launched from abroad; the United States, even during the War on Terrorism, has no more important mission than protecting the homeland and her citizens from future terrorism; and

WHEREAS, The National Strategy for Homeland Security aligns and focuses homeland security functions into six critical mission areas, namely, intelligence and warning; border and transportation security; domestic counterterrorism; protecting critical infrastructure; defending against catastrophic terrorism; and emergency preparedness and response; and

WHEREAS, The responsibility for providing homeland security is shared between federal, state and local governments, and the private sector; many homeland security activities, such as intelligence gathering and border security, are properly accomplished at the federal level: In other circumstances, like first responder capabilities, it is more appropriate for state and local governments to handle these responsibilities; and

WHEREAS, After the creation of the Department of Homeland Security, Presidential and Congressional budgets identified four priority areas for additional resources and they included: Support first responders, defend against bioterrorism, secure America's borders and to use 21st century technology to secure the homeland; and

WHEREAS, Although there are Homeland Security appropriations committees in the United States Congress, there are no Homeland Security authorizing committees; and

WHEREAS, According to the Council for Excellence in Government, the greatest resource the United States has for enhancing homeland security-which has been largely untapped thus far-is the American people; and

WHEREAS, Polls have indicated that over 62 percent of Americans say they would be willing to spend time volunteering with homeland security planning, training and practicing drills in their communities, yet some 84 percent of Americans and first

responders polled admitted to low awareness of federal, state and local emergency preparedness plans; and

WHEREAS, As former members of the Armed Forces trained in vigilance and security, who would be more qualified citizens than veterans to assist in many homeland security activities; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion urges its Legionnaires, Posts and Departments to assist in Homeland Security efforts in communities for example, by developing emergency kits and plans; by remaining informed and assisting families, schools, workplaces and communities in developing emergency plans and checklists; by reporting suspicious activity, or working with community-based organizations.

Resolution No. 107: Citizen Corps
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The American Legion is composed of grassroots Posts across the Country which have had experience in community civil preparedness; and

WHEREAS, In his 2002 State of the Union Address, President George W. Bush announced the creation of the USA Freedom Corps, which is an effort to foster a culture of service, citizenship, and responsibility through volunteerism; and

WHEREAS, Citizen Corps, a component of USA Freedom Corps, is a locally-driven initiative to have every American become an active participant in preventing, preparing for, and responding to crime, natural disasters and other emergencies; and

WHEREAS, The Citizen Corps Affiliate Program expands the resources and materials available to states and local communities by partnering with Programs and Organizations that offer resources for public education, outreach, and training; represent volunteers interested in helping to make their community safer; or offer volunteer service opportunities to support first responders, disaster relief activities, and community safety efforts; and

WHEREAS, Citizen Corps Program Affiliates support Citizen Corps Council activities by helping to establish training and information delivery systems for neighborhoods, schools, and businesses, and by helping with family preparedness and crime prevention initiatives in a community or across a region; and

WHEREAS, The programs of Citizen Corps are jointly managed by the Department of Homeland Security, Department of Justice and Department of Health and Human Services; and

WHEREAS, Citizen Corps Councils help drive local citizen participation by coordinating Citizen Corps programs, developing community action plans, assessing possible threats and identifying local resources; and

WHEREAS, The Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) Program educates people about disaster preparedness and trains them in basic disaster response skills, such as fire safety, light search and rescue, and disaster medical operations. Using their training; and

WHEREAS, The Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) Program strengthens communities by helping medical, public health and other volunteers offer their expertise throughout the year as well as during local emergencies and other times of community need; and

WHEREAS, An expanded Neighborhood Watch Program (NWP) Program incorporates terrorism awareness education into its existing crime prevention mission, while also serving as a way to bring residents together to focus on emergency preparedness and emergency response training; and

WHEREAS, Volunteers in Police Service (VIPS) Program works to enhance the capacity of state and local law enforcement to utilize volunteers; and

WHEREAS, The Fire Corps Program has the goal of providing support and supplementing resource-constrained fire departments through the use of civilian volunteers for non-fire suppression related activities; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That all Departments and Posts of The American Legion are encouraged to become involved in their local Citizen Corps

activities, and establish their own programs under an affiliation with the Citizen Corps and encourage one another to take the CERT Program Training; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion reaffirm its Citizen Corps affiliation, and that the Congress be urged to support and fully fund all components of Citizen Corps; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That Citizen Corps remain as a permanent part of the nation's approach to homeland security and disaster preparedness; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion annually participates in National Preparedness Month.

Approved

Received and Recorded

Resolution No. 50 (MA): Continued Donation of Blood for Emergencies

Referred to the Standing Commission on National Security

Resolution No. 63 (MT): Subject: Tracking Foreign Nationals While In The United States

Law and Order Committee
Terence E. Nolan, Florida, Chairman

Approved

Resolution No. 120: Second Amendment
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The Second Amendment to the Constitution of the United States guarantees each law-abiding American citizen the right to keep and bear arms; and

WHEREAS, It is estimated that between 65 to 80 million individuals, representing approximately 45 percent of the households in America, have chosen to exercise that right by owning one or more firearms; and

WHEREAS, Gun bans, registration, and licensing of firearms and their owners of has had little or no effect in such urban areas such as New York City, California and Washington D.C. and has not prevented violent criminals from obtaining firearms illegally and committing crimes; and

WHEREAS, The restriction of firearms purchases by law-abiding citizens will create a black market in illegal firearms and incur further governmental costs to enforce such restriction; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion reaffirms its recognition that the Second Amendment to the Constitution of the United States guarantees each law-abiding American citizen the right to keep and bear arms; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the membership of The American Legion urges our nation's lawmakers to recognize that the Second Amendment guarantees law-abiding citizens the right to keep and bear the arms, as do the millions of American veterans who have fought, and continue to fight, to preserve those rights, hereby advise the Congress of the United States and the Executive Department to cease and desist any and all efforts to restrict these rights by any legislation or order.

Referred to the Standing Commission on National Security

Resolution No. 338: Combating Crime In America

Merchant Marine Committee
Thomas Schottenbauer, Minnesota, Chairman

Approved

Resolution No. 346: Commercial Shipbuilding For Defense
Origin: Convention Committee on National Security
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The United States emerged as the world's foremost economic power and trading nation after the Cold war, and America's policymakers have neglected to use these advantages to sustain the nation's naval and maritime power; and

WHEREAS, Less than 5 percent of America's import and export tonnage is carried in U.S. Flag ships; and

WHEREAS, The 600-ship navy envisioned by President Reagan would have kept the ship yards busy; today, with a Navy only one-third as large and declining further, America's shipyards are in trouble; and

WHEREAS, In 1999, only 6 U.S. shipyards had contracts to build large ocean-going ships, down from 11 in 1993, and the industry, as a whole, has seen its work force decline by 30 percent since 1991; this undermines the ability of the United States to rebuild and expand its naval and maritime forces; and

WHEREAS, China has been expanding its shipbuilding and now accounts for 7 percent of the world total, but short of their 10 percent target for 2000; Beijing is restructuring the industry into two regional corporations answerable to the government; and

WHEREAS, There are only about 197 U.S. Flagged merchant ships, and by comparison, the Chinese-Flagged merchant fleet numbers over 1,500 ships; more than 400 of these ships, carrying 30 percent of China's trade, are operated by the China Ocean Shipping Company (COSCO), a state-owned conglomerate with close ties to Beijing's military and routinely provides shipping support to Chinese military and naval exercises; and

WHEREAS, U.S. commercial build rates are also not large enough to provide the strategic sealift needed in an emergency, or to support a shipbuilding industry large enough to meet future U.S. naval needs; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion urge the Congress to vigorously act to stop the further erosion of our vital maritime capability; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge the President and Congress to boost naval budgets, promote commercial shipbuilding, expand the use of U.S. flagships in world commerce, and resist foreign actions that would further damage America's defense industrial base.

Resolution No. 347: Support For The Jones Maritime Act And Related Cabotage Laws
Origin: Convention Committee on National Security
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The American Legion has always stressed that maintaining a viable U.S.-Flag Merchant Marine and its supporting infrastructure is essential to the economic, national, and environmental security of this nation; and

WHEREAS, The maritime policy of the United States, as articulated in the 1936 Merchant Marine Act, states that "it is necessary for the national defense and development of its foreign and domestic commerce that the United States shall have a Merchant Marine; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion is concerned about the continued decline of the U.S.-Flag Merchant Marine and the shortage of trained American mariners; and

WHEREAS, As of 2005, the privately owned ocean-going U.S.-flag fleet consisted of only 197 active ships, which includes 106 ships in domestic trade and 36 other engaged exclusively in U.S. government work; and, only 91 U.S.-Flag ships are operating in international trade in support of the nation's economic and national security interests; and

WHEREAS, The United States is the world's largest trading nation, but only three percent of U.S. imports and exports are carried in U.S.-flag ships which is economically unwise and militarily imprudent; and

WHEREAS, The Jones Act which is critical to United States national security and to America's economic well-being should be reaffirmed as should the continuation of the annual appropriations needed to fund the maritime Security Act of 1996; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion support the Jones Act and related Maritime cabotage laws critical to America's maritime infrastructure, and therefore, to the United States national defense.

Military Affairs Committee
Clayborn Lofton, Illinois, Chairman

Approved

Resolution No. 88: Cold War Victory Medal
Origin: Florida
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security
(Consolidated with Resolution 16 (DC))

WHEREAS, The United States Armed Forces engaged the forces of international communism continuously from the end of World War II until the disintegration of the former Soviet Union; and

WHEREAS, The United States, during this extended period, relied for its manpower source on a national service Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps made up of citizens performing their obligated duty to serve and defend the United States; and

WHEREAS, The defeat of the former Soviet Union and its Warsaw Pact allies constituted the greatest success of American Armed Forces since the end of World War II; and

WHEREAS, Many American citizens served the nation in assigned duties without receiving tangible recognition for that service; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion urge Congress to authorize and provide funding for the award of a COLD WAR VICTORY MEDAL to all Armed Forces members who served on extended active duty during the period of September 2, 1945 through December 26, 1991, thereby commemorating service in the Cold War to eliminate the threat of a determined enemy to overpower the freely elected democracies of the world.

Resolution No. 108: Burial Eligibility In Arlington National Cemetery
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, Arlington National Cemetery is our Nation's most sacred shrine representing an embodiment of the sacrifices that were made to uphold our country's ideals and freedoms; and

WHEREAS, More than 250,000 veterans and their dependents are buried here on 612 acres of land; and

WHEREAS, Arlington is one of more than 100 National Cemeteries but, unlike the others, Arlington Cemetery is administered by the Department of the Army; and

WHEREAS, In spite of restrictive regulations (Title 32, CFR), there have been numerous waivers in recent years, falsification of military records to gain interment at Arlington and even an unprecedented Presidential requested waiver and reservation; and

WHEREAS, Eligibility criteria for burials at Arlington need to be codified in order to assure compliance and fairness and to assure that the remaining space at Arlington is judiciously used; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, The American Legion urges the Congress to codify eligibility criteria for burial at Arlington National Cemetery and that such burial be restricted to service members who die on active-duty; to our most

decorated veterans to include recipients of the Purple Heart; former members of the armed forces separated from the military with a physical disability of 30 percent or more before October 1, 1949; and to veterans who spent full careers in uniform, and to their spouses and eligible children; to former prisoners of war; and for the President or former Presidents as Commanders in Chief of the Armed Forces; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion believes there should be no waivers for unqualified persons except under unique and compelling circumstances that comport with codified non-partisan waiver procedures as established by Congress; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That eligibility for interment of cremated remains of honorably discharged veterans in the Columbarium at Arlington should also be codified.

Resolution No. 109: TRICARE Eligibility For Members Of The Reserve Components And Their Dependents
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense (DOD) created TRICARE to augment its Military Medical System; and

WHEREAS, TRICARE largely consists of regional Federally-contracted, for-profit health care providers; and

WHEREAS, DOD's utilization of Reserve Components in the performance of traditionally active duty missions continues globally; and

WHEREAS, Many members of the Reserve Components, when activated to perform full-time duties, can no longer afford their civilian health care coverage for themselves and their dependents. Also, numerous activated Reservists have been non-deployable due to health or dental problems; and

WHEREAS, Many members of the Reserve Components are among the 40 million Americans with no health care coverage for themselves and their dependents; and

WHEREAS, The Reserve Components continue to experience recruiting and retention challenges; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion urges the Congress to authorize and fund the Department of Defense (DOD) in providing permanent TRICARE healthcare for members of the Reserve Components and their dependents.

Resolution No. 110: The American Legion's Position On The Department Of Defense's Force Health Protection Program
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, After the 1991 Gulf War, returning military personnel began to report suffering from unexplained multi-symptom illnesses, commonly referred to as Gulf War veterans' illnesses; and

WHEREAS, Although thirteen years have passed and over 200 hundred government-funded research projects are in various stages of completion, costing more than $200 million; many questions regarding the possible causes of Gulf War veterans' illnesses remain unanswered; and

WHEREAS, Numerous examples of lost or destroyed medical records have been identified, vaccination records were often unclear or incomplete, pre and post deployment examinations were not comprehensive and information regarding troop movements/locations and possible environmental hazard exposures was severely lacking; and

WHEREAS, The lack of such baseline data and other information is commonly recognized as a major limitation in the evaluation and understanding of potential causes of Gulf War veterans' illnesses; and

WHEREAS, To avoid the procedural problems encountered both during and after the 1991 Gulf War, "lessons learned" precipitated the enactment of legislation and policies designed to create a concept of Force Health Protection; and

WHEREAS, Although these policies appeared to correct previously identified problems in theory, reports by the Institute of Medicine and the United States General Accounting Office identified several deficiencies in the implementation of Force Health Protection laws and policies; and

WHEREAS, Controversial vaccines and pre-treatment drugs, such as smallpox, anthrax, and the anti-malaria tablet Lariam, are part of the Department of Defense's overall Force Health Protection plan; and

WHEREAS, Despite the fact that pyridostigmine bromide, an investigational new drug used as a pre-treatment for the nerve agent soman during the 1991 Gulf War, has not been definitively ruled out as a possible cause of Gulf War veterans' illnesses, the Food and Drug Administration granted full approval just prior to Operation Iraqi Freedom, clearing the way for the Department of Defense to use the drug without restriction under the umbrella of its Force Health Protection program; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion continue to actively monitor the Department of Defense's implementation of Force Health Protection policies and urge continual congressional oversight to ensure that all Force Health Protection laws and policies, including thorough pre and post deployment physical and mental examinations, are being properly implemented in a consistent manner by all military branches; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge the Department of Defense to actively track and follow-up, with proper medical care, adverse reactions to vaccinations as well as any and all health-related complaints associated with the ingestion of controversial drugs such as pyridostigmine bromide and Lariam; and be it finally

RESOLVED, That the military continually improve its treatment of service personnel who have been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder and/or traumatic brain injury.

Resolution No. 112: Support For The Selective Service Registration Program
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The American Legion has given long-standing support to universal military training; and despite the success of the All-Volunteer Force, Selective Service registration continues to serve as our defense manpower insurance policy; and

WHEREAS, Despite the end of the Cold War, American servicemen and women are deployed world-wide to include their participation in peace enforcement missions in Bosnia and Kosovo and engaging in the war on terrorism in Iraq and Afghanistan, and homeland security; the unpredictability and volatility of worldwide tensions urge us to think in terms of continued preparedness; and

WHEREAS, The current reality of small Active Forces only reinforces the need for combat-ready National Guard and Reserve units and for the capability to reconstitute our forces in a timely manner; and

WHEREAS, World War I and II began long before our country became involved, allowing the United States the benefit of abundant time to accomplish registration before troops were actually committed—a luxury that we cannot expect to enjoy in today's unpredictable environment; and

WHEREAS, The Selective Service Registration Program has enjoyed remarkable success as more that 90 percent of our 18-25 year olds have registered and there is virtually no resistance to the Program; and

WHEREAS, Registration is one of the few remaining obligations our nation requires of its young men and removing this "rite of passage" for all men would reduce each man's level of consciousness about military service and the obligation to defend our nation; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion supports the retention of the Selective Service Registration Program as being in the best interests of all Americans, and its maintenance is a proven cost-effective, essential, and rapid means of reconstituting the required forces to protect our national security interests.

Resolution No. 113: Status Of Forces Agreement
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, A portion of the compensated benefits of military retirees is considered to be the use of military facilities, such as PX, BX, Post Exchange, Commissary, healthcare, recreational facilities, mail, and other U.S. military facilities worldwide; and

WHEREAS, As a direct result of the Status of Forces Agreements between the U.S. Government and host countries many of these benefits are usually denied to retired military members and their families/dependents residing or visiting U.S. military facilities located outside the U.S.; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That all future Status of Forces Agreements negotiated, renegotiated, or revised with host countries should allow for the unimpeded use of all U.S. military facilities by retired U.S. military members and their dependents, and that U.S. military personnel be more fairly treated in the court system in the Republic of Korea and Okinawa.

Resolution No. 114: Reforming The Military Absentee Voting System
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The 1986 Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (Public Law 99-410) streamlined the procedures for overseas absentee voting; authorized a back-up write-in overseas ballot if the voter did not receive one requested from the state; Postal Service was to ensure that balloting materials were "carried expeditiously and free of postage;" and the overall intent was to ensure "maximum access to the polls" by both uniformed and civilian overseas voters; and

WHEREAS, The 2000 General Elections demonstrated numerous problems exist not only in Florida, but nationally as well, concerning uniformed and overseas citizens absentee balloting procedures; and

WHEREAS, Although a Presidential Election is held on the same date across the United States, it is composed of 50 separate state elections; and the Constitution of the United States grants the responsibility for the conduct of elections to the states; and

WHEREAS, Many states have difficulty printing and mailing ballots to overseas military voters in a timely manner, thus, posing a real challenge for military members and their family members to vote and return ballots within deadlines; and other states will not accept ballots received 30 days before general elections making it difficult, particularly, for military personnel deployed overseas; and

WHEREAS, Absentee ballots from forward deployed military members entitled to free postage in locales like the Iraq, Afghanistan and Bosnia often are not postmarked at mailing but, many times, are postmarked en route resulting in late postmarking in CONUS; and

WHEREAS, Military voters should be protected from disenfranchisement based on technicalities that are beyond their control such as postmark discrepancies, missing notarized signatures and confusion on residency requirements; and

WHEREAS, States are not solely to blame due to complacency on the part of military units which also compounds military absentee voting: voting assistance in the military is often an additional duty relegated to the most junior officers; and special vigilance is often not given to handling election mail; and

WHEREAS, A worldwide Internet voting pilot was recently tested by a Department of Defense contractor using digital signatures and ballot encryption, however, it was rejected for security reasons; and

WHEREAS, Forty-six states now allow the fax transmission of absentee voting materials; and

WHEREAS, Despite progress made after more than a decade by the Department of Defense cooperatively working with the states, on the average, some 30 percent of all military absentee ballots are still not counted in Federal elections; and

WHEREAS, National defense is uniquely a constitutional mandate that gives the Federal government the authority and responsibility to ensure that military personnel and their families are not disenfranchised by the circumstances of their service and, thereby,

necessitating Federal legislation as the states have not resolved the problem for nearly half a century, and a more adequate uniform and consistent system, not 50 unique systems, is needed; and

WHEREAS, The National Conference of Commissioners on Uniform State Laws promotes drafts of uniform and model acts, and it could offer uniform formats for the states to follow on military absentee voting; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion ensure that satisfactorily drafted uniform acts and/or regulations pertaining to the Military Voting Absentee System, are made available to all appropriate state and local election entities; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges that appropriate laws and guidelines be developed at Federal, state and local levels with the intent that all military absentee voters and their families will have their votes counted in every election; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the sending and receiving of blank and completed military absentee ballots be accomplished electronically as much as possible; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion takes an advocate role on this vital issue at National, state and local levels.

Resolution No. 115: Purple Heart for TBI
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The Purple Heart was established by General George Washington and was reestablished by the President of the United States in War Department General Orders 3 in 1932 and was to be awarded to members of the Armed Forces were wounded or killed in action or died of wounds as a result of combat action with hostile enemy forces; and

WHEREAS, General Washington, in establishing the Purple Heart, "intended awarding or authorizing officers would not make personal judgments based on how more or less serious a wound or injury appeared, and that being wounded in combat-by any degree-was a true distinction of 'military merit;' " and

WHEREAS, While clearly an individual recognition, the Purple Heart differs from all other decorations in that an individual is not "recommended" for the decoration, but, rather, individuals are entitled to it upon meeting certain specific criteria; and

WHEREAS, The signature wound in the Global War on Terrorism has been the Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), most often caused by roadside explosions (IEDs), which are medically classified as mild, moderate and severe; and

WHEREAS, Over 14,000 Purple Hearts have been awarded, thus far, of the more than 1.4 million service members who have served in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the DoD reports that 11-28 percent of combat troops may have been exposed to bomb or shell blasts and suffered at least mild TBIs; and 30 percent of Iraq and Afghanistan casualties at Walter Reed Army Medical Center have been diagnosed with mild, moderate or severe TBIs; and

WHEREAS, Military Uniform Regulations currently call for awarding Purple Heart medals for “concussion injuries caused as a result of enemy-generated explosions;” and

WHEREAS, According to the recently published “Rebuilding the Trust” report of the Independent Review Group investigating Walter Reed AMC, it was noted that “no standard administrative codes exist for documenting even mild traumatic brain injuries in medical records;” and

WHEREAS, According to military medical authorities, combat casualty moderate or severe neurotrama TBIs, unlike the psychological Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, may be accompanied by internal wounding to include portions of the brain being damaged and malfunctioning, internal bleeding, and even death, which would dictate the presence of internal TBI physical wounds and justification for the issuance of the Purple Heart; and

WHEREAS, The essence of this resolution was adopted by the National Executive Committee at its Spring Meetings; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion urges the Congress and the Department of Defense and Military Services, as appropriate, to review the regulatory eligibility criteria for awarding of the Purple Heart and recognizing the internal and external wounding aspects of Traumatic Brain Injuries for purposes of awarding Purple Hearts for these wounds resulting from combat actions with hostile forces in the Global War On Terrorism; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges that military medical personnel develop the necessary administrative codes for reporting TBIs for the purposes of detecting, reporting, treatment, and research of traumatic brain injuries to include the awarding of timely Purple Hearts.

Resolution No. 116: Oppose Proposed TRICARE Increases
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security
(Consolidated with Resolution No. 28 (SD))

WHEREAS, The American Legion recognizes the debt owed to the entire military retirement community for their sacrifices and hardships endured in honorable military service to this nation; and

WHEREAS, The Administration and Defense leaders are seeking to impose very large health care fee increases on military retirees and their families; and

WHEREAS, The proposed fee increases are inappropriate and out of line with career service members' unique sacrifices; and

WHEREAS, Military medical and retirement benefits must be markedly better than civilian benefits because they are the primary offsets for enduring decades of extraordinarily arduous service conditions; and

WHEREAS, Military retirees careers have entailed unique and arduous service conditions few other Americans are willing to endure for 20 or 30 years including hazardous duty, service in foreign countries often in hostile environments, extended family separations, just to mention a few; and

WHEREAS, These proposed increases in premiums are targeted to a select group of military medical care beneficiaries—those military retirees and their families under age 65; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion opposes these increases and sees this proposal as an erosion of quality of life benefits from a grateful nation for honorable military service; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion shall prevail upon this Administration and the Department of Defense to reconsider any proposals to implement any increases in the military retirees' TRICARE enrollment fees, deductibles, or premiums.

Resolution No. 117: Military Quality Of Life
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The American Legion has always supported quality of life features for members of the Armed Forces and their dependents as well as military retirees, as people are the foundation of our Nation's fighting forces; and

WHEREAS, Without highly qualified, dedicated men and women, even the most sophisticated weaponry will not provide the deterrent force necessary for this Nation to remain at peace; and

WHEREAS, Military compensation is only one factor in the quality of life equation as to whether a good service member and his family remain in the service: Other major factors include fair treatment, career stability and regular promotions, adequate quarters, adequate health care and commissaries, and day care facilities, all of which ease the numerous sacrifices that are demanded of service members and their families; and

WHEREAS, Over 30,000 Reservists had been activated for homeland security and the war on terrorism and with Reservists performing active duty missions for longer periods of time, their benefits need to be significantly expanded and improved; and

WHEREAS, Our military retirees and their dependents and military survivors are deserving and rightfully entitled to adequate health care treatment, concurrent receipt and regular cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) to military retirement pay and survivor benefit plans; and

WHEREAS, That The American Legion urges the Congress and the Department of Defense to support and fund such quality of life features including but not limited to, the following:

1. Military pay comparability for the Armed Forces and regular increases in the Basic Allowances for Quarters; renovation and construction of military quarters and increased funding for child day care centers are direly needed. Pay raises must be competitive with the private sector;
2. Adequate medical, mental and dental health services; morale, welfare and recreational facilities; and non-privatized exchanges and commissary facilities. The Defense Commissary Agency (DECA) and its functions should be retained and not relegated to the military services;
3. Preserving an attractive retirement system for the active and reserve components and annual cost of living adjustments (COLAs) paid at the same rate and concurrently with other Federal retiree COLAs; oppose any changes to the military retirement system, whether prospective or retroactive, that would violate contracts made with military retirees and would undermine morale and readiness;
4. Requiring that the Services perform mandatory physical examinations, without waivers, for all separating veterans;
5. Fully funding the concurrent receipt of military retirement pay, military separation pays, and VA disability compensation as well as Special Compensation pays for disabled military retirees;
6. That the SBP/DIC offset be eliminated;
7. TRICARE for Life and the TRICARE Senior Pharmacy program for Medicare-eligible military retirees, their dependents and military survivors, should be adequately funded; and regular cost-of-living adjustments to military retirement deployment pay, capital gains tax exclusions, tax-free and increased death gratuity payments, and combat zone tax exclusions for service in South Korea;
8. Congressional re-enactment of Impact Aid to fund the local public school education of military dependents;
9. Adequately protecting the American public and the Armed Forces from the actual or potentially harmful effects of friendly and hostile chemical, biological and nuclear agents or munitions;
10. Urging the Congress to extend and improve additional quality of life benefits, allowances and privileges to the National Guard and Reserves involved in Homeland Security and other missions so as to more closely approximate those of the active force. Military retirement pay and TRICARE healthcare for members of the Reserve Components should be authorized before age 60. Hazardous duty and incentive pays for Reservists should be the same as active duty; tax credits to private businesses that pay the difference between military and civilian salaries to mobilized Reservists and restore travel exemptions for Reserve and Guard members for expenses associated with attending drills;
11. Military health care should also be provided to members of the Reserve Components and their dependents, who become injured while on active duty status regardless of the number of days served on active duty, to the same degree as active duty members under the same circumstances;
12. Whenever a Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) is conducted, The American Legion will urge that certain base facilities such as base medical facilities, commissaries, exchanges and other facilities be preserved for use by active duty and Reservist personnel and military retired veterans and their families;
13. That Walter Reed Army Medical Center not be closed until after the Global War on Terrorism has ended;
14. That the numerous, recurring and serious pay problems experienced by the Active and Reserve Components be immediately resolved;

15. That Traumatic Brain Injury and Combat Stress Disorders be diagnosed and effectively treated in the military; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion urge the Congress and the Department of Defense to support and fund quality of life features for Active Duty, National Guard and Reservists as well as military retirees, veterans and their dependents, and military survivors.

Resolution No. 118: Listing Of Veteran Service Organizations For Discharging Service Members
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, Members of The American Legion are all veterans of the United States Military; and

WHEREAS, Our Legionnaires would like to share with recent veterans of the United States, the veterans services available to these newly discharged service members; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion members would recommend to the United States military branches, and benefits that a separation package be supplied to each of these veterans being discharged; The American Legion would recommend that discharge packets contain the names and addresses of all major veterans organization in the United States by state; and

WHEREAS, American Legion recognizes that the transition from military life to civilian life is sometime difficult and recognizes that association with fellow veterans and access to services is available to veterans which is highly beneficial in their efforts to become productive citizens; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion respectfully requests each military service include such a package of information in the separation process from the military; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion support legislation to insert a clause into the briefing of discharging service men and women that make specific reference to veterans organizations such as The American Legion in their civilian communities.

Resolution No. 119: Concurrent Receipt Of Military Retired And Severance Pays And Disability Compensation And Their Dependents
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security
(Consolidated with Resolution No. 24 (SD))

WHEREAS, Title 38, United States Code, Sections 5304 and 5305, has prohibited the concurrent receipt of both military retirement pay for longevity from the Department of Defense and disability compensation from the Department of Veterans Affairs; and

WHEREAS, Disabled military retirees have been entitled to receive disability compensation only by "wavering that portion of retired pay as is equal in amount to such compensation," so that disabled military retirees essentially fund their own disability compensation which is not subject to taxation; and

WHEREAS, Federal civil service employees, as well as other Federal government workers, may concurrently receive retirement pay for longevity and disability payments; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion believes that it is inequitable and unfair to authorize one group to receive federal retirement pay and disability payments while prohibiting disabled military retirees from receiving both; and

WHEREAS, According to the Department of Defense, the rationale for this disparity is that "VA disability compensation is (meant) for disabled veterans who have left the service before completing a career and before qualifying for retired pay disabled military retirees did not experience a reduction in earning potential during their military career"; and

WHEREAS, Such rationale, which continues to this day, defies both logic and the facts: There are approximately 640,000 disabled active duty and reservist military retirees (rated 0%-100%), who were retired for longevity and who qualified for military retirement yet, during their military careers, sustained non-career-ending injuries, combat wounds and other ailments; and

WHEREAS, There are also over 100,000 non-careerist military disability retirees who were retired for severely disabling injuries, wounds or ailments who are awarded military retirement disability pay as a percentage of their base pay (30% and above) and who are not authorized to concurrently draw VA disability compensation: In order to draw VA disability compensation, they must waive their military retirement disability pay, which is inequitable for those disabled warriors who were unable to complete military careers; and

WHEREAS, The Fiscal Year 2003 National Defense Authorization Act authorized a Combat-Related Special Compensation (CRSC) for those disabled military retirees for longevity whose VA-rated disabilities totaled 60 percent and higher due to combat, combat-related training, hazardous duty or the instrumentalities of war; and

WHEREAS, The Fiscal Year 2004 National Defense Authorization Act authorized the concurrent receipt of taxable military retirement pay and VA disability compensation for disabled retirees rated at 50 percent or higher, to include disabled retired Reservists with at least 20 years of service who were drawing retirement pay, as well as veterans who retired under Temporary Early Retirement Authority (TERA); and

WHEREAS, The FY 2004 NDAA also expanded CRSC for disabled retirees with 20 years of qualifying service who have a combined, combat-related disability of 10 percent or more; and

WHEREAS, Eligible retirees may not receive both concurrent receipt and CRSC but may choose between the two options during an annual "open season;" now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion expresses its gratitude to the Congress for the authorization of both Combat-Related Special Compensation (CRSC) and partial concurrent receipt for over 200,000 disabled military retirees but urges the Congress to authorize and fund full concurrent receipt for all disabled military retirees to include those rated at 40 percent and below; to authorize the CRSC payment of military disability retiree pay and VA disability compensation for those disabled military retirees; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge Congress to eliminate the phase-in of provisions in PL 108-136 so as to accelerate restored retired pay in fewer than 10 years; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion also urges the Congress to authorize the concurrent receipt of military severance pay for less than 30 percent disabled service members and VA disability compensation.

Resolution No. 169: Support For The War On Terrorism
Origin: Convention Committee on National Security
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The American Legion is an organization of wartime veterans created by an act of the United States Congress in 1919; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion's membership is composed of veterans of all wars, the majority of which are Vietnam veterans who have endured the consequences of a nation divided in time of war; and

WHEREAS, Warriors, above all other people, pray for peace, for they must suffer and bear the deepest wounds and scars of war; and

WHEREAS, Because of the very nature of war, the warrior cannot be separated from the war itself; and

WHEREAS, The United States of America was suddenly, and without provocation, attacked by terrorists on September 11, 2001, resulting in the deaths of thousands of innocent civilians and members of the military of the United States; and

WHEREAS, This tragic event does not stand alone, but is a continuation of a long series of unprovoked terrorist attacks aimed at destroying American lives, and the very basic core values of freedom, democracy and respect for human life; and

WHEREAS, In response to this despicable act of cowardice, a united Congress in a bipartisan manner authorized the use of armed force against the global armies of terrorism no matter where they reside; and

WHEREAS, Recognizing that the global war on terrorism is as deadly as any war in which the United States has been previously engaged, the President and Congress did authorize military actions in both Afghanistan and Iraq; and

WHEREAS, The global war on terrorism is a *just war,* aimed at protecting the very foundations of freedom and freedom-loving people everywhere; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion agrees with our Commander in Chief that the acts of terrorism mentioned heretofore were aimed at "the heart and soul of the civilized world, and the world has come together to fight a new and different war, the first, and we hope the only one, of the 21st century—a war against all those who seek to export terror, and a war against those governments that support or shelter them"; and

WHEREAS, The National Executive Committee meeting in pre-Convention session on August 22, 2005, in Honolulu, Hawaii, adopted this resolution and recommended that the 87th National Convention meeting in Honolulu, Hawaii, August 23, 24, 25, 2005, adopt this resolution; and

WHEREAS, This resolution has been passed at every convention since to show The American Legion's steadfast support; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion fully supports the President of the United States, the United States Congress and the men, women and leadership of our armed forces as they are engaged in the global war on terrorism; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges all Americans and freedom-loving peoples everywhere to stand united in their support of the global war on terrorism, and united in their support of the troops who are engaged in protecting our values and way of life; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the National Commander be, and is hereby authorized, to use whatever means at his disposal to disseminate accurate information about this war on terrorism, and to engage whatever means necessary to ensure the united support of the American people.

Resolution No. 176: Pain Management Research, Treatment And Therapies
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The characteristics of modern warfare, including the global war on terrorists, exposes members of the uniformed services to many adverse and dangerous environmental diseases and living conditions; and

WHEREAS, Today's war zone conditions replete with noxious gases released from explosive devices in Iraq and Afghanistan produce traumatic, life altering, battlefield scars and casualties unheard of in previous wars including infections, instant crushing of protective skull and body bones, loss of sight and limbs, dehydration, blood and other body infections and, in some cases, severely impaired or total loss of mental and physical body motor functions; and

WHEREAS, Military medical rapid response teams provide superb, state of the art, medical and psychological life-saving treatment and care at battlefield sites with an extraordinarily high success rate; and

WHEREAS, Military, Department of Veterans Affairs and some specialty civilian health care treatment facilities are overburdened with caring for the most serious and most painful battlefield casualties ever witnessed from war; and

WHEREAS, The nation's medical and mental health care professionals have not been provided with sufficient resources to adequately research, diagnose, treat and manage acute and chronic pain associated with present day battlefield casualties; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion, in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That federal funding for pain management research, treatment and therapies at the Department of Defense, Department of Veterans Affairs and at the National Institutes of Health be significantly increased and that the Congress and the Administration re-double their efforts to ensure that an effective pain management program be uniformly established and implemented; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs increase its investment in pain management clinical research by improving and accelerating clinical trials at military and VA treatment facilities and affiliated university medical centers and research programs.

Resolution No. 339: Department Of Defense Health Care For Military Beneficiaries
Origin: Convention Committee on National Security
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The promise of free health care for life in exchange for 20 or more years of creditable military service was contained in recruiting and retention and was recognized as such by active duty personnel, Reservists and military retirees and their dependents; and

WHEREAS, The passage of TRICARE for Life and the TRICARE Senior Pharmacy Programs for Medicare-eligible military retirees and their dependents has essentially fulfilled the promise of lifetime military healthcare; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion has had a number of concerns with TRICARE healthcare programs to include, for example, TRICARE business practices and benefit portability need to be improved; claims processing reform is direly needed; and reimbursement rates to providers need to be increased; and

WHEREAS, That The American Legion recommends that the following guidelines be incorporated as part of the Department of Defense healthcare package for military retirees, dependents and military survivors:

1. Administrative barriers to an effective TRICARE system to include raising TRICARE provider reimbursements; program portability between TRICARE regions; reducing delays in claim payments; and increasing electronic claims processing need to be removed. Improve TRICARE enrollment procedures, beneficiary education, decrease administrative burdens, eliminate non-availability requirements and eliminate unnecessary reporting requirements;
2. That the TRICARE programs to include the TRICARE for Life and the TRICARE Senior Pharmacy programs which are used by 1.3 million Medicare-eligible military retirees and their dependents be fully funded annually;
3. Restore TRICARE reimbursement policy to pay up to what TRICARE would have paid had there been no other health insurance as was the policy before 1993;
4. That dual eligible disabled retirees continue to receive health care from both military treatment facilities and VA medical centers. TRICARE Prime Remote should be included for military retirees, dependents and military survivors;
5. That all military beneficiaries be authorized to receive dental and visual care at military treatment facilities;
6. That retired Reservists and their dependents be eligible for TRICARE coverage when they become eligible to receive retirement pay; The American Legion urges that all discharging servicemembers, active and Reservists be required to have discharge and retirement physical examinations, physicals should not be optional or abbreviated;
7. That adequate military medical personnel, to include graduates of the Uniformed Services University of Health Sciences and members of the Commissioned Officer Corps of the Public Health Service, should be retained on active duty to provide health care for active duty and retired military personnel and their dependents;
8. That the Federal Employee Health Benefits Plan (FEHBP) be authorized as an alternative to TRICARE for those military retirees and dependents who can afford such premiums;

9. That TRICARE fees not be increased except as authorized by Congress, not by the Department of Defense;
10. That military construction funding be authorized for the construction of Walter Reed Military Medical Center and the Ft. Belvoir Army Community Center;
11. If Congress seeks to increase TRICARE fees the increases should be at a rate no larger than the rate of pay increases for Active, Reserve, National Guard, military and medical retirees, and military survivors; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion urges Congress to fully fund military and VA healthcare programs for beneficiaries as well as a permanent TRICARE program for Guardsmen and Reservists.

Resolution No. 340: Exempting Mailing Charges For Non-profit Organizations
Origin: Convention Committee on National Security
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security
(Consolidated with Resolution No. 242 (OH))

WHEREAS, The motto of The American Legion has been "For God and Country" since its founding by Veterans of World War I in 1919; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion is an organization of war veterans who have dedicated themselves to the service of the community, state and nation; and

WHEREAS, This service is performed through The American Legion's basic programs; and

WHEREAS, The United States of America is presently in a state of war in Iraq and Afghanistan and several thousand of U.S. Troops are in both countries fighting the enemies of the United States; and

WHEREAS, Our troops in both countries have expressed their desire to receive any items from the United States, items ranging from non-perishable food to toiletries and personal items; and

WHEREAS, Several non-profit organizations and other entities, both personal and commercial have been organizing banks to collect items for the troops and sending such items to both countries, these actions being done through the United States Postal Service; and

WHEREAS, The cost of mailing items to both countries is very expensive and sometimes, the entities do not have the funds to accomplish the mailing and they have to resort to asking for more monies just to mail the items; and

WHEREAS, The authority of the US Postal Service should exempt such mailing costs for non-profit organizations to accomplish the mailings to our deployed troops in Iraq and Afghanistan; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion, Department of New Mexico voted that the United States Postal Service exempt the postal mailing charges for packages sent to US Armed Forces deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan by all non-profits, including The American Legion; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That the United States Postal Service exempt the postal mailing charges for packages sent to US Armed Forces deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan by all non-profit associations including The American Legion.

Resolution No. 341: Military Commissaries
Origin: Convention Committee on National Security
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense has evaluated options to downsize or privatize the Military Commissary System by seeking reduced federal funding, reducing the number of operating military commissaries, and evaluating the privatizing of military commissaries; and

WHEREAS, The value of commissaries in the quality of life equation for junior enlisted families and military retirees and others is indisputable: Military commissary usage has ranked second only to medical health care in the non-pay compensation

package according to surveys conducted among active duty and retired beneficiaries as commissaries save patrons on the order of 26 percent in food costs; and

WHEREAS, The nearly $1 billion in subsidized congressional appropriations permit commissaries to sell items virtually at cost, and the removal of this funding would drastically raise food costs which would effectively cause commissaries to close; and

WHEREAS, Contrary to popular belief, military commissaries are not competitive with civilian grocery chain stores as commissary sales represent only 1.7 percent of total U.S. grocery sales; and

WHEREAS, Without commissary savings, pay compensation for active duty and military retirees would have to rise and retired as well as drilling Reservists and National Guardsmen are now authorized to use the Commissaries; and

WHEREAS, With the downsizing of the military to include reductions in force and military benefits, any effort to reduce or dismantle the integrity of the military commissary system would be seen as a serious breach of faith with a benefit system that currently serves as a mainstay for the active and reserve components, military retirees and military survivors, military personnel involuntarily discharged or released from active duty, and 100 percent service-connected disabled veterans and others; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion urges the Department of Defense and the Congress to continue full federal funding of the military commissary system and to retain this vital non-pay compensation benefit system which is essential to the morale and readiness of the dedicated men and women who have served, and continue to serve, the national security interests of the United States; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion oppose any efforts to institute "variable pricing" or to privatize the military commissary system or to dismantle or downsize the Defense Commissary Agency.

Resolution No. 342: Military Funeral Honors
Origin: Convention Committee on National Security
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, Active duty and reserve component (National Guard and Reserves) manpower strengths have been reduced by 35 percent down to 1.4 million in the active component and 850,000 in the reserve components and, coupled with worldwide military deployments, has further strained the availability of manpower resources for veterans funerals; and

WHEREAS, A number of state National Guard organizations such as in Maryland, Missouri, New York and others, have expended state funding for funeral honors without receiving federal assistance; and

WHEREAS, Although the cumulative demand for military burial honors is currently unknown, as are the numbers of accommodated and unaccommodated requests for honors, the military services provided honors for nearly 100,000 funerals in recent years and nearly 35 percent of these military honors rendered consisted of single representatives; and

WHEREAS, Veterans service organizations have played a significant role in rendering military-like honors at veterans funerals; but just as the military has downsized, the membership of veterans service organizations has also been declining due to the passing of its own veterans, and The American Legion has performed an estimated 200,000 veterans funeral honors per year; and

WHEREAS, The Fiscal Year 2000 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) recognized the national obligation to demonstrate the Nation's gratitude to veterans who defended our Nation during times of war and peace; and it mandated the Military Services to provide funeral honors at veterans burials, upon request by the next of kin, with a minimum of two uniformed members, one in the service of the deceased, to be provided for flag-folding and presentation along with the playing of Taps; and

WHEREAS, The FY 2000 NDAA authorized that members of veterans service organizations like The American Legion who participated in military funeral honors "may", not "will", be reimbursed; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion reaffirms that the Congress mandate and appropriately fund the Department of Defense and the Military Services, to include reimbursing the National Guard, so as to provide military honors upon request at veterans funerals in coordination with Veterans Service Organizations such as The American Legion at local levels; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That American Legion Posts and Departments continue to participate with the military in the rendering of funeral honors to veterans; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the Department of Defense implement equitable and expedient reimbursement procedures for members of the veterans service organizations who participate in military funeral honors; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That veterans of the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force and Coast Guard be authorized to receive military funeral honors from those Military Services.

Resolution No. 343: Oppose Granting The Purple Heart For Illnesses
Origin: Convention Committee on National Security
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The Purple Heart was established by General George Washington at Newburgh, New York, on 7 August 1782, during the Revolutionary War and was initially created as the Badge of Military Merit; and

WHEREAS, The Purple Heart was reestablished by the President of the United States per War Department General Orders 3, 1932; and

WHEREAS, The Purple Heart is awarded in the name of the President of the United States to any member of an Armed Force or any civilian national of the United States who, while serving under competent authority in any capacity with one of the U.S. Armed Services after 5 April 1917, has been wounded or killed; and

WHEREAS, To this day, examples of conditions which have clearly not justified the award of the Purple Heart include battle fatigue and post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD); and

WHEREAS, PTSD as well as herbicide (Agent Orange) related diseases are not physical injuries, rather they are illnesses; and

WHEREAS, PTSD in particular, not being a physical injury, will manifest itself in some service members but not in others who have the same experiences, whereas physical wounds have no such limitations; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion opposes the issuing of the Purple Heart for physical or psychological illnesses.

Resolution No. 344: Policy On Reserve Forces
Origin: Convention Committee on National Security
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The National Guard of this Country has served as the bedrock for our defense and its service predates the Nation's founding; and

WHEREAS, Under the Total Force Policy, National Guard and Reserve units have been easily integrated into Active Force structures; however, as we are seeing, there have been numerous problems involving pay, supply and equipment and timely healthcare problems that indicate their integration is not seamless; and

WHEREAS, The reality of smaller Active Forces strengthens the imperative for fully manned and combat ready National Guard and Reserve Forces which are completely integrated into the Total Force; and

WHEREAS, During the War on Terror, activated National Guard and Reserve personnel have comprised anywhere from approximately 30 to 50 percent of deployed United states forces, thereby, representing both the first and second line of America's defense capabilities; and

WHEREAS, The National Guard, besides serving our national interests in Federal capacities, also performs invaluable State missions to include natural disaster assistance,

civil disturbance and law and order missions, participating in drug interdiction, and numerous community service programs; and

WHEREAS, Our National Military Strategy is primarily oriented toward regional conflicts of short duration. Extended conflicts however, have required the full employment of the National Guard and Reserves, and even the reinstatement of conscription may be considered to meet manpower needs; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion urges that the National Guard and Reserves be realistically manned, structured, equipped, trained, fully deployable and maintained at high readiness levels in order to accomplish the missions and roles indispensable to our national defense; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the American Legion urge Congress and the Department of Defense to pass legislation and create policy that addresses all the needs of the Reserve forces to include:

1. **Full range of active duty retention bonuses and recruiting incentives, pay promotions and health care quality of life be applicably activated to the National Guard and Reserve;**
2. **Military retirement pay and TRICARE healthcare for members of the Reserve Components authorized less than age 60;**
3. **Hazardous duty and incentive pays for Reservists set the same as active-duty;**
4. **Creating tax credits to private businesses paying the difference between military and civilian salaries to mobilized Reservists;**
5. **Restoring travel exemptions for Reserve and Guard members for expenses associated with attending drills;**
6. **Military health care provided to members of the Reserve Components and their dependents, who become injured while on active duty status regardless of the number of days served on active duty;**
7. **Retired Reservists and their dependents be eligible for TRICARE coverage when they become eligible to receive retirement pay;**
8. **Providing all discharging Reservists be required to have complete discharge and/or retirement physical examinations to the same standard as the active-duty force.**

Resolution No. 345: Military Funeral Honors
Origin: Convention Committee on National Security
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The American Legion is the largest veteran's organization in the world comprised of war time era veterans; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion was created as a fraternity based upon firm comradeship, born of war service, and dedicated to equitable treatment for all veterans, particularly the disabled, their widows and their orphans; and

WHEREAS, A problem presently exists concerning veteran's rights and privileges as guaranteed to them by Section 578 of Public Law 106-65; and

WHEREAS, The problem is a mere misinterpretation or misrepresentation as presented in the current wordage of Section 578 of Public Law 106-65; and

WHEREAS, Section 578 of Public Law 106-65 pertains to the Department of Defense Titled Program "Honoring Those Who Served"; and

WHEREAS, The National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2000 mandates military honors at funerals for all eligible veterans; and

WHEREAS, The problem, as currently understood is; Funeral Directors are mandated to honor the wishes of the family of a veteran requesting military honors at the time of the funeral of their family member; and

WHEREAS, Many families of veterans are unaware of this service that is available to them in honor of their family members service; and

WHEREAS, As currently written the law requires the funeral director to only fulfill the request when made by the family member; to have a military honor guard at the internment; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That action to be taken to change the wordage, as currently written in Section 578 Public Law 106-65 to: That any and all funeral directors performing services for any veteran of The United States armed forces shall be required to ask the veteran's family member or other interested party if military honors are requested, at no expense to the family, rather than placing the burden upon the veteran's family at this time of bereavement.

Referred to the Standing Commission on National Security

Resolution No. 201 (WY): Military Retirement System
Resolution No. 234 (NY): Service Medal For Atomic Veterans

Rejected

Resolution No. 59 (MT): Recognition of the Cadet Nurse Corps as a Constituted Military Service During WWII and Beyond

Received and Recorded

Resolution No. 3: The Sole Survivor Regulations

Naval Affairs Committee
William B. Goede, Minnesota, Chairman

Approved

Resolution No. 121: Fully Funding The United States Navy And The Marine Corps
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, Our national security depends to a large extent on the ability of the United States to maintain sea superiority as well as strategic combat capabilities of the United States Navy and Marine Corps; and

WHEREAS, The Navy and Marine Corps have continually shown the ability of the United States to maintain a forward posture, projecting US power overseas, when and where needed around the world to uphold our national security; and

WHEREAS, To maintain force readiness, the Navy and Marine Corps must balance priorities of manpower, current and future readiness, quality of service and alignment; and

WHEREAS, Balancing critical combat readiness with future navy requirements is essential to US Naval superiority; and

WHEREAS, A 21st century Navy requires rapid technological advancements in the areas of command and control, which will require judicious upgrades of its systems; and

WHEREAS, The programs that will be the core of Navy and Marine Corps forces in the 21st century require substantial investments; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26, 27, 28, 2008, That The American Legion urges the Administration and the Congress to fully resource and fund the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps to provide credible combat power from the sea.

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.

Awards: National Blood Donor

Category I—Departments with 100,000 or more members
Post and Individual participation—Department of Ohio
Category II—70,000 to 99,999 members
Post and Individual Participation—Department of Wisconsin
Category III—40,000 to 69,999 members
Post and Individual Participation—Department of Georgia
Category IV—25,000 to 39,999 members

Post Participation—Department of Oregon
Individual Participation—Department of Washington
Category V—10,000 to 24,999 members
Post and Individual Participation—Department of Montana
Category VI—less than 10,000 members
Post and Individual participation—Department of Alaska

The results of the competition for the Paul H. Griffith ROTC Trophy are as follows:

Many of our Departments participated in the ROTC Awards Program this year. A total of almost 8,000 Medals were awarded to deserving cadets in Senior ROTC and Junior ROTC Units. The winning Departments for 2007-2008 are the Departments of Alaska, Tennessee, Oregon, Puerto Rico, New York, Rhode Island, Hawaii, South Carolina, Montana and Minnesota. This speaks well for these Departments and The American Legion in their recognition of the youth of America enrolled in ROTC programs.

NATIONAL SECURITY CHAIRMAN WONG: Mr. Commander, this concludes the Report of the Convention Committee on National Security. As a delegate to this convention from the Department of New York, I move the adoption of the report, sir.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: I've got a motion and a second. Any discussion? Hearing none. All those in favor by the normal sign of aye. Opposed? Same. National Security Report is adopted.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: Now at this time, I'd like my family to come forward. All of you. This is your one chance. There's another guy who wants this chair. Just kind of line-up here and I'll introduce you.

I'd like to introduce my wife Sharon. My mother-in-law, Irene Lofton; my father-in-law Clay Lofton, my mother Ruth Conatser, she was so glad that I never had long hair, and now I have no hair, so she's real happy. My granddaughter Kayla, my daughter-in-law Patsy, and my son Richard, my other son and daughter-in-law and two children had to leave a little earlier, but we've got some special friends with us, the out-going Department Commander from Illinois and his wife, Myron and Sandy Kirby, and of course my aide's wife Ann Flanagan, and I have no clue where my aide is. There he is. This is your one chance to say something, I think, whoever wants to talk.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER GEIGER: Marty, this has been fun. From day one when we started, we rode around in the car, Marty would talk and I'd take notes sometimes, try to keep things in line. We knew the ultimate goal that we wanted to reach and through a lot of hard work, a lot of dedication from the people of Illinois, from the people around the United States in this American Legion. And when Marty was elected National Commander we knew that we wouldn't see him to often, but when he did come home we always shared some thoughts with the family and everybody, sometimes a cookout. We certainly missed you for a year Marty, and we want to welcome you back. Thank you very much. (*Applause*)

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: At this time I call on our National Vice Commanders to come forward. All of them. I just want to thank my National Vice Commanders and I guess every Commander probably feels this way, but the tremendous support and responses from each area that they serviced and their excitement for the year was very contagious, and I want to thank them and give them this little token of my appreciation.

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER HAYEN: At this time, the almost Past National Vice Commanders would like to present a gift to our National Commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: It's a custom-designed ring with a diamond in it, and it's very gorgeous. Thank you.

At this time I'd like to have my sergeant-at-arms, my historian, my aide, and my chaplain. Looks pretty good. Come on up here guys. Where's my chaplain? He must be in route. Okay. You know as you are Commander and you get all the limelight and the fun, and the travel, and all the work, there's other people who give up a great deal. Denver's offered, agreed to be my sergeant-at-arms and I truly appreciate it. And probably the most unsung hero of The American Legion Family, of everyone, is your aide. He puts up with you for a year, which is a hard thing to do. He travels with you. His

family gives up everything the Commander's family does, and they get very limited attention. I've had a great aide. He's kept me where I'm supposed to be. He knows when it's time to send me to my room, and he knows when it's time to get me up. And he got me through an entire year healthy. One day I had to go back to the hotel early out of an entire year, so he took good care of me, Bill Flanagan. Where is my chaplain? We can do that, it's my convention for another 10 minutes.

We do have one little ceremony. Do you want to talk about it or do you want me to talk about it? We're very pleased. When I asked Bill to be my aide he had some other plans. He had a plan to run for Senior Vice Commander of our state, which pretty much makes you an automatic at the next run as State Commander. He is a man who is so well thought of in the Department of Illinois, that he traveled with me, never campaigned. We did some letters and some phone calls from the road, and at our State Convention this year Bill Flanagan was elected Senior Vice Commander of the Department of Illinois. So we're going to exchange a cap now. Do you want to do this Ann?

...Presentation of cap to Bill Flanagan. (Applause)

You're officially fired and rehired. (*Laughter*)

Now I call on the National Adjutant, Robert Spanogle.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: Commander, if I could, I'd like the Executive Directors to join me. Mr. Wheeler, Mr. Sommer, Mr. Brown. You have led The American Legion with honor, with the leadership that everyone expected that you would have because of your long service in The American Legion, when elected in Reno, Nevada, at the 89th Annual Convention. We of your staff have been blessed with your intellect and with your humor, and warm hand of friendship, of both you and your lovely wife Sharon. So on behalf of your staff, Dan Wheeler, Jeff Brown, Ron Brooks who just recently retired as Executive Director, and John Sommer the Executive Director in Washington, and all of the Directors, we'd like to present to you and Sharon with a small gift. As I understand, I have not been there, but while you were traveling, Sharon added a sunroom or an outside room to the house which she is furnishing, but we thought maybe you'd have this gift, a little gift from Blockbuster so you can have a flat screen TV in that room to watch Michigan State beat Illinois.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: He was doing good until he got that part about Michigan State beating Illinois. Sharon did add an all-seasons room. She's corrected me every time I've said sun room, to the house while I was gone, and if I didn't get out of the office pretty soon my house would have been twice as big. But she told me when she built that room there would be no TV in that room. Now that we've used it a little bit and had some people over she has succumbed that it is going to have a flat screen TV on one wall, a wall mounted unit. So that's what this is going to be for. We're going to get that up as quick as I can, now that I've got to go home. So, I appreciate it, and I thank the directors and I thank the staff. People who have stood in my shoes understand the quality staff that The American Legion has. No Commander could be as prepared as we should be without the staff. On every issue, when you ask to be briefed up on an issue so you can go represent The American Legion, the staff does a wonderful job. The little things that they do that make me look good. You know they're good if they make me look good. So, thank you so much. *(Applause)*

At this time I call on National Vice Commander Peggy Dettori. Will you please take the gavel and preside over the next order of business.

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER DETTORI: After serving this past year at National Vice Commander I am honored to represent all members of The American Legion in presiding over the next order of business. This is the time when we present to our National Commander, Martin "Marty" Conatser of Illinois, the Colors of his year in office and a plaque. At this time, I am honored to call upon Past National Commander, John H. Geiger of Des Planes, Illinois to present the Colors.

Presentation: Plaque and Colors to Outgoing National Commander
John H. Geiger, Past National Commander (Colors)
Anthony G. Jordan, Past National Commander (Plaque)

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER GEIGER: Thank you Peggy. Commander Marty, officers, and delegates to this National Convention, and all of our Legion family that is here with us to share in the passing on of our best wishes and our thanks to our officers who are retiring, but to welcome the new cadre of people who are going to serve us in the year to come. So, it's my honor today, representing the whole American Legion family to present the Colors of our country and of our Legion to the outgoing Commander. Marty are you available?

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: No!

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER GEIGER: I thought he went home to pack. Officers, delegates and guests at this 90th National Convention of The American Legion in Phoenix, Arizona, please rise and join me in presenting this official set of Colors to our retiring National Commander.

Color Guard, please present the National Commander's Colors to this station.

...Color Guard retires the Colors.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER GEIGER: Hand salute. National Commander Martin Conatser, we are approaching the final hours of your year as our National Commander, and it's your year of dedicated service to our Legion. One year ago, as a candidate you offered to us your skill and courage gained in your experiences as a military, civic, and state leader. Now you've earned our appreciation and thanks for so energetically carrying The American Legion's campaign to serve and to protect our nation's war veterans and their proud families in every part of the country and in Washington, D.C. Your supportive family, the loyal team Illinois, and each of the officers who have served with you stand proudly today to honor you in the substantial contributions that you have made.

Commander Marty, last year in Reno, these National Colors, the proud flag of the United States, and the crimson banner of the National Commander were presented to you in trust that they would be respected and protected. Your personal success has truly demonstrated that our trust in you is justified. On behalf of every member of The American Legion family, it is my honor to present to you, National Commander Conatser, your own National Colors to be proudly displayed in your home or office as a lasting testimonial of our love and respect for you and Sharon.

Color Guard, please present the National Commander's Colors, and we will stand in hand salute.

...Color Guard. One. Two!

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER GEIGER: Please retire the Colors. Hand salute.

That was the National Champion Color Guard from Post 49 in Tilton, New Hampshire. Department of New Hampshire, obviously. Great job! National Champions. You may be seated.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: My book says I ad-lib remarks. I don't know how you do that. I just want to say, thank you. Those flags will be proudly displayed in the Department Headquarters of Illinois alongside John Geiger's flag, along side Al Keller's flag, and the other Past National Commanders from Illinois, and we're very proud of that, and I want to say thank you for that. Where did Peggy go? You're supposed to be up here now.

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER DETTORI: Yes, sir!

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: You're back on the podium now.

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER DETTORI: Yes, sir! Let me see what I'm supposed to do and we'll get right to it. I now call on Past National Commander Anthony G. Jordan of Augusta, Maine, to present the plaque to our out going National Commander. Better late than never.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER JORDAN: Thank you, Peggy. Marty, please join me. First of all, I want to congratulate Marty. You have just completed a year of impressive service to The American Legion. You have carried the torch of leadership with dignity and respect. As we pause now to honor you for your dedication, for your outstanding leadership and commitment to the Legionnaires of this nation. You have

truly justified that trust which your comrades reposed to you. The American Legion family of the Department of Illinois should be proud of your successful year of leadership.

I'm proud of you, and I'm proud to call you a friend, and I thank you for allowing me to be a part of this special day. Speaking on behalf of The American Legion, to include The American Legion Family, I salute you for your outstanding leadership. The impressive bronze plaque is presented to you to bring back to a place, maybe in your home or even your work place. It will remind you of the thousands of miles you traveled, and the great ride you had serving in the high office of National Commander.

The plaque reads: National Commander Marty Conatser, elected by National Convention to serve the high office of National Commander of The American Legion for the year 2007-2008. In appreciation of his dedicated leadership, in recognition of his devoted service to God and country and in token of high esteem of his fellow Legionnaires. This citation is presented to him by authority of the National Executive Committee, given on the 28th Day of August, 2008 before the Delegates assembled at the 90th Annual National Convention in Phoenix, Arizona.

It's my pleasure and thank you very much Commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: Again, I can ad-lib remarks. As you go through your Legion career, there's always people who motivate you, and give you that extra hand, and do special things for you, and the two gentlemen who just presented my Colors and presented my plaque are two of those people. They have both guided, and encouraged, and kicked, when I needed kicked, and I thank them for taking part this afternoon with me.

I've got one final thought, and I guess this is probably my last chance. In August of 2007 I had the opportunity to visit Iraq, and in that visit I had the chance to meet General David Petraeus. And if you'll remember in my acceptance speech, I took this coin and slammed it on the podium, and said it was his challenge that this organization stand up for our soldiers, and never let them down. I'm glad to say you didn't do that. You did a great job and that's what's important.

Now I've been threatening all week to adjourn the Convention at this point, but my book says we've now come to a special order of business, the election of National Officers. I now call on the National Judge Advocate, Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr. of Maryland with the Rules of the Convention governing the nomination and election of officers.

Special Order of Business: Election of National Officers

NATIONAL JUDGE ADVOCATE ONDERDONK: Mr. Commander, Delegates to the 90th American Legion National Convention. The rules for nomination and election of National Officers.

Rule 15. Final sentence. Election of National Officers shall be by roll call.

Rule 17. Prior to the election of National Officers the National Commander shall appoint subject to approval of the Convention, a Judge of Election and such number of tellers as he deems necessary, provided that the total tellers 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.

Rule 18. Nominations for National Officers shall be from the floor on roll call of the departments alphabetically arranged. Each department may present as many candidates as it chooses.

Rule 19. Nominating speeches for National Officers shall be limited to five minutes each. Not more than two seconding speeches shall be made for any candidate, and said speeches shall be limited to three minutes.

Rule 20. When more than two candidates are nominated for any office, balloting shall continue until one candidate receives a majority of the votes of the Convention, except in the election of National Vice Commanders.

Rule 21. In a contested election for National Vice Commanders, balloting shall continue until (a) majorities and (b) pluralities are established for one or more candidates under the following provisions. If, on any ballot taken, less than five candidates receive the necessary majority to elect, the candidate or candidates receiving a majority vote shall

be declared elected and a new ballot shall be taken for the remaining number of places to be filled. The candidate receiving the lowest number of votes on the preceding ballot shall be disqualified, except should two candidates remain to fill one place; a new ballot shall be taken.

Rule 22: The Convention will nominate and elect a National Commander, and five National Vice Commanders, in this sequence.

Rule 23: At the conclusion of balloting on National Vice Commanders, each Department Delegation Chairman shall deliver a written ballot to the tellers. Such ballots shall be in the hands of the tellers before communication is made to the National Commander for announcement of the results.

Mr. Commander, that completes the reading of the rules pertaining to the election of National Officers.

Election of the National Commander

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: As Chairman of this Convention, I now appoint as Judge of Elections Terry L. Woodburn, Adjutant of the Department of Illinois and as tellers of the election, Adjutant John A. Derner, Department of Iowa; Adjutant, Michael McDaniel, Department of Florida; and Adjutant W. E. Gene Franks, Department of Alaska.

Will the judge and tellers of the elections please come forward? National Adjutant, Robert Spanogle will now call the roll of departments. The purpose of the roll call is to receive nominations for National Commander of The American Legion.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: Thank you Mr. Commander. Alabama.

It would speed things along if we opened up all mics and maybe brighten the house just a bit. So if the Delegation Chairman can line up the mics, it'll speed it up a little bit. Alabama.

(*The National Adjutant calls each department in turn*)

DELEGATE FERGUSON (AL): Mr. Adjutant. My name is Bill Ferguson, also known as Wild Bill, and I serve as the Commander and Chairman of the Delegation from the great state of Alabama. I rise for the explicit purpose of yielding to the gentlemen from the great state of Iowa, for the purpose of nominating an excellent choice for this great organization as our next National Commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: The Chair recognizes the Commander from the Department of Iowa.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN MAHON (IA): Mr. Commander, Robert Mahon, delegation Chairman from the Department of Iowa. I request the Chair to recognize Ken Danilson for the purpose of a nomination for the office of National Commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: The Chair recognizes the Chairman of the Finance Committee, Ken Danilson.

FINANCE COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN DANILSON (IA): Mr. Commander, Delegates and guests. My name is Ken Danilson and I am a duly elected delegate from the great state of Iowa. Today, I have the extreme honor and privilege to stand before you for the purpose of placing the name of a great Legionnaire and a good friend in nomination for the high office of National Commander of The American Legion. The office of National Commander is the most esteemed office that anyone can hold in The American Legion. The person who holds this office carries a heavy responsibility in representing not only their fellow Legionnaires, but representatives of the Legion family, and also all veterans whether on active duty or no longer on active duty, and their families. This person must stand before Congress and other organizations as our leader, and be able to effectively communicate The American Legion's principles and goals. This person must be able to communicate at all levels, whether it's with the everyday blue cap or the President of the United States. This person must be an expert in all areas that concern their fellow veterans related to benefits and needs. First and foremost they must be a leader, what is a leader? The definition that I feel fits best comes from Warren Bennis an American scholar and respected author. He states that a leader must know themselves, have a vision that is well communicated, building trust among colleagues, and takes effective action to realize their own leadership potential. The person I believe

that has these qualities and the person I feel will make us all proud as our next National Commander is Dave Rehbein.

Dave and I are from the same district in Iowa, and my first involvement with him was when he was the 6th District Commander of Iowa many years ago. Throughout the years I have had the privilege to work with Dave, as many others have, and been part of his journey to this point in time. I believe if you look at Dave, the complete person, several things come to the forefront. First is family. Dave was born and raised on a farm in Nebraska. A lesser known fact about Dave was that he attended a small country school, and from the third through the eighth he was the only student in that class. This also included many times having to take classes with older students. At one time, there were only 16 other kids in the school, and one of them was his sister, Nancy.

After his discharge from the Army, one of the most fortunate things that happened to Dave along the way was when he met and married Ann. I'm not exactly sure how this saying goes, but it definitely applies here, that for every good man, there is a good or better woman standing behind him. Dave attended Wayne State College and Iowa State University obtaining a bachelor's degree in physics and a master's degree in metallurgy. Following graduation, Dave accepted a position as a research scientist at the Ames Laboratory, U.S. Department of Energy, a position he held until his recent retirement. Dave and his wife, Ann, to me represent what the Legion is all about. Their daughter, Jennifer, and son, Chris, are very active in not only in American Legion activities, but the Auxiliary and the Sons of The American Legion. A few of Dave's interest outside the Legion you may not know about are that he reads about six newspapers a day. His sports interests are the St. Louis Cardinals, NASCAR, Iowa State University, and of course his grandson Devin's soccer games. I also understand he enjoys playing Texas hold'em at his home post.

I would like to share with you a couple examples of Dave's leadership. The first is in Iowa where we have government organization, the Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs, that consists of members from various veterans' organizations that are appointed by our governor. Dave has represented The American Legion on this commission for a number of years and, as expected, takes a leadership role within this group. Another example of Dave's leadership is a number of years ago a need arose to help at a friend's funeral. Dave stepped up and took on a leadership role. Other post members knowing of this and not having a specific church affiliation asked Dave to conduct similar services for them, of which he has done a number of over the past number of years. Dave leads the entire service, including even going to the family's home and talking with them to make sure each service is as personal as possible. Earlier I spoke about what it takes to be an effective leader. These attributes were, knowing yourself, having a vision that is well communicated, building trust among your colleagues, and taking effective action to realize your goals. I believe Dave has effectively demonstrated these skills and has the leadership attributes needed for this role, and I for one am looking forward to him leading our organization this next year. During the past two years, many of you have met Dave as he has traveled to your departments and participated in national activities. I am hopeful that with these visits and getting to know Dave, that we can rely on your support for him, and I am asking you now for this support. The Department of Iowa is very proud to be able to offer up to you someone who we strongly believe will make a great National Commander. Therefore, as a duly elected delegate to this Convention from the tall corn state of Iowa, it is my extreme privilege and honor to place the name of David K. Rehbein into nomination for the high office of National Commander of The American Legion. (*Applause*)

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: I now call on the National Adjutant for the continuation of the Roll Call.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: Alaska.

PAST DEPARTMENT COMMANDER PISA (AK): Good morning. Jim Pisa, Past Department Commander, Department of Alaska. Mr. Adjutant, the Department of Alaska, land of the midnight sun and home of the happy bears, yield to the Department of Kansas for the purpose of seconding the nomination.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: The Chair recognizes the Department of Kansas Commander or NEC.

DELEGATE WAHLBORG (KS): Elgin Wahlborg, Delegate Department of Kansas, requests the Chair recognize Dave Warnken for a second for the high office of National Commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: The Chair recognizes NEC Dave Warnken.

DELEGATE WARNKEN (KS): It is an honor and a special privilege to second the nomination of David K. Rehbein for the National Commander of The American Legion. Dave was raised on a farm near North Bend, Nebraska. He's the second child of Raymond and Phoebe Rehbein. Dave's roots were planted in the soil of Nebraska, but the seeds of success led him to service with the United States Army and beyond.

He was inducted into the United States Army in December of 1969. His basic training was at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. He then went on to infantry training at Fort Ord, California, where he was assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 51st Infantry of the 4th Armored Division in Germany. He served with that unit until his discharge in November, 1971. Dave's service included fire direction control for the mortar section, infantry company armor, chief of the communication section and radio shop for the infantry company. His accomplishments there included Honor Graduate of the USA EUR Demolition and Mine Warfare School and an early promotion to Sergeant E-5 with only 14 months of active duty service.

Dave has his bachelor's degree from Iowa State University, in science and physics and a master's degree in metallurgy. He has had a successful career in his field, and has published approximately 75 research papers and holds one patent. I have known Dave for many years, and I have always found him to be of the highest character, with a very open mind. He has served The American Legion, his community, and the state of Iowa with the distinction at every level. I am proud to call him friend.

I David O. Warnken, a Delegate from the Department of Kansas, to this 90th Convention of The American Legion proudly second the nomination of David K. Rehbein as our next National Commander of The American Legion. (*Applause*)

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: I now call on the Adjutant to continue roll.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: Arizona.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN CONKLIN (AZ): Mr. Commander, Bruce Conklin, Delegate Chairman from the beautiful Grand Canyon State and host of the 90th National Convention of The American Legion, proudly yields to the great state of Virginia for seconding the motion of National Commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: The Chair recognizes the Department Commander from Virginia.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN ROBERTSON (VA): Mr. Chairman, Andy Robertson, Past Department Commander for Virginia, Delegate Chairman, respectfully request you recognize Past Department Commander Dan Dellinger for the purpose of a second.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: The Chair recognizes Past Department Commander Dan Dellinger.

PAST DEPARTMENT COMMANDER DELLINGER: Mr. Commander, delegates, alternates, and guests to the 90th Annual Convention of The American Legion. It is a great honor I stand before you today for the nomination of an outstanding and dedicated Legionnaire for the high office of the National Commander. Throughout our 90 year history, delegates have elected Legionnaires to lead our great organization who have demonstrated leadership and knowledge of our policies and programs. This nominee has shown through his dedication and willingness to serve his post, his district, department, and the national organization with the qualifications necessary to lead the world's largest veterans' organization. He has served as commander, adjutant, finance officer, and newspaper editor of Post 37 in Ames, Iowa. He served as commander, adjutant and sergeant-at-arms of his district. He has led his department as a vice commander, chairman of the membership, Oratorical and Junior Shooting Sports Committees, served on the Leadership College and a Strategic Planning Committee. In addition he served nine years on the board of directors for The American Legion of Iowa Foundation. He has distinguished himself at the national level, serving as Iowa's National Executive Committeemen from 1999 to 2003. He was a member of the National Executive

Committee's Committee on Committees and Resolution Subcommittee. He served as chairman of the National Foreign Relations and Legislative Commissions. He served on the Americanism Commission for nine years and a Legislative Council for four years. He was an instructor at the National Leadership Information Conferences, and has served on the staff of the National Oratorical and Junior Shooting Sports National Finals. In addition he served as a match director for the Junior Shooting Sports Finals from 1996 to 2003.

As you can see, the nominee is highly dedicated, knowledgeable, and has distinguished himself always as a leader throughout his service to our great organization. That is why it gives me great pleasure to second the nomination of David K. Rehbein from Post 37 in Ames, Iowa as the National Commander of The American Legion for the 2008-2009 Legion year. Thank you.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: Do we have some noise back there?

...At this time a demonstration ensued in support of the nominations of David K. Rehbein, Iowa, for National Commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: The floor will come to order. I now call on the National Adjutant for continuation of roll call.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: The line up at the mic said it all. Arkansas.

NECMAN ROGERS (AR): Ross Rogers, Department of Arkansas Executive Committeeman, would like to second the nomination of Dave Rehbein, and place our 26 votes on his list. Thank you very much.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: California.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN LENNOX (CA): Al Lennox, a delegate to this convention, Delegate Chairman, wants to cast all 143 delegate votes, and second the nomination for David Rehbein.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: Colorado.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN GRABIN (CO): Colorado, the Heart of the Rockies. Tim Grabin. We cast all 33 delegate votes, it is our honor, to Dave Rehbein.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: Connecticut. Connecticut. Delaware.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN BRENNER (DE): Delaware, the first state in the Union, and the state where the Commander walks on airplane wings, passes.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: District of Columbia.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN DORE (DC): Mr. Chairman, the District of Columbia, with nine votes, proudly seconds the nomination of David K. Rehbein.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: Florida.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN MARTEL (FL): Paul Martel, Department Commander and acting Delegation Chairman, proudly casts 150 votes from 144,769 proud Legionnaires, for the name of David Rehbein.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: France.

DELEGATE MARSHALL (FR): Bill Marshall, NEC Department of France, Delegate to this Convention, birthplace of this great organization of The American Legion, casts its 10 delegate votes to David K. Rehbein for National Commander 2008-2009.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: Georgia.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN CASPER (GA): Fae Casper, duly elected delegate from the great State of Georgia, seconds the nomination for Dave Rehbein.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: Hawaii.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN ELSON (HI): Pete Elson, Delegate Chairman from the Aloha State, home of the 2008 World Champion Little League team, seconds the nomination for David K. Rehbein.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: Idaho.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN FORURIA (ID): Joe Foruria, duly elected delegate from the Department of Idaho, the Great Gem State, home of Past National Commander Alan G. Lance and the great Boise State Broncos, proudly votes 19 delegate votes for Dave Rehbein.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: Illinois.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN KIRBY (IL): Myron Kirby, Delegation Chairman and delegate to this Convention, proudly seconds David Rehbein.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: Indiana.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN TOLAN (IN): Mr. Chairman, Ralph Tolan, Department of Indiana Delegate. We second.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: Kentucky.

DELEGATE COFFMAN (KY): Randall Coffman, National Executive Committee, Department of Kentucky, host department for the 91st Annual National Convention of The American Legion in Louisville, Kentucky in 2009, proudly seconds the nomination David K. Rehbein for National Commander.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: Louisiana.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN GROW (LA): Edwin Grow, Past Department Commander, Delegation Chairman for the Department of Louisiana, proudly casts our 39 votes for David Rehbein.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: Maine.

DELEGATE OWEN (ME): Robert A. Owen, National Executive Committee from the Department of Maine, Delegation Chairman Pro Tem, home of Anthony Jordan, Past National Commander, casts its 32 delegate votes for Dave Rehbein as National Commander.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: Maryland.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN MURDOCK (MD): Gail Murdock, Delegation Chairman. We second the nomination of David K. Rehbein.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: Massachusetts.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN GONSALVES (MA): Department Commander George Gonsalves proudly casts the votes of 63 from the delegation, being Chairman for Massachusetts, home of Jake Comer, Paul Morin, Past Commanders, proudly casts 63 votes for Dave K. Rehbein.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: Mexico.

DELEGATE WALKER (MX): Mark Walker, NEC, casts its votes for Dave Rehbein.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: Michigan.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN WILLIAMS (MI): Michigan proudly seconds the nomination of David Rehbein for National Commander.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: Minnesota.

DELEGATE PERSING (MN): Virgil Persing, Minnesota, NEC, proudly seconds the nomination of our neighbor to the south, Dave Rehbein.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: Mississippi.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN KERSH (MS): Mississippi casts its votes for Dave Rehbein.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: Missouri.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN HARPER (MO): Marvin Harper, Delegation Chairman from Missouri, proudly seconds the nomination of Dave Rehbein, and casts 64 of our votes towards it.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: Montana.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN PALMER (MT): Elmer Palmer, Commander and acting Delegate Chairman for the State of Montana, the Big Sky Country, representing 133 posts in Montana and one in Canada, proudly seconds the nomination of David K. Rehbein.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: Nebraska.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN INGRAM (NE): Ronald Ingram, Department Chairman, home of the Cornhuskers, and birthplace of Dave Rehbein, seconds the motion for Dave Rehbein for National Commander.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: Nevada.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN WATERS (NV): Commander Daniel Waters, duly elected delegate from the State of Nevada, the Great Silver State, proudly seconds the nomination of David K. Rehbein for National Commander.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: New Hampshire.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN LEWIS (NH): Chuck Lewis, Delegate Chairman from the great State of New Hampshire, home of the three-time National Championship Color Guard Post 49, and my home post, proudly casts our full delegate strength of 29 for Dave Rehbein.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: New Jersey.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN CALANDRILLO (NJ): Frank Calandrillo, Delegation Chairman for the Department of New Jersey, casts 74 votes for Dave Rehbein.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: New Mexico.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN MIRANDA (NM): Audie Miranda, the Legion Chairman for New Mexico, the Land of Enchantment—we also grow corn—we cast our 21 votes for our next National Commander, David Rehbein.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: New York.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN BURNETT (NY): Bill Burnett, Delegation Chairman for the Department of New York. New York proudly seconds the nomination of Dave Rehbein for National Commander.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: North Carolina.

DEPARTMENT COMMANDER MAYHEW (NC): James Mayhew, Department Commander, and duly elected Delegate to this Convention from the great State of North Carolina, is proud to cast all 57 votes for Dave Rehbein.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: North Dakota.

DELEGATE QUAM (ND): Carroll Quam, Department Commander and Delegation Secretary. North Dakota, the Peace Garden State, proudly casts its 27 votes for David Rehbein for National Commander.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: Ohio.

DELEGATE SWISHER (OH): Mr. Adjutant, Carl Swisher, NEC member from Ohio. Before we cast our votes, Ohio was given a gift this morning at the National Auxiliary Convention. Desi Stoy was elected President to serve alongside our next Commander, Dave Rehbein, so Ohio votes all its votes for Dave Rehbein for National Commander.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: Oklahoma.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN TAYLOR (OK): Michael Taylor, Delegation Chairman. 33 votes for Dave Rehbein.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: Oregon.

DELEGATE OWENS (OR): Kevin Owens, Department Commander for the great State of Oregon, casts its 31 delegates for David Rehbein.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: Pennsylvania.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN SANDELL (PA): Commander of Pennsylvania from the Keystone State, the great Department of Pennsylvania, the largest in the national organization, and the home of five National Commanders, proudly seconds the nomination of David Rehbein for the high office of National Commander of The American Legion.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: Philippines.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN SCHOLTEN (PI): Herbert Scholten, Delegation Chairman, Commander Department of the Philippines, proudly casts our votes for David Rehbein.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: Puerto Rico.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN FIGUEROA (PR): Luis Figueroa, the Department Commander of Puerto Rico, we are going to vote for Rehbein, all delegates of Puerto Rico, USA.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: Rhode Island.

DELEGATE GERUNDIO (RI): Ernest Gerundio, NEC from the Department of Rhode Island, the Red Rooster State, proudly seconds the nomination of David Rehbein for the high office of National Commander.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: South Carolina.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN HOLLAND (SC): James Holland, Department Commander and acting Delegate Chairman from the great State of South Carolina. We proudly cast all 36 of our votes for David K. Rehbein.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: South Dakota.

DELEGATE CHAIRMAN WATTS (SD): Gary Watts, Delegate Chairman from the great state of South Dakota, the birthplace of American Legion Baseball, proudly seconds the nomination of Dave Rehbein.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: Tennessee.

DELEGATE CHAIRMAN WATSON (TN): Earl Watson, Delegate Chairman. We proudly cast all 39 votes for Dave Rehbein.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: Texas.

DELEGATE CHAIRMAN DILLARD (TX): Paul Dillard, Delegate Chairman for the state of Texas, home of Past National Commander Joe L. Mathews and Past National Commander John Brieden, III, and home of the America's team the Dallas Cowboys, proudly seconds Rehbein.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: Utah.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN, SWARTZ (UT): Gary Swartz, Convention Chairman, Department of Utah, a great convention state, cast all 16 votes for David Rehbein.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: Vermont.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN BUSHAW (VT): Barbara Bushaw Delegation Chairman from the Green Mountain State of Vermont. I duly—unanimous support of 22 votes to David Rehbein for the office of National Commander.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: Washington.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN WATSON (WA): Larry Watson, Delegation Chair of the great state of Washington casts all its 45 votes for Dave Rehbein for National Commander.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: West Virginia.

DEPARTMENT COMMANDER HALL (WV): David Hall, Department Commander from the great state of West Virginia, home of Past National Commander Miles Epling and home of the last surviving World War I veteran, proudly casts all 32 votes for Dave Rehbein.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: Wisconsin.

DEPARTMENT CHAIRMAN REIGEL (WI): James Reigel, Department Chairman for Wisconsin seconds the nomination for David Rehbein.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: Wyoming.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN HASSEY (WY): Pat Hassey, Delegation Chairman from Wyoming, the land of high altitudes, low multitudes, and great attitudes proudly casts a second for Dave Rehbein for National Commander.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: Mr. Commander that completes the roll call.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: The Chair recognizes microphone 1. Please state your name.

DELEGATE GUGLIUZZA (NJ): Joe Gugliuzza proud Delegate from the Department of New Jersey. Commander, in view of the fact that there is one candidate for National Commander, I move that we suspend the rules of this Convention, close nominations and that the National Adjutant be authorized to cast one vote for the entire delegate strength of this Convention, and that David K. Rehbein be elected National Commander by acclamation. I will now make the first motion. Mr. Commander, I move that we suspend the rules of this Convention pertaining to the election of the National Commander and the nomination and election of the National Vice Commanders, which rules shall be reinstated at the conclusion of the election for National Vice Commanders.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: 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 the National Vice Commanders, which rules shall automatically be reinstated at the conclusion of the election for National Vice Commanders. The motion is non-debatable and requires a two-thirds vote. All those in favor by the normal sign of aye. Those opposed, nay. The ayes have it.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: The Chair recognizes microphone 2. Please state your name.

DELEGATE McKITTRICK, JR. (MA): Mr. Commander. Leslie McKittrick, Jr. duly elected Delegate from the Department of Massachusetts, moves that the nominations for the office of National Commander be closed, and I so move.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: I got a motion to have a second.

...Delegates second.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: The motion to close nominations is non-debatable motion and requires a two-thirds vote. All those in favor by the normal sign of aye. Opposed? Same sign. Approved.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: I now recognize microphone 1.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN CASPER (GA): Mr. Commander, my name is Fae Casper. I'm the Delegation Chairman and Department Commander from the great Peach State of Georgia, and the home of Past National Commander Bob Turner. I move that National Adjutant be authorized to cast one vote representing the entire delegate strength of this Convention, and that David K. Rehbein be elected National Commander by acclamation.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: Is there a second?

...Delegates second.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: Hearing a second. The motion before us that the National Adjutant be authorized to cast one vote representing the entire delegate strength of this Convention and that David K. Rehbein be elected National Commander by acclimation. All those in favor of the motion signify by aye.

...Delegates respond by aye.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: Those opposed, say nay. Didn't think there was any of them. I now call on the National Adjutant.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: As National Adjutant, I cast one vote representing the entire delegate strength of this Convention for the election of David K. Rehbein of Iowa as the National Commander of The American Legion. (*Applause*)

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: I now declare David K. Rehbein of Ames, Iowa, the National Commander of The American Legion for 2008-2009. Will the Sergeant-at-Arms assist the new National Commander of The American Legion to the platform. Escorting him to the stage is Mike Wanser, NEC, Department of Iowa, and Louis Kirk, Vice Chairman of Foreign Relations Council. (*Applause and Music playing*)

The Chair recognizes Past National Commander John H. Geiger of Illinois for the purpose of administering the Oath of Office to the newly elected National Commander of The American Legion.

Administering the Oath of Office to the National Commander
John H. Geiger, Illinois, Past National Commander

Thank you Commander Marty, for allowing me to step forward and handle this very important part of our business, with all of you, the officers, the delegates, good friends and family. It's an important time, and I'm so pleased to be here with that music, because I first joined The American Legion in my family Legion town in Iowa.

Congratulations to you, Legionnaire David K. Rehbein. I'm still working on Conatser. Congratulations upon your nomination and election as the National Commander of The American Legion for 2008 to 2009. This event forms a lifelong memory for your proud family and the dedicated and faithful members of your Department of Iowa. The delegates of this Convention recognize your long devotion to America's war veterans, to The American Legion, and to your state and community. Your strong leadership and planning skills, energy and enthusiasm must now be directed to reinforcing and advancing our great organization throughout the entire United States. The principle objectives of your term of leadership will be defined by the mandates of this National Convention, and increasingly by events throughout the world. Every officer of The American Legion, our national staff, and the members of the Legion family must be alert and prepared for your calls to action. Each of us here in Phoenix and at home should join in a personal pledge to actively support you in this great responsibility of service to our God and country.

David, if you agree to assume to this high office, please step forward to pledge your oath of office. The Convention will please stand at attention. Would you raise your right hand and repeat after me.

...National Commander-elect David K. Rehbein repeated the Oath of Office following the lead of Past National Commander Geiger.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER GEIGER: Congratulations! Commander Rehbein. The Convention may be seated. His daughter is going to give him the badge of his office. Now Ann is going to do this high honor.

MRS. REHBEIN: Through the hands of our friends' church, through my hands to you, go forth with pride and purpose. Thank you.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: I've got my one last duty here, don't cut me out. I present to you, your 2008-2009 National Commander, David K. Rehbein. (*Applause)*

Acceptance Speech: Newly Elected National Commander
David K. Rehbein, Iowa

Thank you, thank you. Before I make any other remarks, I would like to ask Mary Ludwig, wife of Past National Commander, Dan Ludwig be recognized at the podium for a presentation, accompanied by the spouses and friends of others of our Past National Commanders.

Please be seated. I'd like to make some introductions to begin this. Those of you that observed this ceremony just a few minutes ago saw three people that are very special to me. Three people without whom I would not be here. The first being Ann, my wife, and without her I may not even be a member of The American Legion. She's really the one that exposed this organization to me and helped me understand just how great this organization is. And over here, two young people that I am very proud of. Because not only are they our children, but they're active members of this American Legion family. I think you can see that with the Sons of the American Legion cap on our son Chris, and The American Legion cap, as well as the Auxiliary pin on our daughter, Jennifer. Kids, thank you. Jennifer spent some time on a carrier deck, USS *Roosevelt*, during the original Iraqi Freedom operations. We are very proud of her service. With them today are their sons, and our daughter-in-law Beth. Beth and our grandsons Devin and Greyson sitting over there. Proud to have you here. Along side of them, and if you would stand as I introduce you, please. I have two sisters here. My older sister Karen Dorian, my younger sister Nancy Vala and her husband Stan. Thank you. My brother could not be here because of work and other reasons, but we know he's here in spirit. And we also know that here in spirit with us today, although she can't travel anymore is my mother. She lives in Freemont, Nebraska. She has a lot to do with the way our family grew up. She and our dad, who passed away some years ago, we owe what we are to them. But representing her and representing himself is a man that survived those days in 1944 that we call the Battle of the Bulge, my uncle and a hero of mine for a long time, Willis Sellhorn. Willis, thank you for being here.

With us also are some members of Ann's family. Her older brother Mike, her cousin Rita Wagner, many of you from Nebraska know because of her activity in The American Legion Auxiliary, thank you. And a couple that we have come to know well, that we will come to know much better, because he has agreed to serve as my aide for the coming year, Mr. and Mrs. Milt Heifner. Milt, Pat, thank you.

A couple of more thank yous before I get onto some more serious remarks. The two gentlemen that came up here with us, escorted us to the stage, Mr. Mike Wanser and Mr. Louis Kirk. Without them this campaign wouldn't have happened, without them this election wouldn't have been possible, without them I wouldn't be standing here. Gentlemen, thank you. And then the support I received from our post, and our unit, and our squadron in Ames. Would the members of the Ames American Legion family that are here today, please rise. Thank you, and while you're still standing, the rest of the Iowa delegation. You met them as they paraded. We have an outstanding turn out. Thank you. One last thing before I go on. There will be a reception this afternoon at 5:30, the ballroom on the first floor of the Hyatt Regency Hotel. I would be proud to see any of you there that can attend.

Two words that my campaign has been about, that I've spoken to you as we've traveled. Those two words being pride and purpose, and you'll hear them again. You'll continue to hear them next year, because that's really what this American Legion is about. That purpose that the World War I veterans felt as they felt came home from Europe some 90 years ago. Understanding that they had stood beside their comrades during that combat in the trenches, understanding that they still needed to stand beside their comrades, as they all came home, because their comrades needed them, just as our comrades need us now. That purpose stays alive through 90 years. It will stay alive through another 90 years, because our comrades always need us, and beyond our comrades, our country needs us, our communities, and the work we do back home to

make them better places to live, and that moves up in the work we do in the government, and the work we do for the United States of America.

The National Security resolutions that you passed here today, the Foreign Relations resolutions that you passed here today, that's part of our purpose. We understand. We understand why veterans' organizations need to come together. We understand through our service why veteran's organizations need to stay strong, but that purpose is fueled by our pride. Our pride in the uniform that we wore. Our pride that we've now brought forward in service to this organization. It's all one long line. Everyone that's worn the uniform feels that connection. I was Army, I was infantry, but that's not what's important. That's important to me, but what's important to you is the unit and the branch you served, and the comrades you served with.

I want you to think for a minute back to that ceremony Monday when you and I stood and raised our right hands along with those young men and women. I dare say that for many of you, it brought back to you faces and memories that you haven't felt or seen for a long time, but they're still there deep in your heart. That's the kind of pride that we need to show those folks that are serving now. That's the kind of pride that we have that we share with them. They know what they're accomplishing in Iraq and Afghanistan and around the world, and they're proud of what they're accomplishing there. When we meet with them, we need to let them know that we're proud. We're proud of their service. We're proud of our service. We're proud of our forefather's service, that that's really what we're about.

But now we have some challenges. We have some challenges both outside the organization and inside. We have a budget process in place, as it is every year, and every year it tends to lag a little farther. Congress made a big improvement last year in the amount of the budget that they applied to the Veterans Administration, but we need to make sure that they continue to feel that need. That money, in my opinion, is enough to open the Veterans Affairs Medical Centers to all veterans, to put the category eights back in the system. We need to convince the VA of that. We need to convince the Congress that in this next budget they need to build on that base, that that's not a one-time proposition. Last years budget is only the start.

In the national security and immigration areas, you heard the resolutions this morning and yesterday. We need to rebuild our forces. We need to increase the size of our forces because we have challenges around the world. Challenges that right now we would have difficulty meeting. Again, that's a job for the Congress. That's a place that they need to do the authorization, appropriate the money, and put the forces at the strength levels we need, and at the size we need. And beyond that, in the immigration area, because our borders are part of the national security picture of this country. We need to know who and what are crossing our borders, whether it's the border to the south with Mexico, to the north with Canada, or the ships coming into our ports from the sea. Those are challenges that we need to meet through this Congress.

The global war on terror. We must have the ability to find, and identify, and destroy terrorists wherever they are. And we must have the political will in this country to do the job. We can not allow political timidity to stop us in that global war on terror. We have not been hit inside this country for some time. That does not mean we never will be. We will only prevent that from happening again if we are ready.

So, those are the challenges that we have externally. How do we meet them? One way, 68 days from now we will go to the polling booths, and we will choose the leadership of this country in the Congress for the next two years. We will choose the leadership of this country in the White House for the next four years. It's up to us to make wise choices. It's up to us to help the people of this country make wise choices.

We have a national website that right now has videos of the two presidential candidates answering the same questions, and that's something you don't often see in debates, where both candidates get a chance to answer the same questions. Those are questions that you put forth. Some of you here in this audience are on that website, asking some of those questions. Watch that. And beyond that make sure that the people in your community know that's there, because that maybe the only chance that they really get to hear the candidates address questions on veteran's issues, and national security, and military defense. That's why it's there, to give them the chance.

Candidates' nights. We need to have you do them in your local community. Bring the candidates in. Ask them the questions. Let the people of your community know how they answer those questions. But the last thing, and that's 68 days from now, you have to vote. You have to have 'Get Out the Vote' drives in your community to make sure that the people of your community know that we understand how important that vote is. At home, you have time, organize those. As the saying goes, get'er done.

But we have internal challenges. Beginning this year, for the next few months, there will be a moratorium on the direct mail solicitation program. That means that the 200,000 members that that program has brought to us in the last two decades, won't come this year. Not by that method. So, then, we need to go back to the traditional methods. We need to go back to depending on us for our membership recruitment.

I want to remind you that in the first decade of existence of this organization, we went from zero to a million members, and it was done by Legionnaires knocking on doors, and asking their fellow veterans to join. It's not something new. It's not something we have to rediscover how to do that. It's something we only need to find the strength inside ourselves to go do it. We'll talk a little bit more about that in a minute, but that's a challenge.

We have challenges in our programs, our youth programs. The numbers have gone down. They're our future. If we don't take the time to teach them American values, who will? Or maybe they'll learn other values if we don't take the time to teach them American values. We need to address that decline, and that's simply nothing more than us going to the schools, identifying the young people, and enrolling them into programs. Boys State, Boy Scouts, Oratorical, Shooting Sports, Baseball, it doesn't matter. It's our responsibility to fulfill that purpose of getting out there. And our visibility, too often in too many communities they don't see us. They don't know what we do. Once more, it's going to be our responsibility to address that.

I put together an incentive program that I'd like to talk to you about for a couple of minutes, because it's aimed at your posts. They need to know about it, because it addresses those areas. There's four criteria for a post to achieve this award. The first criteria is the post must grow in membership by one. That's all, just be one larger than last year. A second criteria is active participation in one of our youth programs, and I need to define active. Active does not mean going to the high school, saying, "We're going to send three boys to Boys State, would you give us the names, and we'll send the names in." That's not active participation. Active participation is going to the high school saying, "We're going to send three boys to Boys State. Can you give us nine or ten names of young men we should interview? And we will make the selections, and get their names in and then we will see to it that they are provided transportation to Boys State and when they come back we'll invite them to our post meeting." That's active participation. It doesn't matter which program it is, Boys State, Boy Scouts, Baseball, Shooting Sports, Oratorical, active participation in one of them.

Out in the community we need community service projects. We need the people of our communities to see who we are. We can't depend on the media to tell our stories. Sometimes we have to go out there and tell it ourselves. So, I would like to ask each post, unit, squadron, every Legion family in your local community, go outside your post and do a community service project. Something that the people in your town see. And when you do it, do it visible as members of The American Legion family. That's number three.

Number four is a similar project, only aimed at veterans or troops. We support the troops. We do a lot of great things for them. It will help this organization if the community knows what we do. In fact, we'll do it better, the community service project in this one, if we involve the community. They'll come stand us beside us if they know what we are doing.

So, those are the four criteria. Who decides? Who decides if your post has met it? Your district commander. That's where the authority lies. We often say how important the district commanders are, but too often that's all we say is how important they are. This time they have the authority to make those decisions. This time they have the authority to send those posts names and numbers into us at National Headquarters, because they will receive reorganization. And I'm going to ask that district commanders, when that recognition comes to them, that it be delivered back to the post. Not mailed to the post, but delivered so that we're going to them to say thank you. How can we send

them to the schools, how can we send them out on membership drives, how can we ask them to go to the VA Hospitals to volunteer if we as leadership are not willing to go to them to ask those things. We can't do it through the mail. We can't do it on the telephone. Our leadership needs to be there talking to them. That's what we learned in the military, personal leadership. Not sending someone else to do the job. We need to use that here.

Last thing. I'm going to ask one more thing of you. You can't see it under this suit coat, but there's an American Legion belt buckle under there. It's there every day. That's my way of connecting that pride in that Army uniform to the pride I feel in wearing an American Legion cap. And I'm going to ask each and everyone of you not only the Legionnaires, but the American Legion Auxiliary members, the Sons of the American Legion members to wear the emblem. Show the people of your community what you think of The American Legion family. Show them that you're proud enough to wear that emblem every day. It doesn't matter how. It might be a lapel pin. It might be a baseball cap. It might be a pair of earrings, and it might be a broach. Show them the pride you feel in this organization. They'll think more of our organization because they respect you, and because you have shown them.

It's real simple. Twice in my lifetime veterans have walked up to me and said I've seen the emblem that you wear, I'm a veteran, it's time I belonged, and gave me their money without me having to ask. We need that next year as we go back to the traditional recruitment methods. We need every one of you working in whatever way you can on membership. And maybe, maybe that will happen to you because it's amazing when it does happen, because they're joining because they know about The American Legion. They're joining because they know about you, and they now know what you think of The American Legion family.

You've given me a great honor this morning by electing me your National Commander. I think there's really only one way that I can express the feelings that go with this, and it's not anything I thought up. I heard it from a young man over there that you'll hear more from. There's only one word. Wow! Those are my thoughts. Those are priorities. That's my agenda. I hope you will join with that, because I think we can make The American Legion a stronger organization in the next year. It's not about us, it's about those young men and women on the floor with their right hand raised last Monday. Because 25, 30 years from now, some of them will need the advocacy that we do in The American Legion, the service that we do in The American Legion. We need to make sure The American Legion is there for them when the time comes. We've got a strong foundation. It's now ours to keep strong, to build upon so that we're here for them when the time comes. Thank you for your faith. I will see you down the road. Show off the pride that you feel. Thank you. (*Applause and Music playing*)

Election of the National Vice Commanders

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: We'll return to the nomination and election of National Vice Commanders. The Chair recognizes microphone 2.

DELEGATE O'COIN, New York: Mr. Commander, Mary Ann O'Coin, Delegate from the great state of New York. Mr. Commander since the rules of the Convention have been suspended, I move that nominations for the office of National Vice Commander be made from the floor at this Convention.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: Do I have a second? Second I heard. We will now entertain nominations for the, oh, I've got to vote on it. All those in favor by the normal sign of aye. Opposed? Same sign. The ayes have it. We will now entertain nominations for the office of National Vice Commander from the floor. Just a note that the nominees will be voted on as a group, seconding speeches are not needed since rules are suspended. We recognize microphone number 1.

DELEGATE CHAIRMAN BARYLSKI (CT): Andy Barylski, Delegation Chairman from the Constitute State, Connecticut, requests that the senior-most member of the National Executive Committee, Richard W. Anderson, be recognized for the purpose of nominating a candidate for National Vice Commander from the east.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: The Chair recognizes Rich Anderson, NECman.

DELEGATE ANDERSON (CT): Mr. Commander, delegates, alternates, and guests of this our 90th Convention. In our continuous quest for competent leadership in The American Legion I am honored today to present to you the Department of Connecticut's endorsed candidate for National Vice Commander, James A. LaCoursiere.

Jim is the second of five children born to James and Mary LaCoursiere. He arrived in August of 1961, at Tripler Army Hospital in Honolulu, Hawaii, where his father was serving in the United States Navy. After completing high school and as an all-conference athlete, he enrolled at the Central Connecticut State College, but was involved in a serious car accident in 1979, and his plans changed. In 1981, he joined the United States Air Force where he was a medical administrative specialist. His military service led him to become a member of Turner Tinker Post 128, Niantic, Connecticut. His dedication to his post was soon noticed as he progressed through the chairs and become a three term post commander. Jim then served his 5th District as junior vice commander, senior vice commander and district commander. Jim is a 1999 graduate of the National American Legion College, eight year instructor and co-director of The American Legion College Department of Connecticut, and was awarded his Silver Brigade in 2000. Jim is a Past department historian, senior vice commander and department commander. He has served on the National Americanism Council, Distinguished Guest Committee and currently is serving on the Military Affairs Committee. Jim currently is our department director for our Heroes To Hometown, founder of the Connecticut Chapter of The American Legion Riders, member of NADHAL, ANIVICUS, and the Forty & Eight. Jim is employed at Gilman Brothers Company as a logistics operations manager and owner of the J.J. Trucking & Brokerage of St. Clair, Missouri.

Jim and his wife, Chris, a member of the Auxiliary, have four children and reside in Old Lyme, Connecticut. Jim LaCoursiere's energy, commitment, knowledge, and vision of The American Legion are unwavering and we in the Department of Connecticut are extremely proud that we have this opportunity to share him with you. I now ask for your support to elect James A. LaCoursiere to the high office of National Vice Commander for the 2008-2009 term of office. Thank you. (*Applause*)

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: The Chair will recognize microphone 2.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN INGRAM (NE): I am Ronald Ingram from Nebraska, Delegation Chairman, home of the newly elected National Commander, Dave Rehbein and the first birthplace of the First Lady. I now request and recognize our Past Department Commander and Alternate NECman Jerry Landkamer at the podium of the purpose of the nomination.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: The Chair recognizes Jerry Landkamer.

DELEGATE LANDKAMER (NE): Mr. Commander and delegates to this Convention, I'm Past Department Commander and Alternate NECman from Nebraska, and a delegate to this Convention. I'm here to place the name of Michael J. Landkamer in nomination for the high office of National Vice Commander of The American Legion.

A Navy veteran of the Vietnam War, Mike served with the Fighter Squadron 154 on board the aircraft carried USS *Ranger*, and with Fighter Squadron 1 on board USS *Enterprise*. A life member at American Legion Hartman Post 84 this veteran has distinguished himself and the Legion by serving at all levels of the organization for 33 years. During that time he has served in many leadership positions in his post, district, and department, including having served as commander at each level. Mike has served the national organization as both Alternate and National Executive Committeemen. He has served on the National Legislative Council and the National Foreign Relations Commission, and currently serves as liaison to the National Public Relations Commission as a member of the NEC Subcommittee on Committees. Mike is a comfort advisor in the heating, cooling, and indoor air quality industry. He and his wife Patricia share five children and seven grandchildren in their extended family. They are members of St. Bonaventure Catholic Church. Landkamer also belongs to The American Legion Riders, Sons of the American Legion Hartman Squardon 84, Forty & Eight Voiture 841, life member of VFW Post 3704, a life member of the U.S. Ranger/CVA-61 Association, and a member of the Association of Aviation Ordinance man. He has been a member of the Platte County Veterans Service Committee since 1994 where he also serves as chairman. Mike has the ability, knowledge, and most of all the dedication to serve in one of the

highest offices of The American Legion, that of National Vice Commander. He will gladly shoulder any responsibility and any duty given to him in the next year for our new Commander Rehbein. My fellow delegates, the Department of Nebraska is privileged, and I am deeply honored to nominate Michael J. Landkamer, my brother, for the office of National Vice Commander of The American Legion for the coming year. (*Applause*)

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: The name of Michael Landkamer has been placed in nomination. Microphone 1.

DELEGATE OWENS (OR): Kevin Owens, Department Commander and duly elected delegate for The American Legion's 90th National Convention. Commander, the Department of Oregon respectfully requests the Chair recognize our National Executive Committeeman, Charlie Schmidt for the purpose of nomination.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: The Chair recognizes Charlie Schmidt.

NECMAN SCHMIDT (OR): Comrade Commander, delegates to the 90th Convention. It is without a doubt one of the honest honors afforded a department to have one of its members considered for a key leadership position in The American Legion. The Department of Oregon responds to that opportunity today by placing into nomination the name of Harley Ray of Albany Post #10 for the high office of National Vice Commander.

Harley Ray was born and raised in neighboring Washington. During World War II while traveling to visit relatives, the Ray family would swing by Fort Lewis, Washington to offer rides to soldiers going home on Christmas furlough. With duffel bags stuffed in the trunk, and young Harley in the back seat among the soldiers, Harley became captivated with their military stories and experiences. He decided then that he wanted to become a soldier among soldiers when he grew up and serve his country.

Harley's military career encompassed over 35 years of service in the Army National Guard, Army Reserve, and active duty Army. He served as Company B Commander, 2nd Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Armored Division in the Republic of South Vietnam from 1969 to 1970. During his Army days Harley found the time to graduate from the University of Puget Sound and engage in the insurance and automotive business from which he is now retired. Harley's honorable service to our nation culminated in 1991, when he retired from the 2nd Battalion, 3rd Brigade of the 104th Division with the rank of colonel. Harley's compassion and respect for service members and veterans alike took a new meaning when he joined The American Legion. In his 35 years of American Legion membership, Harley Ray has devoted himself to fulfilling the words in our Preamble, living our cardinal principles, and practicing the motto veterans serving veterans. Harley Ray is the consummate Legionnaire. He has served his fellow Legionnaires in numerous positions of leadership, post, district and department commanders, department vice commander, and department sergeant-at-arms, and our department membership chairman. He currently serves as our department legislative chairman. Harley Ray has also served our national organization on the Counter-Subversive Committee, and he is currently serving on the National Economics Committee. Wherever there's a need to support our veterans, he is there contributing. Driving veterans to the VA Hospital, working children's programs in our schools, delivering Auxiliary quilts to the veterans' home, planning the largest Veterans Day parade west of the Mississippi, managing post bingo, placing hundreds of flags on Memorial Day, and just volunteering in any post project. He is right there and alongside him is his strongest supporter, his lovely wife Margie, who is Unit 10 President. Harley Ray has many accomplishments that he probably won't tell you about, like being a three time Gold Brigade membership recruiter. And one of his proudest achievements though is the revitalization of Oregon's District 10 whose existence had declined to unacceptable proportions. As a result of Harley's leadership initiatives the district and post has set the department membership standard by attaining Gold District the last nine years, and is on the road to a tenth year And had it not been for Harley Ray's revitalization efforts of my district, I would not be standing before you here today.

On behalf of the Department of Oregon we are proud to give you a dedicated Legionnaire, a mentor, and a friend, who will work to continue the legacy of The American Legion. I ask your endorsement for Harley Ray of Oregon for the high office of National Vice Commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: The name of Harley Ray has been nominated. Microphone 2.

DEPARTMENT DELEGATE CHAIRMAN DILLARD (TX): Paul Dillard, Delegate Chairman for the Department of Texas, requests permission for a delegate from the Department of Texas, Past National Vice Commander John D. Morris, to come to the podium for purpose of a nomination.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: The Chair recognizes John D. Morris.

PAST NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER MORRIS (TX): Thank you, Commander Marty. Fellow delegates to this 90th National Convention of The American Legion, I am really excited today beyond words to have this opportunity to stand here before you to nominate a dedicated Legionnaire for the high office of National Vice Commander, a truly dedicated Texas Legionnaire by the name of Dellano T. Simmons, who for obvious reasons prefers to be called Shorty.

Shorty is a Paid-Up-For-Life member with 37 years of dedicated service to this organization. Shorty earned his eligibility through his honorable service in the United States Army during the Vietnam Era.

Shorty is a family man, his lovely wife Donita and three children, Troy, Todd, and Tiffany who are in 100% support of his efforts. Shorty is retired from Texaco as a supervisor, with 38 plus years of service, and no I don't think he can help anyone with the price at the pump. Shorty has worked hard over his 37 years of climbing the ladder to higher heights. He served his local post in most all position, some more than once, such as post commander, which he served seven terms. He served both his district and division as commander and served the Department of Texas as chairman of many committees. He served the Department of Texas as vice commander in 2002-2003, and received an award named Legionnaire of the Year for his outstanding service.

Shorty served with pride and dignity at the Department of Texas as its commander, for the year 2004-2005. On the National level he is presently serving on the Americanism Commission. Shorty is also a Paid-Up-For-Life member of the Sons of The American Legion, a member of the Fraternal Order of Eagles, and Masonic bodies. Shorty is a clown, literally. He is a member of the Nem Loof Clowns of Mid County, in his area where he enjoys visiting and performing at children's and veterans homes alike. Due to his outstanding qualifications and desire to continue to serve this organization at a higher level by taking another step up the ladder of success, it is my pleasure on behalf of the entire membership of the great state of Texas to place in nomination for the high office of National Vice Commander to serve the 2008-2009 term, the name of Dellano T. "Shorty" Simmons. Thank you and God bless. (*Applause*)

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: The name of Dellano Simmons has been placed in nomination. Microphone 1.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN HALL (WV): Mr. Commander, David Hall from the Department of West Virginia and Delegation Chairman requests permission for Past National Commander, Miles Epling to approach the podium for purpose of nomination of National Vice Commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: The Chair recognizes Miles Epling, Past National Commander.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER EPLING (WV): The good news. I think I'm last. National Commander Conatser, distinguished Legionnaires, and guests, I come before you this morning to nominate an outstanding and a very dynamic Legionnaire. James W. Davis was born in Glendale, West Virginia on September 1, 1946. He attended public schools and graduated from Union High School in McMechen, West Virginia. Jim then entered the United States Marine Corps in February of 1966, and after serving 14 months he was separated from the Marine Corps as an E-5 with one year's service in Vietnam.

Jim and his wife Carol have four children and ten grandchildren. Jim recently retired as a teacher with Belmont Harrison Joint Vocational School in Cambridge, Ohio. Jim's career in The American Legion began 33 years ago, and he has served most offices in Blake Brothers Post #48, in Benwood, West Virginia. Jim started the Color Guard for Blake Brothers Post and it is one of the most sought after Color Guards in the state of West Virginia. He served as 1st District sergeant-at-arms, and he was the chairman for the Christmas gifts for the veterans drive. He also organized and started the first blood drive

in the 1st District in West Virginia. On the department level, Jim has been a counselor at The American Legion Mountaineer Boys State for 11 years, followed by becoming the assistant director in 2004 which he still serves. Jim served as sergeant-at-arms for nine years and department vice commander. Jim has been a Gold Brigade winner five times, and was the Department of West Virginia Recruiter of the Year four years. He chaired the department Education and Scholarship Committee for eleven years, and directed the department bowling tournament for eight years. In 1998, Jim was awarded The American Legion Department of West Virginia Dr. Ben I. Golden Award. It's an award given for outstanding community service. James W. Davis was elected department commander of the great state of West Virginia in July of 2002. Jim also serves the national organization as a member of the Committee on Education and for the past nine years as a member of this prestigious committee, Jim travels to various parts of the United States explaining the American Legion programs on education to educators and administrators. Ladies and gentlemen, it is my honor to place into nomination for the high office of National Vice Commander for the year 2008-2009, my friend, James W. Davis. (*Applause*)

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: The name of James Davis has been placed in nomination. The Chair recognizes microphone 1.

DEPARTMENT DELEGATION CHAIRMAN KIRBY (IL): Myron Kirby, Delegation Chairman for the Department of Illinois, Land of Lincoln, home of Past National Commander John Geiger, and home of for just a little bit longer, National Commander Marty Conatser. We are all very proud of you in Illinois, and it'll be glad to have you home. Mr. Commander, I move that the nominations for the offices of National Vice Commander be closed.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: Do I hear a second?

...Delegates respond with a second.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: It's a non-debatable motion. All those in favor by the normal sign of aye. Opposed? Same sign. It carries.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: Microphone 2.

DELEGATE NOEL (KY): Mr. Commander, Silas Noel, a duly elected Delegate from the great state of Kentucky. I move that the National Adjutant be authorized to cast one vote for the entire delegation strength of this convention for, James A. LaCoursiere; Michael J. Landkamer, Harley W. Ray, Dellano 'Shorty' T. Simmons, and James W. Davis, and be elected National Vice Commanders by acclamation.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: Do I hear a second?

...Delegates respond with a second.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: It's a non-debatable motion. All those in favor by the normal sign of aye. Opposed? Same sign. Passed.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: I call on the National Adjutant to cast the vote.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: As National Adjutant of The American Legion, I cast one vote representing the entire Delegate strength of this Convention for James A. LaCoursiere, Connecticut; Michael J. Landkamer of Nebraska; Harley W. Ray of Oregon; Dellano T. Simmons, Texas; James W. Davis, West Virginia, for the office of National Vice Commander of The American Legion. (*Applause*)

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: I now declare the following Legionnaires have been elected National Vice Commanders of The American Legion. James LaCoursiere, Connecticut; Michael J. Landkamer, Nebraska; Harley W. Ray, Oregon; Dellano T. Simmons, Texas; James W. Davis, West Virginia. Will the newly elected National Vice Commanders come to the platform for introduction.

…Newly elected National Vice Commanders on stage.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: A round of applause please. (*Applause and Music playing*)

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: I now call on Past National Commander, Joseph J. Frank of Missouri to present the Colors to the incoming National Commander.

Presentation: Colors to Incoming National Commander

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Thank you Mr. Commander, my fellow Legionnaires, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen. Please rise for the presentation of our National Colors by the Color Guard of Post 49, Tilton, New Hampshire, to National Commander Elect David K. Rehbein. Color Guard, present the Colors of the new National Commander of The American Legion.

...Color Guard enters.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: By the numbers. One. Two!

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Commander Dave, it is my honor and we have known each other for 29 years, almost 30 years now, you and your family, and it my honor and privilege to present the Colors that inspire you throughout the coming year to achieve great things for this American Legion. As you travel across the country and visit our troops around the world you will, I know, have the full support and prayers of all of us, The American Legion family. Under your leadership our great organization will grow and meet the many challenges that impact the lives of veterans and their families throughout the world.

When we meet at convention a year from now in Louisville, Kentucky, we will be there to say a heartfelt thank you, you have made us all proud. Godspeed Commander Dave, we are indeed fortunate to have you at the helm of the greatest veterans' organization in this entire world.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Color Guard, please retire the Colors. One. Two.

...Color Guard retires Colors.

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: Everything those Colors are, everything those colors represent, everything that you stand for, I will carry with me for the next year. Again thank you for the honor of this election.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: This is an exciting time in any convention. We have elected a new National Commander, and look forward to a time of growth and community involvement. This is also a time when The American Legion Auxiliary elects a new president, as this important part of our Legion family is also poised for a bright future. The woman chosen to lead The American Legion Auxiliary has worked many years for veterans and their families. Desiree Stoy is eligible for The American Legion Auxiliary through the service of her late step-father, Jack R. Miller, a U.S. Army veteran of the Korean War. She is an honorary life member of the Irvin-Hiskey Unit 535 in Department of Ohio. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome from Bellville, Ohio, Mrs. Desiree Stoy, National President of the American Legion Auxiliary.

Greetings: Desiree Stoy, Ohio, National President American Legion Auxiliary

Mr. Commander, thank you. Your new Commander spoke of pride and purpose. How proud I am to stand before the 90th Convention of the mighty American Legion as the 88th National President of the American Legion Auxiliary. This is a day I will long remember. Thank you. Your new Commander spoke about purpose and your Auxiliary spoke about purpose this morning as well. Our purpose, described by one word, HOPE, an acronym that stands for Honoring Our Promise Everyday, and the members of the American Legion Auxiliary pledge again to support the veterans, their families, and the communities across this nation again, with a new sense of service and not self. And I can tell you Mr. Commander, I am proud to serve with you, because I count you too as one of my friends. And in fact, I am so proud, I'm so proud that it's taller than my five foot one-and-a-half inches. I'm as proud as Dave Rehbein is tall. Mr. Commander if you would join me I would like to present to you the pin that the National President has this year, and I hope that you wear it with pride.

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: Absolutely. I will wear this with pride, because not only is it Desi's pin, it symbolizes what the American Legion Auxiliary is all about. Thank you.

NATIONAL AUXILIARY PRESIDENT STOY: I am so lucky to have the opportunity to serve with your Commander and also to serve alongside the First Lady,

Ann Rehbein. I look forward to getting even closer and building even more friendship with Ann. I also have the opportunity to present to you the National Vice President of The American Legion Auxiliary, Rita Navarrete from New Mexico. And also I'm proud that our National Secretary accompanied us this morning, so Pamela Gilley, the National Secretary of the American Legion Auxiliary. Thank you for this opportunity and Dave the very best to you in your endeavors this year. (*Applause*)

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: Madam President please remain with us for a few moments. I want the delegates to this Convention to greet you and your newly elected National Commander. Also, I'd like to call forward Tommie Cisna. I saw him a minute ago. There he is. Tommie is the newly elected National Commander of the Sons of The American Legion. He's already addressed our Convention, but ladies and gentleman I'd like to present to you the National Commander, Dave Rehbein; the National President, Desiree Stoy; the Sons of The American Legion, Commander Tommie Cisna. Our dynamic leadership team for the upcoming year. I now call on Adjutant Spanogle for the purpose of announcements. Is there any further business to come before this Convention?

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: Mr. Commander, just a few announcements. Sixty years ago today, there was a little bitty baby boy born in Ohio, and he's grown up, and he's not an itty bitty baby anymore. It's Rodger Hight, the Department Adjutant of Ohio. Happy Birthday, Roge. I know we all have to drive home, and there were some glasses found out there near the Vermont Delegation. I think this guy or lady is going to need those glasses to drive home. I tried to look through them myself, but they're up here at the desk. Anybody that lost them, you can get them up here after the adjournment.

The National Commander has asked me to announce, per the National Constitution Bylaws of The American Legion, that the Post Convention meeting of the National Executive Committee will meet immediately following the adjournment of this Convention, in this convention center in Room 151, 152 of the South Building. All National Commanders and all newly elected National Vice Commanders and administrative officers and all NECmen being seated must be there. Thank you, sir.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: Please uncover as the outgoing National Chaplain, Reverend Elliott Foss, offers the benediction.

Benediction
Rev. Elliott Foss, Georgia, Past National Chaplain

It's been a great year. It's been a great opportunity, and a great honor for the 2007-2008 officers to serve you, our family of The American Legion. Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

Father, we thank you and we rejoice over this past year, but we now look forward to this coming year to the new leadership, to new strengths, to new opportunities to serve our veterans and their families. Father, for our outgoing National Commander, may as he goes home with his family hear these words, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." And for our incoming National Commander, may You mount him up with wings of eagles, may he run and never faint. And for the rest of us as we go our way, we just stand relieved, and we pray Father, that this whole American Legion family might do more wonderful things this coming year. And now may the grace of Father in Heaven give you peace and joy and safety as you go from this place today. We pray this for God and for country. Amen.

...Delegates respond with Amen.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: The Color Guard will now retire the Flag of the United States. The delegates will remain standing, and hand salute on my command. Color Guard.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: Hand salute. Two!

The time is 1:08 p.m. I now declare the 90th Annual National Convention of The American Legion adjourned, *sine die*.

...At 1:08 p.m,. the 90th Annual National Convention of The American Legion adjourned.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF ANNUAL RECIPIENT(S)

National American Legion Distinguished Service Medal Award: Awarded annually for outstanding service to the nation and to the programs of The American Legion.
RECIPIENT: President George W. Bush

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: Justin Verlander—Detroit Tigers

Bob Feller 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: Cade Lynch—Jonesboro, AR

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: American Legion Post 76—Las Vegas, NV

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: Max Garrett—Pasco, WA

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: American Legion Post 34—Pasco, WA

The Frank N. Belgrano, Jr. Trophy: Awarded annually to that Department which has rendered the most outstanding service during the year to the program of the Boy Scouts of America.
RECIPIENT: Department of California

George W. Rulon Baseball Player of the Year: A Plaque is presented to recipient by appropriate official upon conclusion of The American Legion Baseball World Series. Citation is presented to recipient at a special Hall of Fame ceremony at Cooperstown, NY, the following summer.
RECIPIENT: Patrick Singletary, Post 77—Hendersonville, NC

The Howard P. Savage 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: American Legion Post 76—Las Vegas, NV

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): Chris Sheff, Mgr., Scott Baker and Gino Campagna, Coaches—Las Vegas, NV

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: Paul Sewald—Las Vegas, NV

Junior Shooting Sports Trophy: Awarded annually in four categories to the top performing Individual and Team in the Sporter and Precision categories competing in the annual USA Shooting National Junior Olympic Air Rifle Championship who are members of clubs and teams affiliated with The American Legion Junior Shooting Sports Program.
RECIPIENT(s):

Precision Team:	**Capitol City Junior Rifle Club (WA)—American Legion Post 2** **Brandon Hergert, Daniel Lowe, Josh Pagel, Kyle Rebillion.**
Precision Individual:	**Abigail Stanec, Ashland Eagles (OH)—American Legion Post 473**
Sporter Team:	**Ozark H.S. JROTC (MO)—American Legion Post 639** **Jacob Edwards, Kelsea Hunt, Shawn Spradling, Rob Thompson.**
Sporter Individual:	**Kelsea Hunt, Ozark H.S. JROTC (MO)—American Legion Post 639**

Louisville Slugger Trophy: Plaque is presented to recipient, or designated representative, by appropriate official upon the conclusion of The American Legion Baseball World Series.
RECIPIENT: Brandon Bass—Omaha, NE

The 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 Florida

Rawlings "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: Max Garrett—Pasco, WA

Spafford National Trophy: Awarded annually to that Department of The American Legion having within its jurisdiction the winner of the National High School Oratorical Contest.
RECIPIENT: Department of Maryland

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(s): James Keith—Albuquerque, NM
LaCueva H.S. Marine Corps JROTC—Post 49, Albuquerque, NM

William Randolph Hearst Trophy: 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.
RECIPIENT: Department of Ohio

American Legion & 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): 2007—Daniel C. Briscoe, Anthony W. Renner, Donald T. Currier, Thomas W. Hallett, Dr. Todd K. Fetsch, Stephen J. Dean, Chris Glass, Sr., Michael J. Feist, Albert Blumer, Donald L. Farris, Shaun Guhl, Kathy M. Bisek, Tracy L. Murray, LuWanda M. Ford, Leonard C. Ford, James M. Gates, Michael Demsko, Charles J. Weber, Jr., Don Jackson, Ray D. Airy, John J. Schillo, David R. Manore, Nancy Ann Peto, Allan D. Hale, Richard Miller, Russell L. Hauser, Jr., David R. Murphy, Craig Murray, Richard "Dick" McCoy, Stephen Suga, David Sears, Herbert C. Vinson, Troy S. Jenkins, Eric K. Doerr, John M. Pickard, William A. Falconer, Raymond F. Burdick, John Roll, Jr., Ronald F. Cady, Joseph W. Gero, Carl W. Aho, Scott A. Schumacher, Philip A. Johnson. 2008 – Norman A. Hoffman, Thomas A. Johnson, John Teske, David Wrausmann, William Brady, Nicholas Clark, John Wilcox, David R. Booth, Sr., John M. Simmons, George B. Thompson, Clifford M. Karppe, Robert Laburada, Thomas M. Homuth, Robert Chisholm, Jim Stewart, Douglas L. Radford, Dennis M. Matthews, John C. Spears, Anna M. Foster, John H. Case, Charles Ced, James Vornberg, Philip J. Colella, Scott C. Fuqua, Edward D. Barton, Oscar O. Outen. (as of 10/15/08).

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):
John Henderson—submitted by American Legion Post 39—Forsyth, MT
ANAVICUS—John Angliss, Bill Green, Al Ouellette, Rick Tait, Alfred Christensen, Marjorie Campbell, Paul Tkachuk, Earle H. King, John Gaetan, Ronald G. Smith, Bill Sutherland, John D. Gillis, Lorry Landry, Hank Penner, Roy Breitkreuz, Robert Horkoff, Louis Mazur, Jean Olafsen, Thomas Wallace, Peter Goodin, Jean Pierre Lefort, Sterling Grant

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: Idaho, Mexico, Montana, Virginia, Washington, Wisconsin.

Employer of the Year Award for Hiring Veterans: Awarded to an employer in recognition of outstanding achievement in the employment and retraining of veterans.
RECIPIENT(s): 2007 Winners
Category I CSX Transportation—Jackson, FL
Category II Prologistix—Sanford, NC
Category III Millennium Security Services, LLC—Roswell, GA
Note: The 2008 Employer of the Year Awards will not be determined until December 31, 2008.

Employment Service Awards: 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): 2007 Winners
LVER of the Year: Gerard Donnelly—Patchogue, NY
DVOP of the Year: Don Collins—Lubbock, TX
ES Office of the Year: WorkSource Career Center of Lubbock—Lubbock, TX

Note: The 2008 Employment Service Awards will not be determined until December 31, 2008.

Awards To Enhance The Lives Of Disabled Persons: 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): 2007 Winners
Reach of Denton—Denton, TX
Note: The 2008 Awards To Enhance The Lives Of Disabled Persons will not be determined until December 31, 2008.

National DEPARTMENT History Contest Awards: Awarded annually at the Fall Meeting of the National Executive Committee to those contestants entered in the National Department History Contest having submitted the One-Year History *Narrative* or *Yearbook* of the Department which best meets the standards established for that particular competition.
RECIPIENT(s):
Department of Wisconsin (One-Year Narrative History)
Department of Ohio (One-Year Yearbook History)

National POST History Contest Awards: Awarded annually to those contestants entered in the National Post History Contest deemed by a duly authorized panel of judges to have submitted the One-Year History of the Post which best meets the standards established for the competitions.
RECIPIENT(s):
Landt-Thiel Post 470—Saukville, WI (One-Year Narrative History)
Matthews–Crawford Post 131—Warrensburg, MO (One-Year Yearbook History)

International Amity Award: Awarded by the National Commander with the advice and consent of the National Executive Committee at such times and places as may be consistent and appropriate. It shall be awarded to specific individuals who shall be war veterans within the accepted meaning of the term and members of an authentic veteran organization established in the territory of any of the nations associated as war-time allies of the United States of America. It shall be awarded to such individuals in recognition of outstanding service in the field of veterans affairs and for service and contributions made in the development of international good will and comradeship between their organization and The American Legion.
RECIPIENT(s): None for 2008

The Distinguished Public Service Award: Awarded annually by the National Commander with the advice and consent of the Commander's Advisory Committee at the time of the annual Washington Conference. It may be awarded to one or more person(s) of the United States Congress.
RECIPIENT(s):
Honorable Chet Edwards, 17th District of Texas, U.S. House of Representatives

The Arthur D. Houghton Sons of The American Legion Trophy: Awarded annually to that Detachment of Sons of The American Legion in each of five membership categories (I—200-1,000 members; II—1,001-3,000 members; III—3,001-6000 members; IV—6001-12,000 members; V—12,001 or more), each of said Detachments attaining the greatest percentage of increase over previous year's membership when compared with all Detachments in its category.
RECIPIENT(s): 2007 Winners

Category I	**Detachment of Arkansas**
Category II	**Detachment of Iowa**
Category III	**Detachment of Georgia**
Category IV	**Detachment of California**
Category V	**Detachment of Pennsylvania**

Note: The 2008 Houghton awards will not be determined until December 31, 2008.

General Henri Gouraud Trophy: Awarded annually to that Department in each of six categories established by the National Membership and Post Activities Committee, each of said Department having been the first in its respective category to attain or exceed its nationally assigned membership quota (effective 1986).
RECIPIENT(s):

Category I	**None Qualified**
Category II	**None Qualified**
Category III	**None Qualified**
Category IV	**None Qualified**
Category V	**None Qualified**
Category VI	**None Qualified**

General John J. Pershing Honor Award: Awarded annually to that Department having the greatest percentage of its posts receiving the Honor Ribbon for having 100 percent or more, of the post's previous year's membership enrolled for the coming year by December 31, and having reported such achievement to National Headquarters by not later than January 31.
RECIPIENT: Department of Nevada

The 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 Delaware

The North Carolina Trophy: Awarded annually to the Department, not included among the several state Departments or the Department of the District of Columbia, attaining the highest percentage of membership as of March 31, over its preceding year's membership.
RECIPIENT: Department of Puerto Rico

The 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 Vermont

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 Thomas R. Stuart

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: First Class Cadet Robert Jerome Brown

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 Eric L. Deetjen

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 Bovey Zhu

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: Ens. Eric D. Gardiner

National Commander's Blood Donor Awards: Presented to departments in different sized categories for participating in The American Legion's Blood Donor Program.
RECIPIENT(s):
Category I—Departments with 100,000 or more members:
Post Participation: Department of Department of Ohio
Individual Participation: Department of Department of Ohio
Category II—Departments with 70,000 to 99,999 members:
Post Participation: Department of Wisconsin
Individual Participation: Department of Wisconsin
Category III—Departments with 40,000 to 69,999 members:
Post Participation: Department of Georgia
Individual Participation: Department of Georgia
Category IV—Departments with 25,000 to 39,999 members:
Post Participation: Department of Oregon
Individual Participation: Department of Washington
Category V—Departments with 10,000 to 24,999 members:
Post Participation: Department of Montana
Individual Participation: Department of Montana
Category VI—Departments with less than 10,000 members:
Post Participation: Department of Alaska
Individual Participation: Department of Alaska

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:
Judith A. Bradshaw, Des Moines Police Department—Des Moines, Iowa

Paul H. Griffith ROTC Trophy: Awarded annually to that Department giving the highest degree of support to the ROTC program within its jurisdiction, based on criteria drawn up by the National Security Commission.
RECIPIENT(s):
Departments of Alaska, Hawaii, Minnesota, Montana, New York, Oregon, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee

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: KRIV-TV Channel 5—Houston, Texas

National Commander's Public Relations Award: Awarded to an outstanding individual and/or organization for distinguished public service in the field of communications.
RECIPIENT: Lou Dobbs

The 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: The Band of the Tonawandas—Williamsville, NY

Emblem Sales Trophy: To be awarded annually to that Junior sponsored Color Guard winning first prize in competition with all other Junior sponsored Color Guards during the annual National Convention of The American Legion.
RECIPIENT: Last awarded 1984

The Four Chaplains Trophy: Awarded annually to the winner of The American Legion Firing Squad competition at the National Convention.
RECIPIENT: Last awarded 1985

The 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: American Legion Post #49—Tilton, NH

The Lemuel Bolles Trophy: Awarded annually to that band winning first prize in competition with all other bands during the annual National Convention.
RECIPIENT: The Band of the Tonawandas—Williamsville, NY

National Adjutant's Trophy: Awarded annually to that American Legion Firing Squad winning first prize in competition with all other Firing Squads during the annual National Convention of The American Legion.
RECIPIENT: Last awarded 1985

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 Idaho

The American Legion Patriot Award: Awarded to outstanding citizens who have demonstrated a profound and exceptional commitment to military personnel and their families. In addition to the award, the national winners will receive expense-paid round trip travel to Convention to include airfare and lodging.
RECIPIENT(s): The Landstuhl Regional Medical Center: Clinical Pastoral Division

FOREWORD

The American Legion continued to have a strong year under the leadership of National Commander Martin F. Conatser, Champaign, Illinois. Membership was strong with 2.6 million veterans in more than 14,000 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.

Robert W. Spanogle
National Adjutant

EXCERPTS FROM CONSTITUTION OF THE AMERICAN LEGION
ARTICLE II

Nature

Section 1. The American Legion is a civilian organization; membership therein does not affect nor increase liability for military or police service. Rank does not exist in the Legion; no member shall be addressed by his military or naval title in any convention or meeting of the Legion.

Section 2. The American Legion shall be absolutely nonpolitical and shall not be used for the dissemination of partisan principles nor for the promotion of the candidacy of any person seeking public office or preferment.

ARTICLE III

Section 1. The American Legion shall be organized in Departments and these in turn in Posts. There shall be one Department in each state, in the District of Columbia, and there may be one Department in each territory and insular possession of the United States. The National Executive Committee may establish Posts in the territorial and insular possessions of the United States and foreign countries, and shall designate the Department under whose jurisdiction they shall function, but this shall in no way affect the status of Departments already established.

ARTICLE IV

Eligibility

Section 1. Any person shall be eligible for membership in The American Legion who was a member of the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard or Air Force of the United States and assigned to active duty at some time during any of the following periods: April 6, 1917, to November 11, 1918; December 7, 1941, to December 31, 1946;

June 25, 1950, to January 31, 1955; February 28, 1961, to May 7, 1975; August 24, 1982, to July 31, 1984; December 20, 1989, to January 31, 1990; August 2, 1990 until a date established by Congress for ending the Desert Storm period; all dates inclusive, or who, being a citizen of the United States at the time of his entry therein, served on active duty in the armed forces of any of the governments associated with the United States during any said periods; provided however, that such service shall have been terminated by honorable discharge or honorable separation, or continued honorably after any of said periods; provided, further, that no person shall be entitled to membership who, being in such service during any of said periods, refused on conscientious, political or other grounds to subject himself to military discipline or unqualified service.

Section 2. There shall be no form or class of membership except an active membership, and dues shall be paid annually or for life.

Section 3. No person may be a member at any time of more than one Post.

Section 4. No person, who has been expelled by a Post shall be admitted to membership in another Post, without the consent of the expelling Post except that where such consent has been asked for and denied by such Post, he may then appeal to the Executive Committee of the Department of the expelling Post for permission to be admitted to membership in another Post, and shall be ineligible for membership until such permission is granted.

ARTICLE V

Section 1. The legislative body of The American Legion shall be the National Convention, except as otherwise provided in the Constitution and By-Laws.

Section 2. The time and place of the National Conventions shall be determined by the National Executive Committee, which shall have authority to change such time and place for sufficient reasons to it appearing.

Section 3. In the National Convention each Department shall be entitled to five delegates and one additional delegate for each one thousand members, or major fraction thereof, whose current dues have been received by the National Treasurer 30 days prior to the meeting of said Convention and whose registration fees, as fixed by the National Executive Committee, for its total authorized delegate strength, have been paid, and to one alternate for each delegate. The delegates shall be chosen not less than 2 weeks before the National Convention at Department Conventions or in any other manner specified by the Department Constitution.

Section 4. Each duly registered delegate shall be entitled to one vote. The vote of any registered delegate absent and not represented by an alternate shall be cast by the majority of the registered delegates present from his Department. Alternates for registered delegates shall have all the privileges of registered delegates except that of voting. A registered delegate is one who has received his credentials after his registration fee has been paid.

Section 5. A quorum shall exist at a National Convention when 60 percent of the Departments are represented as provided above.

ARTICLE VI

Section 1. The National Convention shall elect a National Commander, and five National Vice Commanders, who shall serve without seniority. No two Vice Commanders shall be chosen from the same Department. No person shall be eligible for re-election to the Office of National Commander or National Vice Commander.

Section 2. Such officers shall serve until the adjournment of the succeeding National Convention following their election and thereafter until their successors are chosen. Vacancies in these offices occurring between National Conventions shall be filled by election by the National Executive Committee, and any member of The American Legion, in good standing, shall be eligible for election to such vacancy. Provided, however, that no Past National Commander or Past National Vice Commander shall be elected to fill any vacancy in these respective offices.

Section 3. The National Executive Committee at its first meeting following the National Convention shall appoint the National Adjutant, National Treasurer, National

Judge Advocate, National Chaplain and National Historian, such officers to hold office at the pleasure of the appointing power. All persons having the custody of funds shall give adequate bonds, which shall be approved by the National Executive Committee.

Section 4. All Past National Commanders, while in good standing in their respective Posts, shall be members for life of the National Executive Committee, without vote, and shall also be life delegates to all National Conventions of The American Legion, with vote, to be exercised by them with their respective Departments.

ARTICLE VII

National Executive Committee

Section 1. Between National Conventions, the administrative power shall be vested in the National Executive Committee, which shall be composed of the National Commander, the National Vice-Commanders, and one National Executive Committeeman and one alternate from each Department to be elected as such Department shall determine, the alternate to vote only in the absence of the National Executive Committeeman.

Past National Commanders

J. Addington Wagner, Michigan
Preston J. Moore, Oklahoma
William E. Galbraith, Nebraska
John H. Geiger, Illinois
Joe L. Matthews, Texas
William J. Rogers, Maine
John M. 'Jack' Carey, Michigan
Michael J. Kogutek, New York
Keith Kreul, Wisconsin
Clarence M. Bacon, Maryland
Judge James P. Dean, Mississippi
John P. Comer, Massachusetts
Hon. H.F. Gierke, North Dakota
Miles S. Epling, West Virginia
Robert S. Turner, Georgia
Dominic D. DiFrancesco, Pennsylvania
Bruce Thiesen, California
William M. Detweiler, Louisiana
Daniel A. Ludwig, Minnesota
Joseph J. Frank, Missouri
Anthony G. Jordan, Maine
Butch L. Miller, Virginia
Hon. Alan G. Lance, Sr., Idaho
Ray G. Smith, North Carolina
Richard J. Santos, Maryland
Ronald F. Conley, Pennsylvania
John A. Brieden, III, Texas
Thomas P. Cadmus, Michigan
Thomas L. Bock, Colorado
Paul A. Morin, Massachusetts

National Executive Committeemen

F. Wayne Turner, Alabama
James L. Van Horn, Alaska
Julius Maklary, Arizona
Ross Rogers, Arkansas
James W. Hackney, California
Jeff Luginbuel, Colorado
Richard W. Anderson, Connecticut
John J. Jackson, Delaware
Walter W. Norris, D.C.
Robert J. Proctor, Florida
William E. Marshall, France
Ray Hendrix, Georgia
Andrew W. Johnson, Hawaii
Cleve Rice, Idaho
Kenneth J. Trumbull, Illinois
W. Darrell Hansel, Indiana
Michael E. Wanser, Iowa
David O. Warnken, Kansas
Randall Coffman, Kentucky
Charles D. Aucoin, Louisiana
Robert A. Owen, Maine
Dr. Gordon B. Browning, Maryland
James F. Army, Massachusetts
Mark A. Walker, Mexico
Gerald N. Dennis, Michigan
Virgil V. Persing, Minnesota
Charles E. Langley, Mississippi
David N. Voyles, Missouri
Bob O. Beals, Montana
Michael J. Landkamer, Nebraska
Ron Gutzman, Nevada
John E. Neylon, New Hampshire
William A. Rakestraw, Jr., New Jersey
Bruce Jorgensen, New Mexico
Paul Mitras, New York
Jerry L. Hedrick, North Carolina
Curtis O. Twete, North Dakota
Carl W. Swisher, Ohio
Bobby J. Longenbaugh, Oklahoma
Charles E. Schmidt, Oregon

Alfred Pirolli, Pennsylvania
William J. Kelly, Philippines
Carlos Orria-Medina, Puerto Rico
Ernest Gerundio, Rhode Island
Billy W. Bell, South Carolina
Paul A. Evenson, South Dakota
Jennings B. Loring, Tennessee
Ronald G. Cherry, Texas
William E. Christoffersen, Utah
Leslie V. Howe, Vermont
Rob R. Gordon, Jr., Virginia
William F. Schrier, Washington
William W. Kile, West Virginia
Arthur D. Herbison, Wisconsin
Irvin A. Quick, Wyoming

Alternate National Executive Committeemen

Dolores A. Hardin, Alabama
Lloyd L. Little, Alaska
Deodoro M. Aguilar, Arizona
Cleave B. Weiss, Arkansas
Wesley R. Wharton, California
Ralph P. Bozella, Colorado
D. Joseph Jackson, Connecticut
Charles T. Armbruster, Jr., Delaware
Paul H. Hasz, D.C.
Dennis R. Boland, Florida
Michael T. Umland, France
Charles F. Wessinger, Georgia
LeRoy P. Pulawa, Hawaii
Morris M. Bentley, Idaho
Eugene Thompson, Illinois
Jack Butler, Indiana
John J. Ross, Iowa
Ernest H. Cooper, Kansas
Randall Fisher, Kentucky
Owen D. Watts, Louisiana
William G Bickford, Maine
John F. Milburn, Maryland
Milton K. Lashus, Massachusetts
Jack D. Freitag, Mexico
Darwin Krieger, Michigan
Raymond DeZurik, Minnesota
Robert E. Gosa, Mississippi
Richard A. Heigert, Missouri
Sylvia A. M. Beals, Montana
Douglas Boldt, Nebraska
Jack L. Ford, Nevada
Roland E. Patnode, Jr., New Hampshire
William B. Mack, New Jersey
Prospero J. Sanchez New Mexico
Richard R. Keiser, New York
Coley A. Hunsucker, North Carolina
Jeffrey A. Hall, North Dakota
Richard H. Zulch, Ohio
William E. Finch, Oklahoma
Richard Clark, Oregon
Richard A. Coccimiglio, Pennsylvania
Ignacio F. Palad, Philippines
Faustino Espinosa, Puerto Rico
Ronald P. Levasseur, Rhode Island
John E. Palmer, Jr., South Carolina
Larry L. Price, South Dakota
Hoyte M. Robinson, Tennessee
Conrad L. Roberson, Texas
Terry D. Schow, Utah
Maryls A. Lemnah, Vermont
George C. Lussier, Jr., Virginia
Michael L. Montaney, Washington
William E. Burkett, West Virginia
David L. Gough, Wisconsin
Gerald L. Jacobs, Wyoming

EXCERPTS FROM BY-LAWS OF THE AMERICAN LEGION
ARTICLE I
National Executive Committee
Commission, Committee, and Employees

Section 6. The National Executive Committee, upon nomination by the National Commander, appoints the following standing commissions: National Americanism Commission, National Commission on Children and Youth, National Convention Commission, National Economic Commission, National Finance Commission, National Foreign Relations Commission, National Internal Affairs Commission, National Legislative Commission, The American Legion Magazine Commission, National Public Relations Commission, National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission, and National Security Commission.

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 American Legion, and prescribe their duties and emoluments.

REPORT OF NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER
Peggy G. Dettori, Department of Alaska

As National Vice Commander for the western states and the departments of Mexico and the Philippines, it has been a pleasure serving under the leadership of National Commander Marty Conatser.

The departments of the western region include Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, Wyoming plus our two foreign departments of Mexico and the Philippines.

The summary of my activities for the year 2007-2008 are as follows:

September 2007

No visits.

October 2007

18-21 Membership visit, Department of Idaho, unofficial visit
26-27 DEC meeting, Department of Montana, official meeting.

November 2007

13-17 Membership tour, Department of Washington, unofficial visit.

December 2007

No visits.

January 2008

18-19 DEC meeting, Department of Wyoming, official visit.
25-27 Miss America pageant.

February 2008

1-2 Membership workshop, Department of Alaska, unofficial visit.
8-10 Mid-Winter conference, Department of New Mexico, official visit.
22-24 DEC meeting, Department of Nevada, official meeting.

March 2008

15-16 DEC meeting, Department of California, official meeting.

April 2008

3-7 DEC meeting, Department of Hawaii, official meeting.
11-13 District conference, Department of Washington, official meeting.
23-26 Department convention, Department of Alaska, official visit

May 2008

8-11 Homecoming, Department of Colorado, official visit.

June 2008

13 Merchant Marine Academy Awards ceremony.
19-33 Department convention, Department of Arizona, official visit.
25-28 Department convention, Department of Oregon, official visit.

July 2008
No visits.
August 2008
22-28 National convention, Phoenix, Arizona.

REPORT OF NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER
Thomas L. Burns, Delaware

It's been an honor and a privilege to serve the North East Region and to have served with Commander Conatser as National Vice Commander for 2007-2008. It has been a very rewarding and wonderful experience, one which I will never forget.

I would like to thank Commander Conatser for letting me go to the Air Force Academy to present the American Legion Academic Award to Thomas R. Stuart Squadron 36 class of 2008. It was a proud moment for me to present the 2007 Baseball Player Award in Cooperstown, NY to Brian Drozd of Genoa, Nebraska.

I would like to thank the staff at headquarters for their fine support they extended to me.

September 2007
10-16 Indianapolis for Briefings & Department and District Commander calls.
17-19 Washington, DC Legislative briefings and National Commander's Testimony.
20 Washington, DC Commanders breakfast reception
October 2007
12-13 Champaign, IL Commanders Home Coming
15-18 Indianapolis NEC meeting
November 2007
19 Dover, DE—DEC meeting
December 2007
7-8-9 Department of New Hampshire Membership Roundup
16 Department of Delaware Christmas
21-23 Department of Rhode Island Membership Visit
January 2008
10-12 Department of Pennsylvania DEC meeting and Membership Awards Presentations
18-19 Department of Connecticut Mid-Winter Conference
25-27 Department of Massachusetts DEC and Membership meetings
February 2008
9-10 Department of Maryland DEC meeting
13 Ocean View, DE Worked the polls for election
March 2008
14 Laurel, DE National Commanders Banquet
15 Funkstown, Maryland National Commanders Banquet
16 Millsboro, DE Oak Orchard Post #28 25th Anniversary
30-31 Washington, DC Legislative Conference & Hill Visits
April 2008
1-2 Washington, DC Legislative Conference
11-12 Harrisburg, PA DEC meeting
16 Washington, DC Visit with the Pope
May 2008
3 Elsmere, DE—VA Carnival
5-8 Indianapolis Spring meetings
12 Seaford, DE Install Officers
25-27 Colorado Springs, CO U.S. Air Force Academy Graduation
June 2008
4-7 Department of Massachusetts Department Convention
10-14 Department of New Jersey Department Convention
14-17 Baseball Hall of Fame
19-21 Department of Vermont Department Convention
22 Milford, DE Install Officers

July 2008
12-13 Department of Delaware Department Convention
16-19 Department of New York Department Convention
August 2008
10 Department of Delaware Install Department Officers
16-17 Department of Pennsylvania Drum and Bugle Corp Competition
21-25 National Convention Phoenix, AZ

REPORT OF NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER
Randall A. Fisher, Kentucky

I will never forget this year serving as National Vice Commander and to serve under Marty Conatser our National Commander.

This has been a great honor and privilege to serve in this high position of the American Legion. I will treasure the friendships and wonderful people that I met visiting the states in the Southeast Region. The kindness and hospitality presented to me by everyone I met in the American Legion was a wonderful blessing. The Commanders, NEC, Adjutants, Post Commanders, Blue cap Legionnaires, Auxiliary and the SAL were so kind and made me feel at home in every State.

The friendship of the other Vice Commanders has been great. They are a wonderful group of hard working dedicated legionnaires.

A special thanks to the Southern Bloc, Southeast Region and the State of Kentucky for their support and confidence in electing me as their National Vice Commander. Thanks for the reception and confidence in me by my home Department of Kentucky, I will never forget this great year.

Summary of my travels 2007-2008 are as follows.

August 2007
Election—Reno, Nevada
September 2007
No visits
October 2007
19-21 Fall Conference, Department of Florida, official visit
26-28 Fall Conference, Department of Georgia, official visit
31-Nov.4 Fall Conference, Department of South Carolina, official visit
November 2007
No other visits other than South Carolina
December 2007
No visits
January 2008
18-20 Mid-Winter Conference, Department of Louisiana, official visit
30–Feb. 2 Membership Tour, Department of North Carolina, unofficial visit
February 2008
22-24 Mid-Winter Conference, Department of North Carolina, official visit
26-March 6 Membership Tour, Department South Carolina, unofficial visit
March 2008
No visits except South Carolina.
April 2008
No visits.
May 2008
19-20 U.S. Coast Guard Academy Award Ceremony.
30-June 1 Department of Tennessee, American Legion Boys State, official visit
June 2008
26-28 Department Convention, Department of Kentucky
July 2008
10-13 Department of Mississippi, Department Convention
30–Aug 2 Service Officers School in Indianapolis
August 2008
22-28 National Convention Phoenix, Arizona.

REPORT OF NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER
Donald Hayden, Minnesota

What a great honor and privilege to serve with National Commander Marty Conaster and his team. It certainly has been a pleasure to work with Commander Marty's wife Sharon, who inspired us all. A special "thank you" goes out to all who made my year a memorable one.

To the other National Officers and National Staff, I say, "Thank you!" The five National Vice Commanders had enormous respect for each other, and we certainly had fun. Of course, I humbly served as NVC Tom Burn's official aide—and without pay!

Every event I attended was certainly exceptional, however, a few really had special meaning for me. During our training in Washington D.C., I was privileged to attend breakfast on the south lawn of the White House, hosted by President Bush and First Lady Laura Bush. On Veterans Day 2007, I filled in for National Commander Marty at Arlington National Cemetery. Later that day, I was on the dais with former U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell for the 25th anniversary celebration of the Vietnam Memorial Wall. I also was the guest speaker at the American Legion Home in Ponca City, Oklahoma and met former U.S. Senator Bob Dole for a dedication of the community based outpatient clinic (CBOC) in Hutchinson KS, named in his honor. Finally, I presented a midshipman with the American Legion Award at the Naval Academy in Bethesda MD. The following is a summary of my travels for the year 2007-2008:

September 2007
30 Welcomed home troops back to my hometown

October 2007
19 Guest speaker at CVSO dinner
25-27 Department Conference, St. Cloud, MN.

November 2007
10-12 Veterans Day in Washington, DC on behalf of the National Commander
14-17 Membership Tour, Department of Iowa, unofficial visit

December 2007
9 Pearl Harbor Rally, Forest Lake, MN

January 2008
4-6 Membership Tour, Department of Oklahoma, unofficial visit
11-13 Mid-Winter Conference, Department of Nebraska, official visit
16-19 Membership Tour, Department of Kansas, unofficial visit
25-26 Mid-Winter Conference, Department of Texas, official visit

February 2008
8-10 Mid-Winter Conference, Department of North Dakota, official visit
22-24 Spring Conference, Department of Missouri, official visit

March 2008
6-9 Membership Tour, Department of Arkansas, unofficial visit
11 Lobby Minnesota Congress on behalf of MN Veterans

April 2008
11-13 Children's Home visit, Department of Oklahoma, official visit
17 Meet with Governor Tim Pawlenty for increase of Memorial Day monies

May 2008
16-18 Department Convention, Department of Kansas, official visit
21-22 US Naval Academy Awards Ceremony

June 2008
8 Dedication of New Veterans Museum in Adams, MN
12-15 Department Convention, Department of South Dakota, official visit

July 2008
11-13 Department Convention, Department of Iowa, official visit
17-19 Department of Minnesota Convention, Bloomington, MN
30 Conducted the opening ceremonies and threw out the first pitch at The American Legion Baseball Tournament in Milbank, South Dakota, The birthplace of Legion Baseball on July, 1925

August 2008
22-28 National Convention, Phoenix, Arizona

REPORT OF NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER
David A. Korth, Wisconsin

I was elected National Vice Commander at the 89th National Convention in Reno, Nevada. I was assigned the Central Region which is composed of the Departments of West Virginia, Virginia, Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois and Wisconsin.

Our busy year began with training sessions and membership phone calls in Indianapolis. We then traveled to Washington DC for additional training and legislative briefings. The visit to Washington, DC also included attendance at the National Commander's testimony to Congress and breakfast on the south lawn of The White House. President and Mrs. Bush, Vice President Cheney, and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice joined us.

The visits to our National Offices demonstrated how truly professional all of our devoted staff members are. Without their help through the year my time as National Vice Commander would have been extremely difficult if not impossible.

My visitations to the various Departments were informative and interesting. I cannot describe how well I was treated by the Departments. I especially enjoyed meeting so many Legionnaires at the various meetings and conventions. I was amazed at how differently the Departments operate, but yet all accomplished the missions and goals of The American Legion.

The Departments of Illinois and Michigan conducted and organized membership round-ups moving throughout the Department. I would encourage all Departments to formalize a membership round-up.

A unique membership event occurred in Wisconsin with a snowmobile round-up at Lake Tomahawk with the National Commander in attendance.

Special visits during the year were attendance at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, New York for the Awards Convocation at the graduation ceremonies. I was also privileged to be at the White House, as I traveled by motorcade to Arlington National Cemetery for the wreath laying ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknowns. Following the ceremony John Sommer, Executive Director of The American Legion Washington Office and I represented The American Legion at the Vietnam Memorial known as 'The Wall.'

My year as National Vice Commander was indeed busy and very enjoyable. My fellow Vice Commanders and I enjoyed the short time were able to spend together. I know we shall remain friends for the rest of our lives. Hopefully, we shall see each other at American Legion events in the future years. A special thank you to Robert W. Spanogle, National Adjutant, Daniel S. Wheeler, Executive Director of National Headquarters, Indianapolis, Indiana and John Sommer, Executive Director, Washington DC Office of The American Legion for their advice and counsel throughout the year. A very special thank you to all the staff both at Indianapolis and Washington DC offices for their help in so many ways.

September 2007
8-14 Training and Membership phone calls, National Headquarters, Indianapolis, IN
15-20 Training and Legislative briefings at Washington DC Offices, visit to the White House was included

October 2007
13-18 National Fall Meetings and National Executive Committee Meetings, Indianapolis, IN
26-28 Department Fall Conference, Department of Virginia, official visit

November 2007
7-10 Membership Round-Up, Department of Michigan, unofficial visit
16-18 Egyptian Commanders Club, Department of Illinois, official visit
29-Dec. 2 Membership Tour, Department of Ohio, unofficial visit

December 2007
No other visits other than Ohio Membership Tour

January 2008

11-17	Membership Caravan, Department of Illinois, unofficial visit
24-27	Membership Drive, Department of Wisconsin, unofficial visit (home Dept)

February 2008

3	Snowmobile Roundup, Lake Tomahawk, WI
11-12	Abraham Lincoln Pilgrimage, Springfield, IL
14-17	Membership Tour, Department of Michigan, official visit—2nd type of membership visit

March 2008

15	Membership Awards and American Legion Birthday Banquet, White Lake, WI
29-31	2008 Washington Conference and Legislative visits

April 208

1-2	Continuation of 2008 Washington Conference

May 2008

4-8	National Spring Meetings and National Executive Committee Meetings in Indianapolis, IN
9-10	2008 Department of Wisconsin Spring Meetings
17	8th District Conference at Caroline, WI
25-26	Arlington Cemetery visit
29-31	West Point graduation

June 2008

12-15	Buckeye Boys State, Department of Ohio, official visit

July 2008

11-13	Department Convention, Department of West Virginia, official visit
18-20	Department Convention, Department of Wisconsin, official visit (home Dept)

August 2008

22-28	National Convention, Phoenix, Arizona

REPORT OF THE NATIONAL CHAPLAIN
Rev. Elliott L. Foss, Jr., Georgia

On August 26, 2008, in Reno, Nevada, following the conclusion of the 89th American Legion National Convention, I was sworn in as the National Chaplain at the post-convention National Executive Committee Meeting. I am very blessed to have been given this honor and I wish to thank those first in the Georgia American Legion who have encouraged me along the way, to the National Officers who frequently visited Georgia and reported back to the National Headquarters what I have been doing, and finally to the National Headquarters Staff who have been so supportive this past year, especially National Commander Martin Conatser and National Adjutant Spanogle.

National Chaplain duties included offering invocations and benediction prayers at numerous meetings and functions throughout the year. In October, prayers were offered at the National Executive Committee (NEC) meetings, the Homecoming Banquet for National Commander Conatser, the Past Department Commanders Luncheon and Ye STEVOS dinner during the national meetings in November.

In November I hosted the Department Chaplains Conference which included Chaplains from various Departments of the American Legion, Auxiliary and the Sons of the American Legion. My theme for the year was "Let Your Light Shine" encouraging everyone to share the American Legion programs with everyone they meet. On Veterans Day I was on St. Simon's Island as the guest speaker for the POW/MIA Remembrance Ceremony. I also offered opening and closing prayers for this event.

In January, the National Commander visited the Department of Georgia and I was part of the traveling party visiting various Posts and offering prayers as requested.

During the Washington Conference in April, I offered prayers as numerous meetings, luncheons, and banquets. With the assistance of Georgia U.S. Senator Saxby Chambliss and Senate Chaplain Rev. Barry Black I was honored to offer the opening prayer before the U.S. Senate. The following day, with assistance of Georgia

Congressman Jack Kingston and U.S. House of Representative Chaplin Father Daniel P. Coughlin, I was again able to open the U.S. House of Representatives with prayer. Following the prayer in Congress, I was able to meet privately with Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi and she shared some heart to heart concerns with me. I could tell she was obviously touched by my prayer. During this whole time, the Washington Office of the American Legion was instrumental in ensuring dates and times were coordinated with the various Chaplains' offices. My liaison was the most gracious of hosts, ensuring that everything went smoothly. His knowledge of the area, the buildings and his contacts in those offices made everything run more efficiently than I ever believed could happen. In April, as National Chaplain, I also performed a wedding for Georgia Son's of the American Legion National Executive Committeeman Robert Brown and his wife Martha.

As our National Headquarters sent out notification of hospitalizations and death, appropriate letters were sent. Responses to letters and e-mails expressing concerns for religious issues were coordinated with the National Headquarters Staff Liaison.

In May I attended the NEC meetings and dinners at the American Legion National Headquarters in Indianapolis. I offered prayers as requested. I also personally met with the Mayor of Indianapolis during these meetings. Memorial Day weekend celebrations found me on Saturday, May. 24th in Duluth, Georgia as the Emcee of the American Legion Riders Fallen Heroes Salute. On Monday, May 26th, I was in Brunswick, Georgia bringing greetings and offering prayers as needed.

In June I attended the Georgia American Boys State program and addressed the young men and staff on Sunday evening, offering a short service of encouragement and hope for our youth leaders. Later that month, at the Department of Georgia Convention, I was the guest speaker at the Sunday morning Memorial Service. I also offered prayers as requested during that weekend. In June I was also asked to sit on the Board of Directors of the Jacksonville (FL) Area National Veterans' Cemetery Committee and to serve as the Senior Chaplain at the Cemetery for funerals and remembrances.

The month of July was extremely memorable as I was able to spend 5 days in Washington, DC at the American Legion Boys Nation. During this time I was able to counsel with some of our youth. During the Memorial Service on Monday I was able to encourage our youth and staff alike. On Monday we went to Arlington National Cemetery and with the National Commander and two of our Boys Nation young men, we laid a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. One of the staff members, during this time, ended up in the hospital and I was able to visit and pray with him while in the hospital. I was truly encouraged by the Boys Nation youth as I listened to them in their individual meetings.

On August 16th I was in Callahan, Florida and represented the American Legion at a dedication ceremony for the West Nassau County Veterans' Memorial. I offered the invocation, benediction and prayer of dedication.

At the National Convention in Phoenix, Arizona I hosted the National Chaplain's Breakfast in which we honored the American Legion National Youth Champions. I also presided at the Memorial Service and delivered the morning message that follows my theme, "Let Your Light Shine". Department of Tennessee Auxiliary Chaplain, Jan Bruce, sang "The Lighthouse" immediately preceding my message. During the course of the National Convention and at various luncheons, receptions and banquets I offered prayers as requested.

This year has been the most rewarding year which I have enjoyed as a member of the American Legion. It has truly been an honor and a humbling experience to represent the American Legion at so many special events. The quality of people with whom I have served has been exceptional. The National Staff and the Washington Staff were superb in all that they have done to assist me in this position. Never did I have to worry about anything, staff had it all under control. It is with deep gratitude that I embrace, even more fully, the American Legion, its leaders and its future leaders. May God bless us all.

REPORT OF THE NATIONAL HISTORIAN
James M. Holmes, Indiana

History is something that is made and lasts forever and it is important that it be documented so it is never forgotten. My first task as National Historian was to help the

judging of post and department histories for the national contest in Indianapolis, Indiana during the National Executive Committee meeting held in the fall of 2007. Members of the National Association of Department Historians American Legion (NADHAL) worked in conjunction with Mr. Joe Hovish and his staff to make this venture a success. The results were given at the National Executive Committee meeting.

The results of the One-Year Department Narrative History were:
First Award, Plaque, Department of South Dakota
Second Award, Plaque, Department of Wisconsin
Third Award, Plaque, Department of Georgia
Certificates of Participation are awarded to Departments:
Department of North Carolina
Department of Texas
The results of the One-Year Department Yearbook History were:
First Award, Plaque, Department of Ohio
Second Award, Plaque, Department of North Carolina and Department of South Dakota
Third Award, Plaque Department of Georgia
Certificates of Participation are awarded to Departments:
Department of Colorado
Department of Missouri
Department of New Mexico

As National Historian I was honored to receive this appointment from Commander Conatser for which I say thank you. I would like to recognize the Department of Indiana with a special gratitude to Past National Vice Commander, Allen Titus who had the confidence in me to fill this appointment.

This year included a trip to Springfield, Illinois to attend the Lincoln Pilgrimage which is sponsored by Springfield Post 32. They have made it possible for over 73 years to keep the history of Lincoln and their post alive. As National Historian I attended the Washington, D.C. Conference and helped to promote the views of The American Legion to Congress along with National Commander Conatser's obligation to support the veterans of this great country with updates to the G.I. Bill and healthcare budgets and to be sure that our newest veterans and their families are important to each American Legion member and have our assistance and support. Many monuments have been erected to honor our veterans and their remembrance needs constant care to maintain the purpose of these monuments.

Now is a high time in our country to remember Americanism and the meaning of our freedom for which so many have paid the supreme sacrifice, and our children must be taught all the history that is associated with their freedom.

At the National Convention, I held a luncheon on Saturday, August 23 at the Hyatt Regency in Phoenix, Arizona. Many Legionnaires and friends attended this luncheon to hear Sgt. Major (Ret.) Steve Short of Indianapolis, Indiana speak on some of his military experiences.

For this National Historian, this year has been a lifetime opportunity and there are many people to thank, but I would like to acknowledge Joe Hovish and his staff for their hard work and making it possible to enjoy this year.

All good things have to come to an end but the memories and experiences of this year are an important part of history, but maybe more on a personal level. And as I continue to serve The American Legion organization I can only say, thanks for the memories.

NATIONAL JUDGE ADVOCATE
P. B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

Contracts

The following one hundred sixteen (116) contracts have been reviewed or prepared:

1. Articles of Agreement by and between The American Legion and The American Legion National Convention Corporation of Minnesota, covering the convocation of the 2011 Convention of The American Legion in the City of Minneapolis, State of Minnesota, have been executed.
2. A Memorandum of Agreement by and between The American Legion and National Veterans Legal Services Program, whereby National Veterans Legal Services will provide consultations, informal training of Department Service Officers, BVA staff and claims/representatives, case work review, briefings on proposed changes in law and regulations and assistance in methods for prompt adjudication of veterans' appeal cases.
3. An Agreement by and between The American Legion and AdoptaPlatoon (AAP), whereby a link has been established to Operation Crayon referring to AAP which provides morale-lifting mail and care package support to service members deployed overseas.
4. A Service agreement by and between The American Legion and Powerware Global Services, whereby Powerware Global Services replaces and services the battery in the computer room.
5. An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Data Processing Services, Inc., whereby Data Processing Services will add 15 disc drives to the computer system and create and add drives to the computer system storage capacity.
6. An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Neighborhood E-mail, whereby Neighborhood E-mail will assist in cleaning of in-house data base and E-mail files.
7. A Service Agreement by and between The American Legion and Fuller Engineering Service Corporation, whereby Fuller Engineering will provide maintenance on the Liebert Equipment in the computer room.
8. An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Dell Marketing L.P., whereby The American Legion will market the Dell Federal Member Computer Discount Purchase Program to its various associations, employees, members and affiliates.
9. An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Bally Total Fitness, whereby Bally Total Fitness will offer its services and products under The American Legion's Family Benefit Plan to its employees, members of the Organization and affiliates.
10. An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Norlight Telecommunications, Inc., whereby Norlight Telecommunications, Inc. will provide a dedicated internet port and service of same for The American Legion's computer system.
11. Housing contract between The American Legion and Marymount University to provide for lodging and food service for American Legion Boys Nation held in July 2007.
12. A Memorandum of Understanding by and between The American Legion and The United States Army Recruiting Command (USAREC), whereby The American Legion will assist the United States Army Recruiting Command to improve the recruiting environment for Army recruiters and USAREC will provide information regarding American Legion activities and special community events to local units, bulletins and newsletters.
13. An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Fischer/Parr Entertainment Group (FPEG), an Ohio corporation, to sponsor, at no direct financial cost to The American Legion, a NASCAR team for the Busch Series from Memorial Day 2005 through the end of the 2007 NASCAR season.
14. An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Bridgestone Golf to provide free golf equipment to military personnel returning from duty in the Middle East and Afghanistan.

15. A contract by and between The American Legion and Bluewho.com (web hosting provider), and sub agreement with Samuel G. Cooke American Legion Post 267 to purchase our web hosting and design service.
16. Two (2) List Protection Agreements by and between The American Legion and the following companies have been executed to cover the protection of magnetic tapes used for mass-mailings to the general membership of The American Legion:
    Barton-Cotton-Famous Hospitality, Inc.
    Association Group Insurance Administrators (AGIA)
17. A Service Agreement by and between The American Legion and Sigma Micro Corporation for The American Legion's Technical Services Rate Retainer (TSRR) subscription for hardware, operating system and environment support.
18. A Service Agreement by and between The American Legion and Budget Truck Rental, LLC for truck rental discount program.
19. Maintenance Agreement by and between The American Legion and Comtech Group for the IBM Software subscription for the AS400 and RS6000 computer software.
20. Maintenance Agreement by and between The American Legion and Quality Concepts for structural and environmental services (cleaning) at the Fort Ben location.
21. A Contract by and between The American Legion and Communications Products, Inc. for software upgrade for the existing server running Windows 2000 Server.
22. An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Stratalys Research & Consulting, LLC for a research project to understand the causes of membership non-renewal.
23. Maintenance and Sales Agreement by and between The American Legion and Ikon Office Solutions, Inc. for equipment maintenance.
24. An Agreement by and between The American Legion and FTD.COM, Inc. for a 10 percent discount for floral services via the Legion web site or by calling the FTD 800 number. This program is part of the Member Benefits Program.
25. A License Agreement by and between The American Legion and RLX Video, Inc. This is the vendor TN Marketing uses to provide their DVD's.
26. Annual Maintenance agreement by and between The American Legion and Eaton Power Quality Corporation to provide maintenance and perform preventative maintenance checks on the Uninterruptible Power System (UPS) which regulates the power spikes to the AS400 and is the battery backup in case of a power outage.
27. A License Agreement, by and between The American Legion and Lansa Inc. for software.
28. An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Caremark Pharmacy Discount Prescription for discount prescription program.
29. A Purchase Agreement by and between The American Legion and Managing Editor, Inc. (MEI) for K4 Publishing System software to be used by the Magazine Division.
30. An Agreement by and between The American Legion and The Seven Company, LLC, a consulting service to obtain and present sponsorships, marketing agreements and marketing loyalty program agreement for The American Legion.
31. A Service Agreement by and between The American Legion and Koorsen Fire & Security for fire alarm and detection systems.
32. An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Sears Commercial to promote products provided by Sears Commercial as a discount benefit to Legion members and employees.
33. An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Pitney Bowes Software, Inc. for software products.

34. An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Vanguard Car Rental USA Inc. (Alamo and National), which offers car rental discount programs to Legion members.
35. An Agreement by and between The American Legion and ASC Data Service which supplies data for four-year colleges for the *Need a Lift* brochure.
36. An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Fundamentals Company, Inc. to provide a fundraising opportunity through the sale of magazine subscriptions for Legion members and their families.
37. An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Bulkley Dunton Publishing Group for the purchase of paper to The American Legion.
38. Seventy-eight (78) Subcontractor Standard List Protection Agreements by and between The American Legion and the following companies have been executed to cover the protection of magnetic tapes used for mass mailings to the general membership of The American Legion:
    Marsh Affinity Group
    JH Marketing Services
    TN Marketing
    Quincy Sun
    Moore Wallace Response Marketing
    G E Financial Assurance
    E H Direct
    Aegon Direct Marketing Services, Inc.
    Bankers Life & Casualty Company
    Careington International
    Colonial Penn Life Insurance Company
    Mailing Services of Pittsburgh
    TransContinental Direct
    Webcraft LLC dba Vertis, Inc.
    Regulus Integrated Solutions
    Quebecor World Digest
    Versatile Card Technology
    CD-COM Systems Midwest, Inc.
    GMAC
    National General Insurance
    Commercial Letter, Inc.
    Veterans Online, LLC
    Name-Finders List
    VERTIS
    KDM
    ASC (The College Board)
    Military Advantage
    AEGON Direct Marketing
    PipMail
    Mainstreet Media-Kansas
    Aberdeen American News-South Dakota
    Torrington Telegram-Wyoming
    The Heritage Company
    HNE Printers/Daily Reporter
    Morgan Printing, Inc.
    Nfocus Consulting, Inc.
    Kramers Mailing Service
    FTD Branded
    True North Companies (Medicare Part D, Program-provided by PacifiCare
    Daily Freeman Journal
    CES Mail Communications, Inc.
    Signature Offset
    Quadriga Art, Inc.

Brickmill Marketing Services
Alliance Defense Fund
North Mail, Inc.
SIRVA Affinity Group Services
Perma-Graphics, Inc.
info USA, Inc.
PSA
Epsilon
Ripon Printers
PEP Direct, Inc.
Datagraphic
Source International
Freedom Graphic Systems
Data-Mail, Inc.
Ventura Printing
Commercial Letter, Inc.
Business Mailing Center
River's Edge Printing
SigmaMail
Crell Mail Advertising
Long Term Care Associates, Inc.
Caremark, LLC Confidentiality
Corporate Express Document & Print Mgmt.
MMP Direct and Printing
Konik and Company
The Mailing House
Commander Printed Products
SB MailWorks
Mail Manager
Mail Computer Services Direct
Avis and Budget Car Rental
The Hertz Corporation
Life Line Screening
International data Management
4 Warranty

Litigation

IN THE UNITED STATE COURT
OF APPEALS FOR THE NINTH
CIRCUIT LORI & LYNN BARNES-
WALLACE; MITCHELL BARNES-
WALLACE; MICHAEL & VALERIE
BREEN; MAXWELL BREEN,

Plaintiffs-Appellants/ Record Nos. 04-55732, 04-56167 XAP
Cross-Appellees,

v.

CITY OF SAN DIEGO

Defendant,

and

BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA
AND BOY SCOUTS OF

AMERICA-DESERT PACIFIC
COUNCIL,

Defendants-Appellees/
Cross-Appellants

This case arose when an agnostic couple and a gay couple sued the city of San Diego because of the Boy Scout's lease of Balboa Park for a campground and the swimming pool. The Plaintiffs claim the Boy Scouts are a religious organization because they require a belief in god and claim they were discriminatory because they did not allow gays to participate as leaders.

The Federal Court in San Diego essentially ruled in favor of the plaintiffs.

For an agnostic to claim religious discrimination against an organization that requires a belief in God does not make too much sense. An agnostic is an individual who doesn't "know" whether or not there is a God. This is different from an atheist who denies the existence of God. Hence, The American Legion believes that these plaintiffs should have been dismissed for lack of standing.

In addition, the gay couple never attempted to use the facilities or send their adopted child to use the facilities. They stated to the court that they "felt" that they would not be welcome. Feelings are not sufficient for Federal Jurisdiction.

After the courts ruling, the Boy Scouts appealed, as did the plaintiffs. Indeed, the plaintiffs got their appeal filed first.

Because the court totally misconstrues the case as a case about establishment of religion, when it is really a case about freedom of association and because it is a case about the basic values of this country, The American Legion has filed an amicus curiae in support of the Boy Scouts.

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
EASTERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

THE REV. DR. MICHAEL A. NEWDOW, et al.,
Plaintiff,

v. NO. CIV. S-05-17 LKK/DAD

THE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED
STATES OF AMERICA, et al.,
Defendants.

This case is a continuation of the earlier Newdow flag case which was resolved in the Supreme Court by a ruling that the plaintiff had no standing to bring the case.

Now, the plaintiff has had additional parties join him and has renewed his attack on the words "under God" in the Pledge of Allegiance.

The district court for the Eastern District of California on September 14, 2005 ruled that the California law requiring the saying of the Pledge of Allegiance in classrooms was unconstitutional, even though the usual accommodations were present in the statute for those who did not believe they could say the pledge. The court felt it was controlled by earlier Ninth Circuit opinions. The court further ruled that the saying of the pledge at the city counsel or in the U.S. Congress was constitutional.

American Legion has filed a petition to intervene as an amicus curiae. It seems clear that now that Newdow has plaintiffs that don't have his standing problems, since they are the custodial parents of the children for whom they are suing, the matter will again be heard by the Ninth Circuit and ultimately, hopefully, the Supreme Court.

COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA COUNTY OF SCHUYLKILL
Daniel Jeffrey Steich

Plaintiff S-2371-2005
v.

THE AMERICAN LEGION
POST NO. 575, ET AL

Defendants

The case was filed in Pennsylvania by filing a Praecipe for Summons and Summons. Under Pennsylvania law, a complaint need not be filed for several years unless the defendant insists. We see no reason to start spending the money. Accordingly, we are keeping an eye on the case. It cannot go forward until the plaintiff does file his complaint. The court has sent notice it intends to terminate this case unless a party fills out a Statement of Intention to Proceed before October 1, 2008.

SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA AND FOR THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

Philip K. Paulson,

Petitioner Case No. GC 849667

v.

Charles Abdelnour, in his
Official capacity as the City
Clerk of the City of San Diego;
Mikal Haas, In his Official
Capacity as Registrar
of Voters for the County
of San Diego;
And Does 1 to 10, Inclusive,

Respondents

This case involves the Mount Soledad War Memorial which contains a cross. Plaintiffs have sued in an attempt to have the cross removed and destroyed. A judge ordered the cross removed or the city would pay penalties of five thousand dollars ($5,000) per day. The matter is currently both in the Federal courts and in the California Supreme Court. American Legion was instrumental in obtaining a stay of the penalty order in the US Supreme Court. American Legion has filed its amicus brief in conjunction with the Department of California in the California Supreme Court. The United States Congress has enacted and president signed a statute which would turn the memorial over to the federal government. Hopefully, this will put an end to the state litigation. Nonetheless, we will proceed until we know the veteran's memorial is secure. A Federal Judge ruled the cross did not violate the constitution. The plaintiffs may appeal.

IN THE UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS
FOR THE SECOND CIRCUIT
05-1820-CV

IN RE: "AGENT ORANGE" PRODUCTS LIABILITY LITIGATION

JOE ISAACSON AND
PHYLLIS LISA ISAACSON,
Plaintiffs-appellants,

v.

DOW CHEMICAL COL, ET AL.,
Defendants-Appellees,
CAUSE NO. D-1-GN-06-000801

The American Legion has filed an amicus brief in this case in support of the claimants. The plaintiffs were not able to file a claim in the 1984 Agent Orange Settlement because they had not yet manifested any symptoms. Although these plaintiffs received no compensation and were essentially barred from the early case, the defendants have attempted to use the early case to deny them any compensation. Most of the other veteran's organizations have also joined in support of the plaintiffs.

IN THE DISTRICT COURT
TRAVIS COUNTY, TEXAS

RYAN VORLAND
Plaintiff

v.

345th JUDICIAL DISTRICT

CURTIS LESLIE HARRIS; LAKE
CITIES POST NO. 88, THE AMERICAN
LEGION, DEPARTMETN OF TEXAS,
LAKE DALLAS, TEXAS; AMERICAN
LEGION, DEPARTMENT OF TEXAS;
AND THE AMERICAN LEGION
Defendants

This is a dram shop case filed in Texas because of an auto accident by an individual who allegedly had been drinking at a Legion Post. Matter referred to our insurance company and counsel obtained. Shortly thereafter, the plaintiff's attorney filed a motion to withdraw. We understand the court authorized the withdrawal.

Hence the case is in limbo at the moment because it may be refiled. (A Summary Judgment was obtained in this case in September 2006.)

SUPERIOR COURT
JUDICIAL DISTRICT OF NEW HAVEN
AT NEW HAVEN

EARL POTTER, JR

VS.

THE AMERICAN LEGION (IN); THE AMERICAN LEGION (DC); THE AMERICAN LEGION (CT); THE AMERICAN LEGION, POST 88; WILLIAM F. COCKING; AND RAYMOND EARLEY 0901922

This is a dram shop case in which the plaintiff alleges that American Legion Post No. 88 in Connecticut allowed a non-member to drink to excess who then caused the plaintiff to trip and fall and hurt himself. The matter was referred to the insurance company who retained counsel. The case law demonstrating that The American Legion is not responsible for the actions of independent Posts (especially the Urban case) was forwarded to counsel who convinced plaintiff's lawyer to withdraw the action against The American Legion. The case is closed.

STATE OF INDIANA) IN THE HAMILTON SUPERIOR COURT
) SS:
COUNTY OF HAMILTON) CAUSE NO. 29DO2-0711-PL-1332

BRADLEY ANDREW RICKARD,
Plaintiff

v.

THE AMERICAN LEGION POST 341, ET AL., a/k/a JAMES EVANS POST 341 THE AMERICAN LEGION; ROBIN BOYD; and THE AMERICAN LEGION,
Defendants

This is a dram shop case involving American Legion Post No. 341 in Indiana. Plaintiff alleges that Robert Beatty drank at Legion Post No. 341 and was operating his vehicle, while intoxicated, causing a crash. Matter was referred to the insurance company who retained counsel. Counsel was furnished with the case law.

After extensive negotiations with counsel, plaintiff agreed to dismiss The American Legion National Organization without prejudice on the basis of the Urban case. The case is now over.

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF FAIRFAX COUNTY
VIRGINIA

PATRICIA DUNCAN
Plaintiff

v.

Case No. 2007 10727

THE AMERICAN LEGION
BRENDA J. DIMICHAEL (R/A)
et al
Defendants

This was a malicious prosecution and defamation case brought by an employee of a Legion Post in Virginia.

Even though the complaint names The American Legion, the National Organization was not served. Only the Post was served. When we found out about the action, we contacted plaintiff's counsel. After demonstrating to plaintiff's counsel that the National Organization was not involved in this case and could not be liable (the Urban case) a non suit was obtained. The case is now over.

PHILADELPHIA COUNTY COURT OF COMMON PLEAS
TRIAL DIVISION

JOYCE GRASSO
401 Montgomery Avenue
Rockledge, PA 19046
Plaintiff

v.

LIBERTY POST 308, THE AMERICAN LEGION DEPARTMENT OF PENNSYLVANIA
2305 Computer Road
Willow Grove, PA 19090

No. 000446

and

THE AMERICAN LEGION
1608 K Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20006

This is a slip and fall case involving American Legion Post No. 308 in the Department of Pennsylvania. The Post was sued as well as the Department and the National Organization. Even though the case should have been brought in Montgomery County, it was filed in Philadelphia County. The matter was referred to the insurance company and counsel obtained. Working with counsel, based on the Urban case, we were able to obtain an order from the court sustaining our preliminary objections, dismissing the complaint against The American Legion with prejudice and transferring the remaining case to Montgomery County. The case is now over as to the National Organization.

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF MISSISSIPPI
EASTERN DIVISION

PAUL ASHBY, GERRY WHITEHEAD
AND JESSICA PIGG WHITEHEAD

VERSUS NO. 1:7CV248-M-D

THE AMERICAN LEGION,
AMERICAN LEGION DEPARTMENT OF MISSISSIPPI
AND AMERICAN LEGION POST 130

This is a discrimination case based upon the fact that the best man at a wedding reception, during or after the reception, walked into the Post bar of Post No. 130 in Mississippi to order a drink. He objects to waiting fifteen minutes to be served and to the fact that the barmaid would not put his change in his hand, but placed it on the counter.

Plaintiff's lawyer sent a demand to The American Legion requesting The American Legion to waive Service of Process. A response was returned refusing to waive Service of Process citing the cases that show The American Legion is not responsible and giving the plaintiff's attorney a Summary History of The American Legion's position on race relations. Despite the case law showing that The American Legion is not responsible, plaintiff's attorney elected to serve The American Legion.

The insurance company denied coverage and an attorney was obtained. We have filed numerous motions and will be filing a motion for Summary Judgment. The only claim against The American Legion is that it "condoned" discrimination. This makes no sense and is not a tort known to attorneys. The case is proceeding.

2006-3159, 2008-3060
UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS
FOR THE FEDERAL CIRCUIT

CHRISTIAN M. DEJOHN,
Petitioner,

v.

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY,
Respondent.

This case brought by a veteran of Bosnia who was denied a job as an Historian by the U.S. Army in violation of his rights to Veteran's Preference.

The American Legion has filed an amicus brief in the Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit supporting Mr. DeJohn's rights to Veteran's Preference. The case is continuing.

IN THE SUPREME COURT
OF THE UNITED STATES

JOE ISAACSON AND
PHYLLIS LISA ISAACSON, ET AL.,
Petitioners

DANIEL RAYMOND STEPHENSON,
SUSAN STEPHENSON, DANIEL
ANTHONY STEPHENSON, AND
EMILY ELIZABETH STEPHENSON,
ET AL.,

v. 05-1826-CV

DOW CHEMICAL COMPANY; MONSANTO
COMPANY; HERCULES, INC., OCCIDENTAL
CHEMICAL CORPORATION;ULTRAMAR
DIAMOND SHAMROCK CORPORATION;
MAXUS ENERGY CORP.; CHEMICAL LAND
HOLDINGS, INC.; T-H AGRICULTURE &
NUTRITION CO.; THOMPSON HAYWARD
CHEMICAL COL; HARCROS CHEMICALS,
INC.' UNIROYAL, INC.; C.D.U. HOLDING, INC.;
AND UNIROYAL CHEMICAL CO., INC.
Respondents.

These cases involve Agent Orange issues. Neither plaintiff was allowed in the class action because they had not at that time developed symptoms. Since that case is over and closed, the symptoms have been developed. The individuals have, accordingly, sued the chemical companies.

The defense is that the case is over and the chemical companies were already sued in a class action. However, these people were specifically excluded from the class who could recover. Hence, their rights cannot be cut off by the class action.

Notwithstanding this, the Second Circuit has ruled against these plaintiffs. The American Legion has joined them as an amicus curiae in their petition for certiorari to the Supreme Court. If certiorari is granted, we will be filing a brief in support of the individuals.

IN THE
SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

PLEASANT GROVE CITY,
Petitioner,

v.

SUMMUM,
Respondent.
On Writ of Certiorari To The UnitedStates
Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit

These cases involve the right of private parties to place memorials disparaging veterans on city property merely because there is a private memorial on city property honoring veterans. The 10th Circuit ruled that Sumum, the plaintiff, had the right to place his memorial on the property of the city of Pleasant Grove and Duchan City. This, of course, would have a chilling effect on the placement on veteran's memorials. The American Legion agreed to become an amicus curiae and has been joined by the VFW and The Military Order of the Purple Heart, Commissioned Officers Association of the US, The Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc., Veterans Coalition and The Americans Ex Prisoners of War. Our briefs have been filed in the Supreme Court.

NATIONAL DIRECTOR OF INDUSTRIAL PROPERTY OF THE ECUADORIAN INSTITUTE OF INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

THE AMERICAN LEGION,
Opposer,
Request no. 192064/07
v. Trademark: AMERICAN LEGION
Published in the Intellectual Property
CIGNAL INTERNATIONAL CORP., Gazette No. 514 of November 2007
Applicant

This is a matter in Ecuador in which The American Legion is imposing the attempt of Cignal International Corp. to register the emblem of The American Legion as one of its trademarks. We believe that, should Cignal be successful, it will flood the US with a lot of cheap merchandise bearing the emblem of The American Legion. Accordingly, opposition to their application has been filed in Ecuador.

We are in the process of filing a similar case in Panama to get an approved registration in that country cancelled.

SUPERIOR COURT OF NEW JERSEY
MERCER COUNTY-LAW DIVISION

DANIELLE M. ESTEVEZ AND
CARLOS ESTEVEZ
Plaintiff

vs. Docket No. MER-L-000713-08

SANDRA I. STEWART-DAVIS,
CHARLES T. DAVIS, AMERICAN LEGION,
XYZ CORPORATION (a fictitious company),
John Does and Jane Does (a fictitious designation
representing one or more person)
Defendant

This is, apparently, a dram shop case. The complaint is so poorly drafted that we do not know for sure. It merely alleges that The American Legion is responsible for an unnamed Post who allowed one of the defendants to drink there. There are a number of allegations of carelessness, recklessness and negligence, but no facts.

The case was originally served against the American Legion National Auxiliary on July 9, 2008. Noting that The American Legion was also named, the National Organization of The American Legion waited service. When it did not come, further investigation revealed that service had been made on the agent for the service of process on April 14, 2008. On learning of this detail, counsel was obtained and an answer filed to avoid default. The matter has been referred to the insurance company, but we have no decision from them yet.

In any event, we have recommended that our attorney be used by the insurance company since he has an outstanding record of representation for The American Legion. He has won sixteen cases with no losses.

On his own motion, trial counsel suggested that he contact plaintiff's attorney to see if the complaint would be dismissed, based on the Urban case, since there is no liability in the National Organization and plaintiffs apparently do not even know if there was consumption of alcohol at a Legion Post or if there was, which post.

Other Legal Matters

There are a number of other legal proceedings in which The American Legion has been contacted for discovery purposes, which are not part of or named in the particular cause and a number of cases are in the beginning stages but not yet filed.

The National Judge Advocate has rendered 985 written opinions on questions which have been submitted by the several Departments and/or Posts of The American Legion, National Officers, staff members and individual members of our organization. These opinions involved matters legal, such as contracts, probate matters, federal tax questions, torts, insurance matters, Articles of Incorporation, civil rights statutes, retirement benefits under the law and other matters of a legal nature; problems concerning the interpretation and construction of the National Constitution and By-Laws of The American Legion, policy matters, many of which matters required a great deal of legal research.

In each instance, when appropriate, a copy of the opinion rendered was furnished to each of the following so that they would be acquainted with the decision affecting their Department; National Executive Committeeman, Department Commander, Department Adjutant, and the Department Judge Advocate of the Department involved.

Many oral opinions were also rendered to the National Officers, National Commission Chairmen, to Department Officers, and to staff Directors of the national organization upon subjects involving matters legal, financial, administrative and policy.

There were 18 written opinions rendered during the year to the National Secretary of the American Legion Auxiliary, in response to queries submitted to her for determination by me.

The National Judge Advocate has also rendered oral advice on matters legal and administrative to the National Officers of the American Legion Auxiliary on many occasions during the past year.

The American Legion Magazine

The National Judge Advocate in accordance with established policy, has reviewed all manuscripts of articles destined for future publication in *The American Legion Magazine* and the *Dispatch*, for the purpose of expunging statements or materials questionable in character, contained therein which might subject The American Legion to a suit in libel. To date 160 manuscripts have been reviewed and appropriate comments in connection therewith were transmitted, when necessary, to the Publisher or Editor of *The American Legion Magazine*.

The American Legion Retirement Plan For Employees Of The National Headquarters And Subordinate Groups Thereof

In accordance with the requirements of law, The American Legion has filed all necessary returns, reports and allied documents for the calendar year 2007 with the Internal Revenue Service in connection with The American Legion Retirement Plan. The office of the National Judge Advocate also reviewed the Summary Annual Report for The American Legion Retirement Plan and arranged for the distribution thereof as required by law.

Employees' Salary Savings (401(k)) Plan

In accordance with the provisions of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (ERISA) The American Legion has filed all of the necessary Annual Return Reports and allied documents for the calendar year 2007 with the Internal Revenue Service in connection with the American Legion Employees' Salary Savings 401(k) Plan. The office of the National Judge Advocate also reviewed the Summary Annual Report for the Employees' Salary Savings Plan and arranged for the distribution thereof as required by law.

Parliamentary Duties

The National Judge Advocate attended the past National Convention of The American Legion and all meetings of the National Executive Committee and has served both bodies in the capacity of National Parliamentarian.

Other Duties

The National Judge Advocate functions as Secretary for Haynes & Partners Communications, Inc. and attended all of the board meetings of said corporation and caused the minutes of each meeting to be prepared and distributed. The National Judge Advocate also functions as counsel on matters involving to date contracts, labor issues, real estate law, postal regulations, corporate organizations and insurance.

The National Judge Advocate also functions as counsel for and a director of The Citizens Flag Alliance, Inc. In that capacity, the National Judge Advocate reviews contracts such as the trust for the flag essay scholarship fund and attends board meetings. The Office of the National Judge Advocate files required charitable registrations and reports to allow the American Legion National Organization to solicit funds in the states with charitable solicitation registration laws. To date, 29 registrations and reports have been filed. Others will be filed as due. Some counties even attempt to require registrations and reports.

Meetings of the National Retirement Committee and Salary Savings Committee

The National Judge Advocate, a member of The National Retirement Committee of National Headquarters, The American Legion, and Chairman of the Employee's Salary

Savings Committee, has attended and participated in the meetings held by these committees during the past year.

I have also, in response to requests, drafted legal and other documents for the use of National Officers of the American Legion and Officers of the American Legion Auxiliary. During the past year I have met with and attended numerous conferences with officials of outside corporations and the government for the purpose of representation or for the rendering of advice and guidance for and on behalf of The American Legion on matters legal and administrative.

In conclusion, the National Judge Advocate wishes to thank all National Officers, Department Officials, and members of the National Executive Committee for the valuable assistance and cooperation extended to him during the past year.

ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES
Daniel S. Wheeler, Virginia, Executive Director

Three major responsibilities are assigned to the Executive Director, whose office is located in the National Headquarters, Indianapolis:

- During absences of the National Adjutant from The American Legion National Headquarters, he acts for him. He additionally performs duties assigned by the National Adjutant.
- He oversees The American Legion Magazine and Administrative Services, which includes the following divisions: Human Resources, Maintenance, Library, and the E. A. Blackmore Museum.
- He serves on the Personnel Committee, HPC Board of Directors, the IT Committee, and various other committees as needed.

The Administrative Services Division also provides all secretarial assistance to the executive officers of The American Legion. All Division Directors resident at the Indianapolis National Headquarters report to the Executive Director

Mail
June 1, 2007 through May 31, 2008

Incoming Letters and parcels (distributed to Divisions for processing).....1,000,351
Incoming Parcels.....4,441
Outgoing Letters/Parcels (Exclusive of National Emblem Sales) 9,968.423

Freight and Express
June 1, 2007 through May 31, 2008

Out (cartons).....4,337
Out (pounds).....216,416
UPS (in).....2,895
UPS (out).....7,401

LIBRARY AND MUSEUM
Library
Joseph J. Hovish New York, Librarian

The mission of The American Legion Library is to provide an information storage and retrieval system for The American Legion.

Indexing of documents continues. The main emphasis has been on the indexing of the back issues of The American Legion Magazine. Since 1987, these issues have been indexed. Now the task is to keep current with those issues that appear on a monthly basis. The Library now has an index to over 50,000 images in the collection, and a project to make the book collection more accessible continues.

A number of researchers made extensive visits to the Library. Areas of research involved the remembrance of World War II in America; World War II memorials in America; religion and American soldiers of the Great War; nationalism in Germany and the United States during the first half of the 20th century; and the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

Significant Gifts to the National Headquarters Library

Bayonet, donated by Jeff Kelsey.

Archangels in Battle, donated by Donna J. Krutka, MD.

Mankato Legionnaire, donated by Patrick W. Foss.

History of the U.S. Navy and *My War*, donated by James M. Holmes.

World War II Time Life Series and Addison Vesley Series of Vietnam Experience, donated by Mr. and Mrs. Bruce Laetsch.

The Spokesman-Review, donated by Clayton T. Glenn.

Hoosier Legionnaire, donated by Norman W. Euler.

American's Fighting Planes, donated by Marty Justis.

Legion Airs, donated by Don Novotny.

DVD *An American Legend,* donated by Brett P. Reistad.

The following books have been donated by Joseph Steil: *The Politics of The American Civil Liberties Union; Tet!; I Remember/Memories of Life and War; The Luftwaffe Data Book; Hilter's Panzers East; Submarine/A Guided Tour Inside A Nuclear Warship; The Third World War; Like A Thunderbold/The Lafayette Escadrille and the Advent of American Pursuit In World War I; Wings of Hope/The U.S. Air Force and Humanitarian Airlift Operations; American Armies and Battlefields In Europe; Personalities and Reminiscences of the War; Operation Joint Guardian/The U.S. Army in Kosovo; The Threatening Storm; The Soviet Air Force: Since 1918; The God Machine; United We Stand/Flying The American Flag; Selected Chaff/The Wartime Columns of Al McIntosh; Panther; Soviet Military Power 1990; The Armament Tide; Pearl Harbor/Amazing Facts; The Airmen and the Headhunters; Men In Black; Russian Civil and Military Aircraft 1884-1969; The Encyclopedia of British Military Aircraft; Fighter/A History of Fighter Aircraft; The Siege of Leningrad 1941-1944; Barbarossa The First 7 Days; A Concise History of The United States Marine Corps, 1775-1969; Air Forces of the World; The Encyclopedia of the World's Combat Aircraft; Reaching Globally, Reaching Powerfully: The United States Air Force in the Gulf War; and Beyond The White House.*

The following books have been donated by NADHAL: *Ordinary Heroes; Women In The Wild Blue; One Day In History, December 7, 1941; Guadalcanal/The U.S. Marines In World War II; and The American Aircraft Factory In World War II.*

Bulletins, Reports, etc. Received and Filed 116
Periodical Titles Received 208
Books, Pamphlets and *The American Legion Magazine* cataloged 1,476
Correspondence Written by National Historian 485
Correspondence Written by the Librarian 936
Prominent Legionnaire Questionnaires Mailed 943
Prominent Legionnaire Questionnaires Received 260
Follow-ups of Correspondence 31
Items Microfilm Added to Stock 21,635

Significant Gifts to the National Headquarters Museum

1938 National Convention programs, donated by Norman W. Euler

Substantial archival material from the Department of Washington, submitted by Thomas Conner.

Christmas Day 1918 menu, the booklet Popular Songs of the A.E.F., and copies of the John Zmija's obituary, prayer card and Legion emblem, donated by Jeanne R. Parker.

Sheet music entitled, "I'm Coming Back," donated by Robert L. Morrill.

National Organization of World War Nurses pin, donated by Lee Hippensteel.

Resolutions signed by Past National Commander Lewis Gough (1952-1953) and Past National Commander Frank Belgrano, Jr. (1934-1935), donated by David Thomas Rankin.

Joseph John Fielder's World War I uniform, donated by Lois F. Wiley.

Plaque as a period piece from the 1928 National Convention, donated by University of Texas San Antonio Library.

Wood carved Eagle, donated by the Greater Phoenix Convention & Visitors Bureau.

Print of five Allied World War I military leaders taken at the 1921 National Convention, donated by Donald M. Zeigler.

Scrapbook of Dan and Minnie Collins, donated by John A. Young.

Material on the Memorial Day Ceremony held at the Mexico City National Cemetery, donated by Mark A. Walker.

Photograph of the Drum and Bugle corps from Harper-Van Dyke Post 359 taken at the 10th National Convention, donated by Michele M. Smith.

Red, White and Blue Commemorative Book and the Red, White Blue Program of the musical extravaganza, donated by Dee Schraegle.

Photograph of the Statute of Library, donated by the artist Alfred G. Weart.

American Legion uniform and Legion pin, donated by Marilyn White.

The following items have been donated by Jerome W. Kelly: two flag bases (round); flag stand; The American Legion emblem card table; gavel and bell, Pittinger Post No. 119; Plaque—Traverse City; Plaque—The American Legion Emblem; Plaque—National Commander 1939-1940; Plaque—Pittinger Post No. 119; Plaque—Appreciation from National Executive Committee; Gold Membership Card, L. A. Breakfast Club; two Blue Star Banners; New York 1937 National Convention pictorial book; The American Legion emblem cover, velvet; The American Legion 50th Anniversary Commemorative Plaque; letter from Governor George Craig, Past National Commander; Proclamation of Council of the Sagamores of the Wabash; Sheet Music—"The Marching Legionnaires, Step by Step We March Along"; and three sunflower buttons—Ralph T. O'Neil, National Commander.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (IT) DIVISION
Jeffrey O. Brown, Indiana, Executive Director

The Information Technology (IT) Division Staff play a key role in the selection of all software to be used by National Headquarters staff. IT also determines and procures the hardware to be used by employees of National Headquarters and is responsible for troubleshooting and maintaining the equipment. The IT Division maintains the telecommunications that inter-connect the two Indianapolis, Indiana offices with our facility in Washington, D.C.

IT is responsible for the computer system which houses The American Legion National Headquarters membership database as well as keeping this database updated with changes to the membership—whether it be adding new members, renewing existing members, changing addresses of members or changing any other membership information. Much of this work is accomplished using a high-speed optical scanner, capable of processing in excess of 100,000 responses a day.

The Internet Operations group is also a part of the IT Division. All aspects of The Legion's web presence (www.legion.org) are handled within IT. We have the creative, design and technical staff and resources to present over 5,000 web pages of information to the world. Website content suggestions are provided from various sources, internally and externally, but the determination of what gets posted is made by our Public Relations Division.

In conjunction with the membership database capabilities, The American Legion has invested in sophisticated list processing software, which the IT Division administers. This software ensures that all mailings are done at the lowest cost by complying with U.S. Postal Service guidelines.

The IT Division also has the capability to perform high-speed personalized laser printing. Annual membership cards, membership solicitation letters, renewal notices, return address labels for the Departments' fundraising programs and mailing labels for a variety of communications pieces are all printed by the IT Division.

A Post and Department membership tracking software (AIM) is also supported by the IT Division, along with the ALPOP product, which allows Post leaders to access the National Membership database and to perform certain maintenance functions.

AMERICANISM COMMISSION
Joseph E. Caouette, Jr., New Hampshire, Chairman
Marty Justis, Maryland, 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 an understanding and practical manner to Legion Posts and other groups and individuals, including young America.

While the Americanism program consists of a broad, objective, general plan that features wide-range community service, better citizenship, youth development and counter-subversive activities, the efforts of the Americanism Commission are educational in nature and embrace these specific objectives:

- Promote understanding of the principles of democratic governmental problems, and bringing more citizens to think seriously of the duties of citizenship;
- Give sound, practical service in our communities, working to make these communities better and safer places in which to live;
- Emphasize religion, encouraging its continuation in the life of every citizen;
- Encourage education in every possible manner, presenting school awards, sponsoring and conducting oratorical contests, cooperating with education and citizenship groups, promoting proper flag etiquette and display, and sponsoring objective youth development programs;
- Do important work for the youth of America, sponsoring American Legion Baseball, the American Legion High School Oratorical Contest, American Legion Boys State, American Legion Boys Nation, American Legion Junior Shooting Sports Program, Boy Scout activities and many other citizenship and objective training activities;
- Work for the assimilation of immigrants through schools of citizenship and other agencies and stand for the restriction of immigration so that this assimilation may approach perfection; and
- Combat subversive and terrorist activities, all un-American groups and activities which have for their aim the downfall of democracy in America.

Additionally, the Americanism Commission has continued to be actively involved in legislative matters affecting our way of life. Among our legislative priorities are illegal entry of aliens into this country, voluntary prayer in public buildings, bilingual education alternatives and English as the official language of the United States. Two current major legislative initiatives of The American Legion are 1) the continuing efforts to effect a constitutional amendment that would give Congress the authority to enact flag protection laws, and 2) coordinating a nationwide effort to combat the secular cleansing of our American heritage through Establishment clause lawsuits.

This Commission has the responsibility for supervision and coordination of two standing committees: The Counter-Subversive Activities Committee and the National Committee on Education.

Following is a summary of the several programs, which are the responsibility of the Americanism Commission and have been conducted during the 2007-2008 American Legion year.

American Legion Boys State/Boys Nation

The American Legion believes that if the United States is to maintain its form of government, it must have a citizenry that has a fundamental understanding and interest in its operation. This is what the Boys State program does for the young men of our nation. It teaches the fundamentals of American government through the state level.

It was 74 years ago that Legionnaires in the state of Illinois recognized the need for a program that would help high school boys understand and appreciate the government they were learning about in the classroom. It was a time in the history of this Nation when un-American ideas seriously threatened the future of the Nation. The whole idea of Boys State, then and now, is to show young people that beyond a doubt, our form of government is good; but its preservation depends upon intelligent, informed and loyal citizens in combination with an honest and impartial administration of government activities.

Ten years after the inception of Boys State as a program of The American Legion, the National Organization recognized the need for a program similar to Boys State at the National level and in 1946, established American Legion Boys Nation. This year, it celebrated the 63rd anniversary session.

Both Boys State and Boys Nation are unique programs that emphasize participation and personal experience in a respective model "state" and "nation" that is complete with its governing bodies and elected officials.

Each year 20,000 young Americans take part in Boys State, and throughout its 74 year history, the program has graduated well over 1,750,000 young men.

Every year, each Boys State selects two outstanding graduates to represent them at American Legion Boys Nation. In 2008 the program was again held in Washington, D.C., during July, and it introduced delegates first-hand to the structure and function of the federal government.

The week of government training in the Nation's Capital combines lectures and forums with visitations to federal agencies and institutions, shrines and historical points in and about Washington, D.C. Actual participation in the political process is highlighted through the week to include the organization of party conventions and the nomination and election of a Boys Nation president and vice president. In addition to federal legislators and representatives of federal agencies, American Legion officials and other leaders of national distinction participate in Boys Nation. Joseph Riley of Etowah, Tennessee was elected President of the 63rd session of Boys Nation. He joined the youth champion delegation as a guest of the National Commander at the National Convention of The American Legion in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26-28, 2008.

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. This program, in its 71st year, was recognized by the Federal Commission for the Bicentennial of the United States Constitution as a program of "exceptional merit."

Each contestant must give a prepared oration on some phase of the United States Constitution, giving emphasis on the duties and obligations of a citizen to our government. The prepared oration must be the original effort of each contestant, taking not less than eight nor more than ten minutes for delivery. Each contestant must also give an assigned topic presentation on a constitutional topic (not known until the time of the contest) taking not less than three nor more than five minutes for delivery.

Funds totaling $138,000 in college scholarships are available to the fifty-four National level contestants, with the winner receiving an $18,000 scholarship. Funds for these awards are provided by The American Legion Life Insurance Fund. In addition to the scholarships awarded by the National Organization, there are scholarships awarded by intermediate organizations of The American Legion to participants in local levels of competition.

The 71st annual National Finals Contest was held at Indianapolis, Indiana, in April 2008. The three finalists were: First place—Spencer Harjung, Elkton, Maryland second place—Virginia "Ginger" Macfarlan, Siloam Springs, Arkansas; third place—Christopher Pagliarella, Seymour, Connecticut.

Boy Scouts of America

The American Legion charters approximately 2,770 Scout Units in communities across the country involving more than 72,800 young people. Its commitment to the principles of Scouting dates back to the Legion's first National Convention in 1919.

The American Legion continues to be seriously concerned with the continued acts of domestic terrorism by the ACLU and its unrelenting attacks against the Boy Scouts of America and the Boy Scouts' efforts to maintain and practice traditional family values with regard to membership and leadership standards.

The American Legion selected Paul Banwart, Shakopee, Minnesota, as its 2008 Eagle Scout of the Year. Selection was based on his outstanding religious, school, community and scouting achievements. He will receive a $10,000 scholarship from The American Legion.

Three Eagle Scouts were named runners-up for the award and each will receive a $2,500 scholarship. They are David Cairns, Stowe, Vermont; Brandon Drozd, Genoa, Nebraska; and Tyler Moore, Marine, Illinois.

In addition, an estimated 8,000 certificates honoring new Eagle Scout recipients are distributed annually.

Almost three hundred and seventy American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary and Sons of The American Legion members have received The American Legion and Scouting Square Knot award to recognize their dedication and work to assist in furthering the Scouting programs of The American Legion.

Junior Shooting Sports Program

The American Legion Junior Shooting Sports Program is a national Americanism program administered through Post-sponsored Junior Shooting Clubs. The purpose of the program is to provide gun safety and marksmanship training for young people and to offer a wholesome recreational activity through organized competition. The Junior Shooting Sports Program has 1,070 active clubs with almost 15,000 young people participating.

The 18th annual Junior Air Rifle National Championship was conducted August 5-10, 2008 at the Olympic Training Center range in Colorado Springs, Colorado. The tournament climaxed two rounds of postal matches which began shortly after the first of the year and involved almost 1,700 entrants.

The competition was divided into two categories: precision air rifle and sporter air rifle. Medals and plaques were awarded in both categories, as well as in each of the prone, kneeling and standing positions.

The 2008 winners were Ethan Settlemires of Walnut, Mississippi (Precision) and Xentri Garza of Fort Worth, Texas (Sporter). Both received $2,500 scholarships provided by the Sons of The American Legion.

Eight and Forty National Lung and Respiratory Disease Nursing Scholarship Fund

The American Legion administers the Eight and Forty National Lung and Respiratory Disease Nursing Scholarship. This scholarship was created to assist Registered Nurses in securing advanced preparation for those positions in supervision, administration or teaching. These prospective positions must have a direct relationship in the areas of care and prevention as it relates to lung and respiratory diseases. The Eight and Forty, for 2008-2009, awarded six $3,000 scholarships to recipients in six states for one year's study to assist in furthering their education. This brings their cumulative total for the past 48 years to 844 scholarships, totaling over $1.5 million to help eliminate personnel shortages in this important area of nursing. This scholarship program will again be offered for the 2009-2010 school year.

Flag Education

The American Legion is a nationally recognized authority on the proper display of the United States Flag. Each year, thousands of letters, phone calls, and electronic mail messages are routinely answered giving factual information on the display, use of and respect for the American Flag.

The American Legion continues distribution and sale of "For Which It Stands" a multimedia instructional resource about the history of the flag of the United States, the significance and meaning of our flag, and respecting and caring for our flag. It is intended primarily for use with students in the upper elementary and middle/junior high school

grades. Over 13,000 copies of the DVD have been sold since the debut of the DVD in early 2005.

Additionally, over 65,000 copies of the publication *Let's Be Right on Flag_Etiquette* and more than 100,000 copies of the pamphlet, *Flag of the United States—How to Display It, How to Respect It* are distributed annually to schools, organizations and individuals. This information is sent at little or no cost to all who request it.

In 1988, The American Legion published *Our Country's Flag*, an educational comic book for use in elementary schools. Well over one million copies have been distributed since the booklet was introduced. In May 1995, the education booklet, *I Pledge Allegiance*, was published, also for use in elementary schools. In 2005, The American Legion added *Our Country's Veterans* to its list of educational publications.

The American Legion continues its campaign to protect the U.S. Flag from physical desecration. All 50 state legislatures have passed memorializing resolutions in support of a constitutional amendment to give Congress the authority to enact flag protection laws. Working with other organizations of the American Legion-founded Citizens Flag Alliance, The American Legion shepherded a flag protection Constitutional amendment through the House of Representatives six times in as many Congresses. In June of 2006, The American Legion spearheaded the drive for the amendment in the U.S. Senate, coming within one vote of passage there. The legislation has been introduced in the 110th Congress.

Service to God and Country

A program of basic Americanism, "Service to God and Country," seeks to prevent the spiritual decay of America by charging the citizenry with a spirit of positive Americanism, respect for law, reverence for authority and awareness of our human rights and freedoms.

"Service to God" emphasizes regular public worship, daily family prayer and the religious education of children, while "Service to Country" attempts to inculcate a sense of individual obligation to the community, state and Nation. These objectives are aimed at preparing young Americans to take up tomorrow's responsibilities by teaching them moral and spiritual values, renewed interest in our Country's history, self-discipline, self-reliance, ideals of loyalty and honesty.

Each year, a Conference for the Department Chaplains is held under the direction of the National Chaplain. Training and program information is provided for further dissemination to District and Post Chaplains who coordinate the program at the local level.

American Legion Baseball

American Legion Baseball marks its 83rd season in 2008. Over 100,000 players on 5,000 teams participated in this American Legion Americanism youth activity during the past year. The 2007 George W. Rulon American Legion Baseball Player of the Year is Blaine Drozd from Genoa, Nebraska.

More than seven million dollars in sponsorship fees are spent on American Legion Baseball teams by the local posts. One million dollars is appropriated by The American Legion National Organization to conduct eight Regional Tournaments and the World Series of American Legion Baseball.

Many Legion players have gone on to distinguish themselves in Major League Baseball and have been honored with election to the Hall of Fame. Over 52 Hall of Fame members played American Legion Baseball including Tony Gwynn, Tom Seaver, Johnny Bench, Pee Wee Reese, Bob Feller, Ted Williams, Willie Stargel, Stan Musial, Carl Yaztremski, Warren Spahn, Brooks Robinson, Frank Robinson, and Paul Molitor.

Over 50 percent of the Major League ballplayers and almost 76 percent of college players competed in American Legion Baseball as teenagers. The lessons learned on the baseball diamond, such as leadership, teamwork and respect for the rules, are lessons that are learned for a lifetime.

COUNTER-SUBVERSIVE ACTIVITIES COMMITTEE
Robert Bournival, New Hampshire, Chairman
Robert Caudell, Indiana, Assistant Director

The Counter-Subversive Activities Committee, since its establishment by the National Executive Committee of The American Legion on November 17, 1950, has scrutinized and continues to monitor what is transpiring in the realm of subversion and terrorism. A program of the Americanism Commission, reports of activities are made to the National Executive Committee at its Spring and Fall Meetings and at National Convention.

The Committee is responsible for furnishing background information on assigned resolutions that are considered by the National Americanism Commission for recommended action to the National Executive Committee or the National Convention.

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
Rev. James T. Akers, Kansas, Chairman
Robert Caudell, Indiana, Assistant Director

The National Committee on Education, established in 1976, is comprised of members from both The American Legion and the American Legion Auxiliary.

The purposes of the Committee are: (1) to inform itself and The American Legion/American Legion Auxiliary of developments, problems and potentials in the field of education; (2) to recommend appropriate policies and programs for The American Legion/American Legion Auxiliary; and (3) to maintain contact with the education community so that there may be an interchange of thinking between The American Legion/American Legion Auxiliary, educators, students and other organizations concerned with the well-being of education throughout the Nation.

Education was one of the first major concerns of The American Legion. In 1921, the organization committed itself to a constructive support of education. During the years that followed, The American Legion developed a formal Policy on Education.

The American Legion has always supported the principle that education is a necessary prerequisite to the successful functioning of a republic. While recognizing the right of private and religious groups to maintain schools, The American Legion vigorously subscribes to the necessity for a publicly supported education system to ensure that every American child has the opportunity for an adequate education. The American Legion believes that popular self-government, as set forth in the Constitution of the United States, cannot continue to exist without a continuing system of free public education. Not only does proper national defense require trained personnel, but every phase of life today demands that we have competent citizens who are qualified, willing and able to discharge their responsibilities.

The availability of educational opportunity for individuals to pursue their own development is a prerequisite to the achievement of all other social goals. Our education system must be designed to provide every person with the means to reach their potential which will provide our Country with the high level of responsible citizens and specialized workers that it requires. In turn, we will have greater assurance of economic growth, of sound decision-making, and the knowledge necessary to promote our national security.

The American education system should produce citizens who understand and are dedicated to principles of free enterprise; to democratic principles and processes; and whose devotion to freedom and human dignity goes beyond mere lip service.

The Education Program of The American Legion consists of four basic elements: (1) recognition of local systems through observance of American Education Week; (2) dissemination of scholarship and financial aid information through the publication *Need A Lift?;* (3) participation by American Legion Posts and American Legion Auxiliary Units in a community-wide effort to enhance the programs and policies of the local schools through the guidelines provided in the handbook PACT (Post, Auxiliary, Community Together); and (4) scholarship programs.

American Education Week is an annual event co-sponsored nationally by The American Legion. The observance was originally established by The American Legion with the help of the National Education Association in 1921. The major objective of the

program is to focus public attention on the needs and achievements of the Nation's schools. This year's theme is "Great Public Schools: A Basic Right and Our Responsibility." The observance will be November 16-23, 2008.

The publication *Need A Lift?* is revised annually and contains 152 pages of scholarship, grant and loan information, work-study cooperative programs and sources of career information for all students. There is a section directed toward opportunities for veterans and their dependents. Another section lists scholarships and financial aid available from Departments of The American Legion and American Legion Auxiliary totaling more than $685,000. Each fall, complimentary copies of *Need A Lift?* are sent to more than 29,500 high schools across the nation. In all, last year nearly 80,000 copies of *Need A Lift?* were distributed from the Legion's National Headquarters.

A companion to *Need A Lift?* is the pamphlet *A Guide for Parents and Students* which contains planning and financial aid information for high school students and their parents. Each year, distribution of more than 100,000 copies of each of these publications is done through American Legion Posts, schools, counselors and librarians, by mail and through distribution at national education conventions. Copies of these publications can also be obtained by writing The American Legion National Emblem Sales Division, P.O. Box 1050, Indianapolis, Indiana 46206. Individual copies of *Need A Lift?* are $3.00 plus shipping and handling, prepaid. *A Guide for Parents and Students* is available at a cost of 10 cents each or $2.95 per 100, plus shipping and handling, prepaid.

Following the terrorist attack on the United States on September 11, 2001, The American Legion established the September 11th Memorial Scholarship Fund to provide educational opportunities for the children of American service men and women who die while on active duty on or after September 11, 2001. The fund will provide "American Legion Legacy Scholarships" to the children to attend college and will be in addition to their governmental entitlements. Fund raising activities are ongoing with an initial goal of 20 million dollars established to fund this scholarship. Other scholarship programs include the American Legion High School Oratorical Scholarship Program; Eagle Scout of the Year; American Legion Baseball Leadership Scholarship; Gatorade Sportsmanship Award Scholarship; and the Samsung American Legion Scholarship. Through these scholarship programs, The American Legion issues, on average, $450,000 annually to eligible students to further their education.

The *PACT Handbook* is the guide for American Legion Education Chairmen. It contains information on the goals and objectives of the education program, ideas and suggestions for activities, coordinating concepts and a typical calendar for a successful program. Programs covered in the handbook include: Citizenship Education, Career Education activities such as career nights, community resource files, Adopt-A-School, how to promote American Education Week, and financial aid nights.

Over 23,000 students are recipients of The American Legion School Award Medal each year. This award is designed to recognize a student for the qualities of courage, honor, leadership, patriotism, scholarship and service. The award is presented to a boy and a girl upon graduation from elementary school, junior high/middle school or high school.

The American Legion believes that the citizens of this country should be dedicated to the pursuit of excellence in the entire realm of intellectual endeavor; that our people should recognize those persons who have developed their intellectual abilities to the fullest extent; that teachers should enrich their knowledge, particularly in the field in which they teach and that scholarship assistance to deserving students should be expanded.

Such an educational program will fulfill the dreams of the past, the aspirations of the present and the needs of the future. The American Legion supports such a system of education and believes that the vitality of our democratic way of life is dependent upon such schools.

AMERICANISM COMMISSION
Executive Section

Joseph E. Caouette, Jr., Rollinsford, New Hampshire, Chairman
Larry L. Price, Redfield, South Dakota, Vice-Chairman

Roger L. Wild, Lincoln, Nebraska—Commander's Representative
Luis V. Gonzalez, Henry, Illinois—Consultant
Charles E. Gannon, Landover Hills, Maryland—Consultant

COMMISSION ON CHILDREN & YOUTH
Dennis R. Boland, Florida, Chairman
Marty Justis, Maryland, Director

The American Legion has been a staunch supporter for the children and youth of our nation since our founding in 1919. Our commitment to our nation's children continues to be a paramount concern for the National Commission on Children & Youth as it seeks to improve the well being of all children.

Through the decades that followed our founding, The American Legion became a strong advocate for children's rights and 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 Eight & Forty—many states and communities improved their own child welfare provisions.

The development of new and expanded public programs designed to provide economic security for children made it possible for our organization to turn its attention to other problems affecting young people. To date there is no area of child welfare that has gone untouched by the collective hand of The American Legion. The very program of Children & Youth itself is unique from any agency—private or governmental—in its ability to expand into every area of concern for child welfare and child health.

As stated in a 1924 resolution adopted by the National Executive Committee, The American Legion "has and will do everything possible to perpetuate 'A SQUARE DEAL FOR EVERY CHILD'" This remains our ultimate goal and the definitive challenge for the years ahead.

To attain this goal, The American Legion, in 1925, adopted the "Whole Child" plan, which states: "every child should have a home, health, education, character and opportunity." Its foundation is based on three guiding principles:

1. To strengthen the family unit against the forces of today's complex society, recognizing that the most normal environment for children is a home with their own parents.
2. To extend support to sound organizations and facilities that provide services for children and youth, always acting in a supplementary capacity, rather than duplicating the efforts of existing agencies.
3. To maintain a well-rounded program that meets the physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual needs of today's young people. Stated certainly for future endeavors, this third principle has provided the flexibility to address all matters of child health and child welfare.

While these principles represent the heart of the "Whole Child" plan, the muscle depends on our four Guidelines for Action, working together:

1. PREVENTION—Finding solutions to obstacles before they become long-lasting problems.
2. EDUCATION—Providing information to our members and the general public on timely issues involving children and youth.
3. LEGISLATION—Maintaining knowledge of new and existing laws, needed amendments, and the administration of laws that affect young people at the national, state and local levels.
4. MATERIAL AID—Providing direct assistance in the form of cash, clothing, food and time.

During the past eighty-nine years, The American Legion's Children & Youth Program has contributed to significant advancements in the area of child welfare. While our list of achievements is extensive, it is by no means complete. The American Legion has, and will maintain a deep community-centered interest in children 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 on the

quality of care, education, and training which we, as parents and citizens, provide for all children today.

The American Legion is proud of the Legionnaires, and the members of its affiliated organizations, and their achievements on behalf of our nation's youth. Their efforts in the area of child welfare are a living testament to the ability of an organization of free men and women to adapt itself to evolving needs, while maintaining high principles and taking on increased responsibilities under those principles.

2007—2008 Program

In May of each year, The American Legion's National Commission on Children & Youth meets to consider what programs it wants to emphasize for the following program year. When a decision is made, the National Children & Youth staff is charged to research these areas of concern and produce materials to support our volunteers.

For the program year 2007—2008, the Commission voted to focus their efforts on the following quality of life issues, which directly impact our young people on the National level:

1. Child Health
2. Child Safety
3. Family Support

Child Health: Since our beginning, the Legion has worked to improve the quality of life for all young people. Our partnership with Children's Miracle Network underscores this mission. Children's Miracle Network (CMN) raises critically needed funds for 170 children's hospitals, which treat 17 million children annually in the United States and Canada. These hospitals treat children with all types of afflictions and injuries, rendering service based on need, not the ability to pay. They annually provide $2.5 billion in uncompensated charity care and are committed to turning no child away.

Children's Miracle Network is dedicated to ensuring that 100 percent of local donations made through CMN Champions (the continuing theme of CMN's fund-raising campaign) stay in the community in which they were raised to benefit children treated at participating hospitals.

The Commission encourages American Legion Departments and Posts to work with and support their local CMN-affiliated children's hospitals to benefit the health and well being of our nation's children. During the 2007—2008 program year, the combined American Legion family provided more than $4.5 million dollars in total donations to local children's hospitals nationwide. Since our partnership with CMN began in 1998, The American Legion family has donated over $28 million to this worthy endeavor. This achievement was possible only through the dedicated efforts of Legion family members throughout this nation who have embraced this program and are committed to assisting children.

The position of The American Legion is that all children should have quality health services to assure their physical, mental and emotional well-being. To obtain these services, families of seriously ill or injured children often must travel hundreds of miles to seek medical treatment at specialized children's hospitals, thus causing the family to spend days and even weeks away from home. The additional financial burden placed on the family coupled with overwhelming medical costs is difficult, and many times impossible for the family to afford.

Ronald McDonald Houses were created to serve these families by offering them a home-like atmosphere, regardless of the family's ability to pay, where they can get the rest and renewal they need to be most supportive of their sick or injured child. The Ronald McDonald House Charities Pop Tab Collection Program generates funds to help offset the costs associated with a family's stay while their child is receiving specialized treatment.

To assist these children and families, The American Legion has adopted the Ronald McDonald House Charities Pop Tab Collection Program as a national children and youth project designed to benefit participating Ronald McDonald Houses throughout the country. Through the collective efforts of The American Legion and Ronald McDonald House Charities, we help to provide a home-away-from-home environment for

financially challenged families with seriously ill or injured children who must undergo medical treatment at a children's hospital.

Child Safety: The American Legion is very concerned about the welfare of our nation's youth and a major problem that threatens them. Suicide among adolescents, age 15-24, continues to be the third largest cause of death among this age group. The suicide rate among adolescents has grown steadily over the last four decades and has quadrupled since 1960. Over 4,000 young people take their own lives every year. Suicide is a senseless tragedy, but is completely preventable. The National Commission on Children & Youth produces and distributes a brochure, entitled "Know the Warning Signs of Youth Suicide," designed to assist youth and adults in understanding some of the warning signs and facts about suicide.

As long as Halloween activities are sponsored and promoted in our various communities by duly appointed and elected officials, the National Commission on Children & Youth of The American Legion believes children and parents should know how to make this observance as safe as possible. To assist this effort, the National Commission on Children & Youth produces and distributes a brochure, entitled "Make Halloween a Fun and Safe Night," to educate children and parents about trick-or-treat safety.

The American Legion is very concerned about young people destroying their lives by using drugs. 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.

Growing up today is hard and peer pressure 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 National Commission produces and distributes a brochure titled "Gateway Drugs…Choose not to use," to equip parents and children with the facts of gateway drugs and help children lead a healthy lifestyle.

Military Support Network: Since September 11, 2001, the nation has been on high alert and National Guard and Reserve units have been activated in record numbers. As a result, the families of these men and women often find themselves unable to meet normal monthly household obligations. Assistance is needed for a variety of everyday tasks and expenses. These needs range from routine household chores, grocery shopping, and childcare, to ensuring that the grass is mowed for the expecting mother whose husband is serving abroad. To actively address these issues, The American Legion created the Family Support Network. Military families can request assistance by calling a nationwide toll-free telephone number, 1-800-504-4098, for service personnel and their families to call for assistance. Families can also request assistance electronically through the Legion's web site at www.legion.org/fsn. All requests are referred to The American Legion Department, or state, in which the call originated. Departments relay the collected information to a local American Legion Post. The Post then contacts the service member or family to see how assistance can be provided locally. Since the creation of the Family Support Network in 1990, thousands of Posts have responded to meet these families' needs.

As our forces pursue the enemies of freedom in Iraq and around the globe, The American Legion supports our men and women in uniform and their families with the Family Support Network. Those of us in The American Legion, who served our nation in times of adversity, remember how it felt to be separated from those we love. The Family Support Network is successful as a direct result of Legionnaires, at the Post level in communities, responding to the needs of our comrades and their families. As the nation's largest veteran's organization, our commitment to the men and women of our armed forces and their families is absolute. As a grateful nation, we must ensure that no family endures hardships caused by military service that protects American ideals and freedom.

Continuing with our tradition of supporting veterans and their families, The American Legion has partnered with Operation: Military Kids to support the children of activated and deployed members of the armed forces. Spearheaded by the United States

Department of Agriculture and the Army Youth Development Project, Operation: Military Kids recognizes that when National Guard, Reserve, and other military parents living in civilian communities are mobilized, their children suddenly have unique needs and may lack the community support systems associated with active military installations.

Extensive media coverage of ongoing military operations and dependence on the Reserves and National Guard creates daily anxiety. These "new" military kids seek friends and adults who can empathize and can help them cope with their new world. The American Legion, as a core partner of Operation: Military Kids, will enable this program to harness the benefits of our well-established and successful children and youth programs at the national and local levels to support military youth.

The American Legion in cooperation with State and County Cooperative Extension staff seeks to reach out to military youth before, during, and after their parents deploy. This outreach effort seeks to:

1. Create a community support network for military youth.
2. Deliver recreation, social and educational programs for military youth.
3. Support military kids coping with the stress of having a parent deployed.
4. Collaborate with schools to ensure that staff is attuned to the unique needs of military students.
5. Educate the public on the impact of the deployment cycle on military personnel, families, kids and the community as a whole.

Continuing Programs

Temporary Financial Assistance (TFA): This is the landmark program of the Commission on Children & Youth. Begun in 1925 as a form of direct aid to veteran's children, the Temporary Financial Assistance program is still unique in the social work field today and remains a very active program. During the 2007-2008 program year, the program aided 1,349 children with $635,487.37 in grants. From its beginning to present, this fund has assisted veterans' families with millions of dollars in non-repayable grants.

The fund, made possible by The American Legion Endowment Fund Corporation, is used to assist families in meeting the costs of shelter, food, utilities and medical needs when the parents are unable to do so; thereby helping to keep the child, or children, in a more stable home environment.

Through TFA, a Post may call upon the Americanism and Children & Youth Division of The American Legion for cash assistance to help meet the basic needs of veterans' children. Funds can be granted over a temporary period to eligible children when it has been determined by investigation that the child is in need and that no other sources are available, or those that are available are inadequate. It is important to note that while the veteran must have served honorably on active duty during a designated war period, the veteran does not have to be a member of The American Legion to receive assistance.

As sure as The American Legion is the largest veterans' organization in the world, there are veterans' families who require assistance. Possibly the rent is overdue or the children are hungry because a parent is sick or disabled, deceased, or has deserted the family. Whatever the reason, these children become the concern of The American Legion and the Temporary Financial Assistance Program is the vital tool which is used to help meet the maintenance and health needs of veterans' children, thereby allowing the child to develop in the home.

Child safety: The American Legion has demonstrated a strong concern for the safety of this nation's young people since the early 1920's. In 1992, the National Commission on Children & Youth designated the Child Safety program as one of its annual or continuing programs.

Child safety is defined as any external event that may present a significant danger to a child or young person. It includes, but is not limited to:

1. Child Abuse and Neglect
2. Sexual Abuse
3. Indoor/Outdoor Safety
4. School Safety

5. Playground Safety
6. Childhood Communicable Diseases
7. Accidents (automobile, drowning, firearms)
8. Fire Safety
9. Substance Abuse
10. Youth Suicide

Accidents are the leading cause of death and disability among our nation's youth. Annually, nearly 16,000 children under the age of 21 die in automobile crashes, fires, through the improper use of firearms, and drowning. In homes, playgrounds and parks, the potential for serious injury is always present.

Legion volunteers regularly disseminate information to parents, children and community leaders regarding the issue of safety. Making children safety conscious, in the home and outside, is necessary to assure that they have an opportunity to play and grow into useful adults and citizens.

Legislative Efforts

The initiation and support of worthwhile Children & Youth legislation is one means by which the Commission on Children & Youth has attempted to accomplish its goals during the 2007-2008 program year. At National Convention in Salt Lake City, UT, August 25-31, 2006 the following resolutions, here summarized, were approved.

Admission of Children of United States Citizens: Res. 318-2006. United States citizens now have greater access to the nations of the world for work opportunities, both in the public and private sectors, and travel. In part, because of this, many children in foreign countries are progeny of United States citizens. Public Law 97-359 was enacted to amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to provide preferential treatment in the admission of certain children of United States citizens, but addresses only alien children from Korea, Vietnam, Laos, Kampuchea or Thailand born after 1950 and before October 22, 1982. As The American Legion believes that no child born of a United States citizen should be denied equal treatment under the laws of this country, we urge legislative action to amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to provide equal treatment in admission of all children of United States citizens.

Children in Pornographic Literature: Res. 323-2006. Studies indicate that there is a direct and strong correlation between those who read pornographic magazines and those who commit related crimes. Additional data reveals that child pornography, “kiddy porn,” is often found in the personal effects of child molesters after their arrest. The American Legion is firm in its position that the interstate transportation of obscene material must be stopped and that the United States Postal Service be provided sufficient investigators to enforce existing federal laws against pornography and the transportation of pornographic material.

Production, Sale and Distribution of Obscene Literature: Res. 329-2006. 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.

Reaffirming Immunization Program: Res. 331-2006. The American Legion realizes that in today's society there is no place for communicable disease for which there is a vaccine. Though true, we also realize that several childhood communicable diseases breakout annually because children are not properly immunized. It is our belief that full protection is available and that the state and federal governments should provide sufficient funding so that indigent families with children can receive the necessary immunizations against all communicable diseases.

National Family Week: Res. 328-2006. One of the basic principles of the children and youth program is to maintain the integrity of the family home. In today’s fast paced society, it is critical that we seek to recognize the importance of strengthening the basic unit of our country…the family. No institution can take the place of the family in giving meaning to human life and stability to our society. We urge the President and the Congress to establish National Family Week on a permanent basis during the Thanksgiving holiday week.

School Nutrition Programs: Res. 332-2006. 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.

Catastrophic Illness among Children: Res. 319-2006. It has long been our position that all children should have adequate health services to assure their physical, mental and emotional well being. In the Temporary Financial Assistance program, we have seen an increase in the caseload of needy medical problems. Unfortunately, many of our children are not receiving the necessary medical care due to the extreme requirements placed on the financial abilities of the average family. Consequently, children with severe catastrophic illnesses are not receiving the needed medical care. The rising cost of medical care in such cases is not covered by even the best medical policies. The American Legion believes that the state and federal governments should enact legislation to financially assist those families faced by catastrophic illness to the end that the family will not be financially devastated.

Drug Trafficking: Res. 325-2006. 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.

Protect Children from the Unrestricted Media: Res. 329-2006. The producers of movies, television shows and news, and the Internet have become very explicit in describing and depicting various types of violence. Organizations, such as the American Civil Liberties Union, defend such actions as the author's constitutional right of free speech without regard for the potential consequences to minor children. The American Legion supports appropriate state and federal legislation to restrict the excessive use of violence, vulgarity, and other forms of moral depravation in movies, TV programs, TV news and on the Internet. In addition, we encourage Departments and Posts to conduct awareness campaigns to educate their members, their families and the general public about the potential dangers the Internet and other forms of electronic media pose to children and teenagers.

Comprehensive Health Care for Children and Youth: Res. 324-2006. Many of our 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.

These are the highlights of our 2007-2008 Children & Youth legislative program. The American Legion's Commission on Children & Youth has constantly urged Departments to support Children & Youth legislation as it relates to our National objectives. Local Posts are also encouraged to support city ordinances that deal with the community's efforts to improve conditions for children and youth. The Children & Youth legislative program is a never-ending struggle, which we eagerly accept for the sake of all children.

Children & Youth Expenditures

Annually, as it has for the past 85 years, the Commission on Children & Youth records activities from The American Legion Family, consisting of over 14,000 Posts of The American Legion, over 5,000 Squadrons of The Sons of The American Legion, 8,500 Units of the American Legion Auxiliary, and hundreds of Salons of the Eight and Forty. In addition, the expenditures of Departments and of the National Organization are obtained for the 12-month period of June 1, 2007 through May 31, 2008 and combined with these reports.

During the reporting period, The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation recorded $698,507.87 in donations from members of The American Legion Family and individuals across the country. During the same period, our Temporary Financial

Assistance program expended $635,487.37 in grants to 1,349 children of veterans. For the 2007-2008 Children & Youth programs year, including contributions to the Child Welfare Foundation, Posts, Squadrons, Units and Departments of The American Legion and affiliated organizations reported a grand total of $18,294,325 in expenditures and contributions to benefit the children of America.

Children & Youth Literature

During the 2007-2008 program year, hundreds of thousands of pieces of Children & Youth literature were distributed by the Americanism and Children & Youth Division in order to further the objectives of the total program.

As shown in Table #4, our most popular brochures are related to our major points of emphasis—Child Health, Child Safety, and Family Support. It is of further interest to note that 1,287 citations were distributed to Departments in order to recognize Posts for their contributions to the overall Children & Youth Program.

Appreciation Acknowledged

The Commission on Children & Youth and its Chairman take this opportunity to thank the volunteers of The American Legion family. Many hours, tremendous amounts of energy and personal sacrifice cannot be repaid. Special mention must also go to National Commander Martin "Marty" Conatser, not because of his position, but because of his sincere dedication and enduring support for our programs this past year. In addition, the Commission sincerely thanks National Adjutant Robert W. Spanogle for his continued support and cooperation. The members of The American Legion do an excellent job with this program, but the record must be clear. Without the assistance of the American Legion Auxiliary, the Eight and Forty, and the Sons of The American Legion, our National Children & Youth Program would have little chance for success.

Table No. 1

Region and Department	Reporting Legion	Reporting Auxiliary	Temporary Financial Assistance by National	Contributions to Child Welfare Foundation by Posts & 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 Admininstrative Expense by Legion and Auxiliary	Total Aid for Children from 8/40	Total Number of Children Served Nationally	Total Aid Legion and Auxiliary Lines 4 thru 10
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
REGION 1											
Connecticut	41%	25%	$500.00	$2,345.00	$21,879.00	$43,868.00	$3,850.00	$3,700.00	$57.00	8,808	$76,199
Maine	40%	29%	$900.00	$710.50	$50,211.00	$13,573.00	$37,815.00	$2,810.00	$120.00	2,113	$106,140
Massachusetts	35%	53%	$7,876.58	$786.00	$82,227.00	$46,099.55	$33,084.00	$6,711.00	$350.00	7,176	$177,114
New Hampshire	78%	51%	$7,735.06	$1,899.58	$105,045.00	$410,122.00	$67,478.00	$10,382.00	$239.98	19,565	$602,902
Rhode Island	87%	15%	$0.00	$0.00	$17,730.00	$4,075.00	$2,775.00	$5,750.00	$75.00	2,772	$30,405
Vermont	67%	63%	$0.00	$845.00	$646,831.00	$46,524.00	$32,084.00	$12,375.00	$70.00	3,323	$738,729
TOTAL:	**47%**	**41%**	**$17,011.64**	**$6,586.08**	**$923,923.00**	**$564,261.55**	**$177,066.00**	**$41,728.00**	**$911.98**	**43,757**	**$1,731,488**
REGION 2											
Delaware	60%	40%	$0.00	$545.00	$55,873.12	$27,982.00	$31,580.53	$2,109.00	(2)	3,665	$118,088
D.C.	40%	0%	$0.00	$384.00	$566.00	$148.00	$120.00	$100.00	$0.00	16	$1,318
Maryland	72%	65%	$0.00	$7,205.00	$413,525.52	$194,223.29	$68,408.68	$32,530.00	$25.00	27,999	$715,917
New Jersey	31%	36%	$7,936.69	$1,800.00	$86,656.00	$84,207.00	$37,033.00	$14,083.00	$0.00	6,868	$231,716
New York	80%	61%	$8,118.64	$3,611.74	$318,015.00	$374,547.00	$236,652.00	$166,848.00	$382.85	45,599	$1,108,175
Pennsylvania	52%	0%	$7,231.56	$1,711.00	$346,329.66	$243,864.06	$163,091.94	$39,352.00	$390.00	36,274	$801,970
Virginia	100%	56%	$26,656.61	$8,516.44	$304,109.00	$90,950.00	$98,775.00	$42,885.00	$510.00	17,411	$572,402
West Virginia	92%	36%	$5,612.00	$1,212.00	$30,306.00	$55,602.00	$34,473.00	$8,585.00	$150.00	11,892	$135,940
TOTAL:	**86%**	**56%**	**$55,555.50**	**$24,440.18**	**$1,555,380.30**	**$1,071,523.35**	**$670,134.15**	**$306,492.00**	**$1,457.85**	**149,724**	**$3,685,526**
REGION 3											
Alabama	25%	20%	$16,970.93	$1,483.84	$8,630.00	$44,468.00	$30,076.00	$27,584.00	$240.00	6,466	$129,453
Florida	96%	97%	$29,872.85	$53,563.63	$361,560.00	$152,038.00	$187,750.00	$45,590.00	$3,407.20	32,177	$833,782
Georgia	62%	31%	$3,899.69	$1,314.62	$712,386.00	$145,328.00	$33,278.00	$36,226.00	(2)	22,804	$932,430
Kentucky	56%	0%	$35,715.27	$1,591.80	$160,082.00	$84,931.00	$54,301.00	$16,596.00	$175.00	9,991	$333,392
North Carolina	38%	26%	$39,982.52	$1,505.50	$70,063.00	$33,481.00	$47,733.00	$23,962.00	(2)	6,663	$216,725
South Carolina	31%	13%	$8,727.82	$974.50	$23,351.00	$21,196.00	$15,833.00	$4,710.00	(2)	4,200	$74,790
Tennessee	52%	9%	$16,285.52	$1,664.00	$58,355.00	$28,793.00	$39,304.00	$6,056.00	$0.00	5,523	$150,458
TOTAL:	**53%**	**36%**	**$151,454.60**	**$62,097.89**	**$1,394,427.00**	**$490,235.00**	**$408,275.00**	**$160,724.00**	**$3,822.20**	**87,824**	**$2,671,030**
REGION 4											
Arkansas	26%	0%	$500.00	$96.50	$13,421.00	$7,765.00	$19,239.00	$11,745.00	$215.00	456	$52,982
Louisiana	30%	4%	$0.00	$6,148.64	$44,393.00	$33,236.00	$22,333.00	$30,790.00	$375.00	4,754	$137,276
Mississippi	23%	20%	$8,153.19	$4,100.00	$61,552.00	$31,401.00	$17,082.00	$11,500.00	$100.00	3,026	$133,888
Oklahoma	32%	8%	$34,979.64	$25.00	$57,510.00	$25,174.00	$31,534.00	$14,101.00	$45.00	3,595	$163,369
Texas	53%	36%	$19,754.53	$5,187.86	$249,086.00	$168,860.00	$129,980.00	$34,692.00	$500.00	47,682	$608,060
TOTAL:	**37%**	**18%**	**$63,387.36**	**$15,558.00**	**$425,962.00**	**$266,436.00**	**$220,168.00**	**$102,828.00**	**$1,235.00**	**59,513**	**$1,095,574**
REGION 5											
Illinois	30%	48%	$14,583.87	$7,919.50	$138,095.00	$78,803.00	$164,180.00	$46,001.00	$886.75	31,816	$450,469
Indiana	47%	44%	$32,211.13	$22,070.78	$238,853.00	$114,309.00	$94,973.00	$15,897.00	$1,499.68	11,769	$519,814
Michigan	58%	58%	$18,228.74	$3,119.74	$226,364.00	$115,203.00	$67,675.00	$28,879.00	$3,171.15	21,426	$462,641
Missouri	48%	21%	$20,610.26	$2,419.81	$73,862.00	$36,740.00	$52,070.00	$13,888.00	$210.10	15,861	$199,800
Ohio	83%	53%	$9,103.37	$67,377.00	$616,114.92	$293,749.55	$524,495.21	$90,703.00	$533.00	74,348	$1,602,076
Wisconsin	100%	61%	$14,901.89	$6,255.58	$22,112.00	$90,192.00	$873,842.00	$37,577.00	$0.00	215,297	$1,044,880
TOTAL:	**60%**	**49%**	**$109,639.26**	**$109,162.41**	**$1,315,400.92**	**$728,996.55**	**$1,777,235.21**	**$232,945.00**	**$6,300.68**	**370,517**	**$4,279,680**
REGION 6											
Iowa	60%	60%	$21,204.81	$2,255.83	$68,000.00	$47,995.00	$71,973.00	$20,157.00	(2)	11,277	$231,584
Kansas	75%	0%	$1,620.00	$4,115.00	$97,606.20	$37,962.13	$32,525.00	$4,500.00	$435.00	9,782	$178,783
Minnesota	49%	0%	$5,992.23	$2,070.00	$345,430.00	$126,050.00	$80,822.00	$17,093.00	$640.00	13,531	$578,097
Nebraska	77%	51%	$0.00	$3,630.50	$105,312.00	$40,183.00	$65,255.00	$17,123.00	$490.00	26,968	$232,194
North Dakota	53%	25%	$2,612.41	$2,125.00	$139,704.00	$32,444.00	$47,052.00	$17,999.00	$0.00	17,374	$241,936
South Dakota	67%	72%	$0.00	$219.00	$46,204.00	$23,818.00	$51,548.00	$6,990.00	$0.00	13,220	$128,779
TOTAL:	**62%**	**34%**	**$31,429.45**	**$14,615.33**	**$802,256.20**	**$308,472.13**	**$349,175.00**	**$83,862.00**	**$1,565.00**	**92,172**	**$1,591,373**
REGION 7											
Arizona	72%	33%	$26,592.08	$2,358.93	$229,679.44	$87,418.00	$68,962.00	$39,950.00	$545.10	24,684	$455,506
California	77%	87%	$32,307.34	$3,482.10	$478,589.00	$261,637.00	$202,433.00	$86,683.00	$2,549.14	30,155	$1,067,681
Colorado	39%	0%	$15,041.91	$616.01	$1,580.00	$19,750.00	$33,113.00	$5,839.00	$120.00	3,168	$76,060
Hawaii	65%	0%	$0.00	$10,060.00	$300.00	$325.00	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00	1	$10,685
Nevada	64%	26%	$2,300.00	$4,361.00	$16,185.10	$16,188.01	$17,185.00	$3,695.00	$249.00	912	$60,163
New Mexico	46%	55%	$895.00	$4,858.86	$3,410.00	$7,600.00	$3,190.00	$200.00	$128.00	134	$20,282
Utah	25%	17%	$0.00	$502.67	$25,155.00	$8,950.00	$2,791.00	$2,750.00	$103.75	858	$40,252
TOTAL:	**62%**	**51%**	**$77,136.33**	**$26,249.57**	**$754,898.54**	**$401,868.01**	**$327,664.00**	**$139,117.00**	**$3,694.99**	**59,912**	**$1,730,628**
REGION 8											
Alaska	89%	46%	$0.00	$250.00	$80,392.00	$26,900.00	$39,777.00	$4,382.00	$300.00	12,937	$152,001
Idaho	100%	48%	$27,052.12	$1,716.92	$43,549.00	$2,490.00	$15,913.00	$3,850.00	$135.00	2,847	$94,706
Montana	100%	0%	$16,609.25	$1,153.50	$20,351.00	$15,954.00	$20,317.00	$4,825.00	$175.00	3,970	$79,385
Oregon	96%	57%	$1,531.26	$690.00	$116,392.74	$6,620.00	$12,376.73	$2,811.00	$157.00	13,924	$140,579
Washington	100%	0%	$83,044.33	$2,542.00	$163,887.00	$6,278.00	$41,268.00	$16,202.00	$838.50	8,428	$314,060
Wyoming	63%	77%	$436.27	$5,637.31	$46,935.00	$0.00	$238,948.00	$1,030.00	$104.00	7,426	$293,091
TOTAL:	**95%**	**29%**	**$128,673.23**	**$11,989.73**	**$471,506.74**	**$58,242.00**	**$368,599.73**	**$33,100.00**	**$1,709.50**	**49,532**	**$1,073,821**
REGION TOTALS:	**59%**	**42%**	**$634,287.37**	**$177,986.28**	**$7,643,754.70**	**$3,890,034.59**	**$4,298,317.09**	**$1,100,796.00**	**$20,697.20**	**912,951**	**$13,457,463**
FOREIGN											
France	42%	0%	$0.00	$232.45	$3,555.00	$3,000.00	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00	967	$6,787
Mexico	100%	0%	$0.00	$0.00	$11,050.00	$6,320.00	$0.00	$2,642.00	$0.00	1,227	$20,012
Philippines	1%	0%	$0.00	$0.00	$400.00	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00	0	$400
Puerto Rico	29%	0%	$1,200.00	$10.00	$2,800.57	$10.00	$2,008.00	$2,235.00	$0.00	80	$8,264
TOTAL:	**23%**	**0%**	**$0.00**	**$0.00**	**$19,455.57**	**$8,462.00**	**$2,008.00**	**$4,877.00**	**$0.00**	**2,274**	**$34,803**
GRAND TOTALS:	**58%**	**41%**	**$635,487.37**	**$270,941.64**	**$7,663,210.27**	**$3,898,496.59**	**$4,299,612.09**	**$1,105,673.00**	**$20,697.20**	**915,225**	**$17,894,118**

(2) - Not organized in the Department

TABLE #1 REPORTING PERIOD: JUNE 1, 2007 - MAY 31, 2008

Child Welfare Foundation by National Auxiliary	$10,000
Children & Youth Division by National Auxiliary	$10,000
Child Welfare Foundation by National 8/40	$525
Children & Youth Division by National 8/40	$0
Other children programs by Jr. Auxiliary	$0
Child Welfare Foundation by individuals	$2,415
Bequests to Child Welfare Foundation	$40,697
C.W.F. by Sons of The American Legion	$332,426
Child Wefare Foundation by National Legion	$4,145
GRAND TOTAL	**$18,294,325**

TABLE NO. 2
EXPENDITURES FROM NATIONAL TEMPORARY AID FUNDS TO DEPARTMENTS ACCORDING TO YEARS

	1926-45	1946-65	1966-85	1986-95	1996-2005*	June 2006 - May 2007	June 2007 - May 2008	Grand Total
Alabama	29,181.33	51,167.06	76,790.45	165,155.82	137,824.69	12,861.11	16,970.93	472,980.46
Alaska	0.00	1,627.56	1,550.00	0.00	3,500.00	1,500.00	0.00	8,177.56
Arizona	26,061.70	8,752.00	21,380.31	228,396.73	289,526.72	24,226.05	26,592.08	598,343.51
Arkansas	33,873.20	25,962.22	2,881.07	58,723.29	16,181.61	8,289.32	500.00	145,910.71
California	30,106.15	16,026.45	1,550.00	7,559.00	30,034.44	18,828.76	32,307.34	104,104.80
Colorado	41,621.11	22,618.11	1,395.00	13,205.83	17,592.15	8,379.53	15,041.91	104,811.73
Connecticut	1,854.00	440.00	450.00	1,192.00	7,971.56	3,767.83	500.00	15,675.39
Delaware	2,035.00	1,000.00	475.00	2,635.00	8,497.64	0.00	0.00	14,642.64
DC	2,570.00	1,203.50	600.00	26,636.75	2,319.00	0.00	0.00	33,329.25
Florida	33,341.28	25,520.50	2,530.00	33,542.76	64,469.81	9,989.74	29,872.85	169,394.09
Georgia	69,894.07	86,084.42	4,865.00	8,498.51	12,861.80	2,419.22	3,899.69	184,623.02
Hawaii	670.00	0.00	900.00	0.00	6,168.40	857.48	0.00	8,795.88
Idaho	7,593.50	5,771.85	7,366.39	24,202.62	195,485.15	13,748.26	27,052.12	254,167.77
Illinois	30,220.79	4,343.53	10,525.73	129,729.07	276,545.19	9,677.01	14,583.87	461,041.32
Indiana	31,850.08	9,066.40	2,920.00	152,703.98	173,400.66	18,611.74	32,211.13	388,552.86
Iowa	17,493.08	597.00	3,928.45	16,982.47	227,865.82	23,592.34	21,204.81	290,459.16
Kansas	20,766.80	42,064.35	8,923.00	9,691.54	16,291.60	1,444.20	1,620.00	99,181.49
Kentucky	23,843.50	45,527.90	64,854.96	48,497.66	12,445.22	33,976.28	35,715.27	229,145.52
Louisiana	23,400.50	38,454.30	3,395.00	7,640.45	33,897.24	627.39	0.00	107,414.88
Maine	3,618.94	1,910.26	2,676.55	20,812.00	22,305.05	3,695.00	900.00	55,017.80
Maryland	5,887.00	3,390.57	3,383.00	4,770.00	31,620.94	1,372.63	0.00	50,424.14
Massachusetts	2,754.50	455.00	150.00	7,050.00	18,888.67	1,482.65	7,876.58	30,780.82
Michigan	23,895.33	33,281.24	15,346.82	17,575.76	52,676.66	9,573.38	18,228.74	152,349.19
Minnesota	8,610.77	23,322.79	11,840.33	172,036.26	89,538.19	14,263.47	5,992.23	319,611.81
Mississippi	40,293.63	63,254.14	117,892.56	54,314.88	84,261.79	8,505.79	8,153.19	368,522.79
Missouri	53,073.08	47,799.64	11,056.00	19,362.51	38,984.13	22,513.43	20,610.26	192,788.79
Montana	5,414.25	1,668.85	1,575.30	45,267.56	57,913.91	9,904.80	16,609.25	121,744.67
Nebraska	18,470.10	17,795.68	17,531.06	4,520.25	759.49	0.00	0.00	59,076.58
Nevada	585.00	766.00	7,272.00	1,495.00	16,818.94	1,143.30	2,300.00	28,080.24
New Hampshire	4,250.50	4,941.50	0.00	55,557.79	12,610.00	4,668.25	7,735.06	82,028.04
New Jersey	8,995.53	1,946.00	4,478.00	65,437.20	53,194.60	1,990.00	7,936.69	136,041.33
New Mexico	20,074.30	53,098.74	58,723.89	117,760.24	49,262.39	1,754.50	895.00	300,674.06
New York	7,887.54	4,803.00	1,150.00	42,484.24	83,432.27	4,807.38	8,118.64	144,564.43
North Carolina	46,597.50	81,019.60	9,740.00	23,502.67	68,774.55	24,700.95	39,982.52	254,335.27
North Dakota	26,017.45	11,788.21	5,771.32	7,064.40	11,426.94	3,613.98	2,612.41	65,682.30
Ohio	23,930.43	5,116.25	11,613.89	12,357.65	13,289.44	10,087.76	9,103.37	76,395.42
Oklahoma	40,458.05	65,406.47	88,956.03	171,688.84	203,764.51	25,605.74	34,979.64	595,879.64
Oregon	1,250.50	13,750.15	24,595.95	46,815.83	14,796.00	6,522.25	1,531.26	107,730.68
Panama	675.00	534.00	600.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,809.00
Pennsylvania	22,847.41	651.00	19,204.85	38,683.37	29,380.12	12,573.35	7,231.56	123,340.10
Puerto Rico	17,057.00	57,754.00	55,499.50	49,720.00	11,100.00	2,390.00	1,200.00	193,520.50
Rhode Island	1,562.00	1,641.00	1,060.00	19,527.38	16,182.72	3,424.90	0.00	43,398.00
South Carolina	68,453.05	26,693.34	5,339.00	900.00	13,610.16	11,072.06	8,727.82	126,067.61
South Dakota	42,430.27	16,362.05	725.00	46,361.43	5,358.30	0.00	0.00	111,237.05
Tennessee	31,144.77	54,613.20	20,604.30	61,868.79	36,561.35	19,405.74	16,285.52	224,198.15
Texas	35,373.50	47,392.43	26,714.50	8,534.74	31,484.75	18,228.11	19,754.53	187,728.03
Utah	11,125.48	3,248.00	3,396.00	13,414.42	14,034.34	1,500.00	0.00	46,718.24
Vermont	1,824.50	9,251.50	0.00	5,425.00	6,004.26	4,539.26	0.00	27,044.52
Virginia	45,310.31	28,037.78	17,836.00	37,295.82	66,509.94	7,702.46	26,656.61	202,692.31
Washington	3,378.00	427.50	625.00	100,545.28	511,131.69	80,273.16	83,044.33	696,380.63
West Virginia	27,629.98	11,395.94	3,460.00	24,514.68	40,628.59	3,255.65	5,612.00	110,884.84
Wisconsin	15,881.98	8,067.25	9,878.00	19,309.78	74,327.21	8,811.11	14,901.89	136,275.33
Wyoming	8,180.00	1,993.00	1,350.00	2,279.00	13,746.91	2,831.64	436.27	30,380.55
Other Depts	560.00	173.50						733.50
Miscellaneous**	19,499.21							19,499.21
TOTAL	**$1,121,572.95**	**$1,089,976.73**	**$777,325.21**	**$2,253,246.25**	**$3,327,257.51**	**$525,008.96**	**$635,487.37**	**$9,094,387.61**

*Includes January 2006 - May 2006

**For the year 1926--Department totals not available

Table 3

Comparison of Number of Children of WW II, Korea, Vietnam, Grenada/Lebanon, Panama, and Gulf War Veterans Receiving Aid from National Children and Youth Division

	World War II	Korea	Vietnam	Grenada/ Lebanon	Panama	Gulf War	Totals
June	0	0	12	6	3	55	76
July	0	0	13	5	2	75	95
August	3	1	8	12	0	95	119
September	0	0	15	9	10	100	134
October	0	0	15	5	16	85	121
November	0	0	11	6	22	64	103
December	0	0	15	5	13	128	161
January	0	0	7	10	23	102	142
February	1	0	21	3	1	63	89
March	0	3	6	15	2	82	108
April	0	1	4	14	9	69	97
May	0	0	1	3	2	98	0
Totals	4	5	128	93	103	1016	1349
Percentage	0.30%	0.37%	9.49%	6.89%	7.64%	75.32%	100.00%

Table No. 4

Printed Material Furnished Upon Request
During Period June 1, 2007 through May 31, 2008

	Total
8&40 Nursing Scholarship	5,677
American Legion & Children's Miracle Network - Brochure	4,119
American Legion Child Welfare Foundation	7,679
American Legion Endowment Fund Corporation	11,200
Annual Children & Youth Program Piece	16,518
Children & Youth Department Chairman's Guide	104
Family Support Network	45,083
Gateway Drugs	42,838
Make Halloween a Safe and Fun Night - Brochure	99,057
Nathan's Visit Comic Books	677
National Family Week	1,427
Play It Safe	54,278
Serving America	74,799
Serving Communities	44,289
Serving Veterans	45,087
TFA Applications	405
TFA Brochures	52,159
Warning Signs -- Suicide Prevention	22,427
Citations:	
Annual Children and Youth Citations	775
Certificate of Meritorious Service	132
National Achievement Award	21
Special Children & Youth Citation	359
Reporting:	
Unit Report Form	200
We Want a Report from Your Unit or Salon	50
Department Report Forms	106
TOTAL	529,466

COMMISSION ON CHILDREN & YOUTH
Executive Section

Dennis R. Boland, Florida—Chairman
Elmer Fuhrhop, Ohio—Chairman Emeritus
Donald Suchy, Nebraska—Vice-Chairman
Kenneth C. Hylton, Indiana—National Commander's Representative
Raymond G. Johnson, New York —Consultant
Gary W. Gifford, Maryland—Member
Patricia A. Harris, North Carolina—Consultant
Robert M. Johnson, Maryland—Member
Peggy Moon, Minnesota—Member
Herbert J. Petit, Jr., Louisiana—Member
Robert D. Scott, Oregon—Member
Miles Smith, Illinois—Member

AMERICAN LEGION CHILD WELFARE FOUNDATION, INC.
Dennis R. Boland, Florida, President
William A. Pease, Indiana, Executive Secretary

In 1954 The American Legion endorsed the separate incorporation of the American Legion Child Welfare Foundation. Since then, the Foundation has granted over nine million dollars to other non-profit youth oriented organizations.

The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation's foremost philanthropic priority is to provide other nonprofit organizations with a means to educate the public about the needs of children across this nation. The Foundation accepts proposals from nonprofit organizations for projects that:

- Contribute to the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual welfare of children through the dissemination of knowledge about new and innovative organizations and/or their programs to benefit youth; and/or
- Contribute to the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual welfare of children through the dissemination of knowledge already possessed by well-established organizations, to the end that such information can be more adequately used by society.

In October of 2007, the Board of Directors approved grants to 18 non-profit organizations in the amount of $530,700 for projects to be completed in calendar year 2008. The organizations and amounts are as follows:

American Legion Child Welfare Foundation Grants

American Legion Children's Home	Ponca City, Oklahoma	$64,000
American Humane Association	Englewood, Colorado	$24,879
Big Brothers Big Sisters of McHenry County, Inc.	McHenry, Illinois	$24,351
Childhood Leukemia Foundation	Brick, New Jersey	$42,000
Children's Hunger Alliance	Columbus, Ohio	$20,000
Family & Children's Service	Minneapolis, Minnesota	$40,000
Give Kids The World	Kissimmee, Florida	$14,700
Kids In Danger	Chicago, Illinois	$16,400
Mercy Medical Airlift	Virginia Beach, Virginia	$43,000
National Ability Center	Park City, Utah	$9,600
National Autism Center	Randolph, Massachusetts	$39,150
National Exercise Trainers Association	Minneapolis, Minnesota	$25,870
National Exchange Club Foundation	Toledo, Ohio	$39,866
National Indian Child Welfare Association	Portland, Oregon	$24,625
National Marfan Foundation	Port Washington, New York	$25,000
Our Military Kids, Inc.	McLean, Virginia	$33,800

TechMission	Dorchester, Massachusetts	$5,000
ZERO TO THREE	Washington, DC	$38,459

During the 2007-2008 contribution year, donations exceeded $698,507 with over $332,425 of that amount coming to the Foundation from the Sons of The American Legion. We receive most of our support from the members of The American Legion, the American Legion Auxiliary, the Eight and Forty, and the Sons of The American Legion. Their Posts, Units, Salons, and Squadrons are the primary contributors to the success and growth of our Foundation.

We encourage each member and each local organization to make an annual contribution in support of their Foundation so it can continue to fund projects that will assist children by giving them a better chance at life. It is important to remember that every dollar given to the Foundation is put directly into the trust fund to be used for grants that assist our young people.

At the meeting of the Board of Directors of the American Legion Child Welfare Foundation held in Indianapolis on May 4, 2008, the following officers were elected: Dennis R. Boland of Florida (President); Peggy Moon of Minnesota, (Vice President); Roger N. Messier of Virginia, (Secretary); and Robert Turner of Georgia, (Treasurer). Administrative personnel that were re-appointed by the Board of Directors were George A. Buskirk, Jr. (Assistant Treasurer) and William A. Pease (Executive Secretary).

Under the 1969 Tax Reform Act, the Foundation retains its tax-exempt status. Gifts, therefore, are deductible for federal income tax purposes to the extent permitted by law, and bequests to the Foundation are deductible for federal inheritance tax purposes to the extent permitted by the Federal Tax Act.

NATIONAL CONVENTION COMMISSION
Jeffrey L. Olson, Minnesota, Chairman
Richard D. Holmes, Indiana, Director

The 89th annual National Convention of the American Legion was conducted in Reno, Nevada, August 24–30, 2007. National Commander Paul A. Morin (Massachusetts) called the National Convention to order at 9:00 a.m. on Tuesday, August 28, 2007. Commander Morin welcomed the Legionnaires to Reno, Nevada and thanked them for their continuing service to our Country and to our Veterans. The Honorable Robert Cashell, Mayor of the City of Reno, the Honorable Geno Martini, and Mayor of the City of Sparks, Tony Vaughn, Commander, the American Legion Department of Nevada, and Dale "Tiny" Salmen, President of the National Convention Corporation of Nevada welcomed legionnaires to the National Convention. Congressman Bob Filner, as well as the Honorable R. James Nicholson, Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs also addressed the attendees of the 89th National Convention of The American Legion. A special guest to the Convention was The Honorable George W. Bush, President of The United States, who addressed the National Convention on Tuesday, August 28, 2007.

Among the many highlights for the 2007 National Convention was the Patriotic Memorial Service and The National Commander's Banquet for Distinguished Guests that took place in the Reno/Sparks Convention Center. Off Broadway and Tony Award-winning Forever Plaid provided entertainment to a crowd of approximately 2,200 Legionnaires and guests.

Convention Commission Activities

The National Convention Commission held three regular meetings during the year. Revisions of our request for proposal (RFP) continued in 2007. This process is extremely important as it provides an equal opportunity for all cities to be judged the same way during the initial review and site visit process. It is the commission's desire to continue to attract new cities desirous of hosting our National Convention. This provides our "blue cap" Legionnaires and their families with a varied and enjoyable convention that can be shared by all on an annual basis.

The National Convention Commission reviewed bids, for the 2013 National Convention, from the cities of Columbus, Ohio, Houston, Texas and St. Louis, Missouri.

Subsequent to conducting site visits and after listening to formal presentations from each of these fine cities, the National Convention Commission recommended to the National Executive Committee that the city of Houston, Texas be awarded the National Convention for 2013, the dates being August 23–29, 2013. The National Executive Committee later approved the recommendation.

Dates and future conventions are:

Louisville, Kentucky	August 21–27, 2009
Milwaukee, Wisconsin	August 27–September 2, 2010
Minneapolis, Minnesota	August 26–September 1, 2011
Indianapolis, Indiana	August 24–30, 2012
Houston, Texas	August 23–29, 2013

DISTINGUISHED GUEST COMMITTEE
Carol Hamburger, Arizona, Chairman

The Distinguished Guest Committee exists under the umbrella of the National Convention Commission. Responsibilities include the coordination of activities of all persons invited to attend the national convention as our distinguished guests.

The committee arranges each guest's arrival and departure at the national convention. Each distinguished guest is also assisted with credentials, agendas and other details of the national convention.

ECONOMIC COMMISSION
James E. Koutz, Indiana, Chairman
Joseph C. Sharpe Jr., District of Columbia, Deputy Director

This report covers the programs, activities and accomplishments of the National Economic Commission, its two standing committees (Employment and Veterans Preference), and the staff from July, 2007, through June 30, 2008. 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 Economics Commission is chaired by James E. Koutz (IN). The division consists of Deputy Director Joseph Sharpe, Jr., Assistant Director Mark Walker, and an administrative assistant Jasmine Davis.

National Economic Commission

- Employment Committee
- Veteran Preference Committee
- Awards Subcommittee
- Small Business Task Force Advisory Board
- Homeless Veteran Task Force Advisory Board

2007-2008 Meetings

During the period this report covers, the commission met for four regularly scheduled executive sessions. A list of those meetings follows:

1. Members and guests of the National Economic Commission met on Saturday, August 25, 2007, in the Reno-Sparks Convention Center, Reno, Nevada, in conjunction with the Eighty-ninth Annual National Convention. A report on that meeting was made to the National Executive Committee on Monday, August 27, 2007. The complete text of that report appears in the Proceedings of the National Executive Committee's Pre- and Post-Convention Meetings.
2. An executive session of the National Economic Commission was held in the headquarters of The American Legion in Indianapolis, Indiana, on October 16-17, 2007. A complete report on that meeting appears in the Digest of Proceedings of the National Executive Committee, October 2007.
3. At the 48th Washington Conference, on Monday, March 31, and Wednesday, April 2, 2008 which were held in the Renaissance Hotel in

Washington, DC; commission members and guests met to hear the latest on subjects of concern to them.

4. Members of the commission met May 5-6, 2008, in the headquarters of The American Legion, in Indianapolis, Indiana. A complete report on that meeting appears in the Digest of Proceedings of the National Executive Committee, May 6-7, 2008

Legislative Appearance

A very important part of the work of the National Economic Commission is the preparation and presentation of congressional testimony on issues affecting the economic well-being of America's veterans. During the period covered by this report, the commission staff testified before Congress, and also participated in the preparation of testimony presented by other members of the Legion staff on several occasions.

The following is a synopsis of the Congressional hearings and correspondence held from August 1, 2007, to July 31, 2008, on matters pertaining to the National Economic Commission,

1. On September 6, 2007, the Assistant Director testified before the House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity on "Veterans' Preference"
2. On September 19, 2007, the Assistant Director testified to the House Veterans' Affairs Committee on "Small Business Administration's Contracting Programs"
3. On September 20, 2007, the Assistant Director testified before the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity, House Committee on Veterans' Affairs on "Licensure and Credentialing"
4. On September 26, 2007, the Assistant Director testified to the Subcommittee on Government Management, Organization and Procurement, House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform on "Opening Federal Contracting to Small, Minority-Owned Business"
5. On September 27, 2007, the Assistant Director testified to the House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Health on "Department of Veterans Affairs Grant and Per Diem Program"
6. On October 4, 2007, the Deputy Director testified before the House Committee on Small Business on "The Role that Legislation could play in Increasing Procurement Opportunities for Small Business"
7. On October 11, 2007 the Assistant Director testified to the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity, Committee on Veterans' Affairs on "Department of Labor Veterans' Employment and Training Service (DOL-VETS)"
8. On October 18, 2007 the Assistant Director testified before the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity, House Committee on Veterans' Affairs on "Updating The Montgomery GI Bill"
9. On October 25, 2007 the Assistant Director testified before the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity, House Committee on Veterans' Affairs on "Department of Labor Veterans; Employment and Training Service (DOL-VETS)"
10. On December 5, 2007 the Assistant Director testified before the Subcommittee on Housing and Community Opportunity, House Committee on Financial Services on "Housing Needs of Low income Veterans"
11. On February 13, 2008 the Assistant Director testified before the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity, House Committee on Veterans' Affairs on "Expiring Department on Veterans Affairs Programs"
12. On February 13, 2008, the Director testified before the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs on "Fiscal Year 2009 VA's Budget Request"
13. On April 9, 2008 the Assistant Director testified before the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs on "Ending Homelessness for our Nation's Veterans"

14. On May 16, 2008 the Deputy Director testified before the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity, House Committee on Veterans Affairs on "Enhanced Services could Improve Transition Assistance for Reserve and National Guard"
15. On June 19, 2008 the Deputy Director testified before the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity, House Committee on Veterans Affairs on "United States Olympic Committee Paralympics Program Act of 2007, Servicemembers Telecom Contract Relief Act, Military spouses Residency Relief Act, SMOCTA Reauthorization Act and other Proposed Legislation"
16. June 24, 2008 the Deputy Director testified before the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigation of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs on "VA and DOD Cooperation in Reintegration of National Guard and Reserve"
17. On July 10, 2008 the Assistant Director testified before the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity, House Committee on Veterans' Affairs on "The Independent Living Program"
18. On July 28, 2008 the Assistant Director testified before the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity, House Committee on Veterans' Affairs on "Transition Assistance for Reserve and National Guard"

Administrative Activities

The National Economic Commission and its two standing subcommittees on Employment and Veterans Preference are responsible for ensuring that America's veterans have the opportunity to provide, with honor and dignity, the economic necessities of life for themselves and their families. In order to achieve this goal, the commission and its committees work closely with governmental agencies and liaison to assist the organization's members.

A staff responsibility is answering the large volume of mail and electronic mail that is received annually from veterans seeking information or assistance on issues which come under the commission's jurisdiction. While the staff can neither place individual veterans in jobs nor represent them in labor disputes, the staff does provide information, guidance and, when appropriate, referral. Besides correspondence from individuals, the staff also receives and answers frequent requests and inquiries from government agencies, members of Congress, congressional committees, private organizations, and other groups regarding veterans' economic issues.

Employer of the Year Awards

One of the commission's major programs is its awards program, which is administered by the staff. Through this program The American Legion pays tribute to those employers across the country who have established outstanding records in the employment and retention of veterans, workers with disabilities and older workers, and to outstanding members of the state employment security agencies.

Each year since 1969, the Legion's National Economic Commission has sponsored an Employer of the Year Awards Program. This program seeks to honor those employers across the country that have established an outstanding record in the employment and retention of veterans. Prior to this year's Washington Conference, the chairman of the National Economic Commission, James E. Koutz (IN), appointed an eight-person subcommittee to review all of the nominations that had been received during 2007 in the Employer of Veterans Awards Program.

The Commission's Awards Subcommittee met to select the following National winners:

Large Employer: CSX Transportation, Florida
Medium Size Employer: Prologistix, North Carolina
Small Employer: Millennium Security, Georgia

Employment Service Awards

Beginning in 1993, three awards have been presented to the Local Veterans Employment Representative of the Year, the Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialist of the Year, and the Employment Service Office of the Year. These awards are given in cooperation with local Job Service offices across the country, to recognize truly outstanding veteran-dedicated staff members.

National winners are as follows:

LVER of the Year: Gerard Donnelly, New York

DVOP of the Year: Don Collins, Texas

Employment Local Office: Career Center of Lubbock, Texas

Other Awards

Employer of the Disabled: Reach of Denton, Texas

Employer of Older Workers: The Holophane Company, Georgia

Homeless Veterans Outreach Award: The American Legion Department of Wisconsin

EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE

Albert M. Robotti, New Jersey, Chairman
Joseph C. Sharpe Jr., Maryland, Deputy 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 chairmen to assist individual veterans in finding employment. Their Posts and Departments appoint these employment chairmen. Occasionally, Departments also appoint them at the county and District levels.

VETERANS' PREFERENCE COMMITTEE

Richard T. Lee Jr., California, Chairman
Joseph C. Sharpe Jr., Maryland, Deputy Director

This committee is charged with the responsibility of promoting veterans' employment opportunities in federal government and for ensuring that agencies continue to observe all veterans' preference laws.

Federal Veterans' Economic Programs

The following is a brief overview of the Commission's interactions with those federal agencies, and their veterans' programs, with which the commission works regularly.

GAO Research on Vocational Rehabilitation and Education

The staff has been independently researching the level of success for many veterans' programs. Visiting sites, meeting with key personnel in the VR& E program and veterans who have used the VR& E program, the Economics Division spoke at length with members of GAO regarding specific aspects of the program.

Staff of The American Legion Economics Division visited the DC site to ascertain their capabilities in assisting veterans in the local Washington, DC metro area. The site is a successful model funded by the Department of Labor and operated by the District of Columbia with 3 staff members. The center estimates that it assists approximately 300-400 veterans each quarter and assist them in building resumés, KSA workshops, and entry level training outreach programs. This site only services veterans and is not intertwined with other career centers; however, veterans can use the city's other sites, and are also directed to contact the DVOP/LVER location.

TRANSITION

Job Fairs

The American Legion has formal Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) with RecruitMilitary and Military.com that will allow The American Legion to have a presence in all of their job fairs around the country. The main purpose of participation in

these job fairs is to educate veterans of their benefits, provide veterans outlets for employment and promote The American Legion.

This is an extremely important opportunity that has incredible positive impact for veterans and our organization. Since the beginning of the calendar year, as of July 31, 2008, the American Legion has participated in 102 job fairs through our national partnerships. Another 69 job fairs are scheduled to occur over the remainder of the year.

Additionally, each Department employment chairman organizes participation in numerous local job fairs other than our 2 national partners. Job duties and expectations, instructions and flyers accompany approximately 1000 educational brochures from the national office for each job fair. Educational material is sent automatically to Departments associated with Military.com and RecruitMilitary and per individual request.

The Economics Division encourages Departments to urge members to volunteer for the upcoming events in their respective departments. We ask that volunteer staff include Service Officers, Employment and Homeless Chairman, Children and Youth representatives, as well as members from The American Legion Auxiliary and Sons of The American Legion.

Department of Labor Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS)

Deputy Director Joe Sharpe is a member of the Department of Labor's Veterans' Advisory Committee.

Veterans' employment and training programs are designed to help veterans—those who face employability barriers and those who are job ready. VETS gives priority service to all veterans, with the highest priority afforded to disabled veterans. VETS also focuses on the special attention to military personnel preparing to separate from active duty.

VETS programs include the Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) and Local Veterans' Employment Representative (LVER) program, which VETS funds through state employment security agencies. The following are other programs administered by VETS:

- Homeless Veterans Reintegration Projects.
- Section 168 of the Workforce Investment Act to fund training of veterans in useful career skills.
- Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA).
- Transition Assistance Program (TAP) for military service members, funded through states and contractors in partnership with the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Defense.
- Federal Contractor Job Listing Program.
- Federal Veterans' Preference monitoring

With the number of Reserve/National Guard personnel returning from the Middle East, USERRA is going to become more and more of an issue. The Department of Labor has already seen an increase in the number of cases being filed and can only expect that number to increase. The current level of operations along with the greatly downsized military has required the greater use of the Reserve components and many of these persons have been deployed to Bosnia, then Afghanistan, and then turned around and were sent to Iraq. This is placing a burden on the civilian employers and the deployed soldiers that must be addressed to the mutual satisfaction of both sides. Many of these individuals also have their own businesses that they were unable to maintain while deployed and have lost customers and must start all over again.

Recently separated veterans are most likely to need assistance in finding a job. In many cases, some military combat-arms skills are not easily transferable to the civilian job market. Veterans also face difficulties in establishing and maintaining contacts for employment purposes. Military personnel are usually stationed away from their local community. This is an employment barrier because similarly situated non-veterans from the community are able to develop a network of contacts to help them obtain jobs in their chosen field. Service members stationed away from their community for three years or more lack such a network. Service members serving overseas (as happens in the case of

one out of every five service members separating from active duty) further compounds job search efforts.

With the current unemployment rate, recently separated service members (particularly those who are 20 to 34 years of age) suffer the highest unemployment rates of all veterans. VETS works hard to help these young, recently separated veterans with a multitude of integrated services to prevent extended unemployment and ease their transition to careers in the civilian labor market.

License and Certification

While on active duty, veterans attend some of the finest technical and professional training schools in the world. Many of their skills require some type of license or certificate to pursue a career in the civilian workforce. In many cases, this license or certificate requires schooling, which is comparable to that already completed at armed forces training institutions. Unfortunately, too often agencies that issue the license or certificate do not recognize the military training or experience already completed. As an example, a qualified combat medic who treated gunshot wounds in Operation Desert Storm cannot be certified as an emergency medical technician in the nation's cities without additional (and often redundant) schooling. The American Legion conducted a study and found 105 professions, with direct application to civilian careers, for which the military services provide training and for which a credential of some kind is required in civilian life. Efforts must continue to persuade civilian authorities to recognize formal military training.

Veteran's Preference

The veteran community is the only truly representative group of all races, ethnic groups, religions, genders, and disabled persons, that has earned the right to be provided a preference in hiring within the Federal government and any government contractors. Most civilian persons who have never been associated with military service cannot imagine the sacrifices and hardships that have been endured by these veterans.

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) administers the regulations and notifies Federal agencies of their deficiencies; however, there is a blatant indifference to the 5-point veterans' preference amongst certain hiring offices. Staff attend veteran meetings of the OPM, work with DoD/OPM in their quest to develop a new personnel policy program for DoD, reviews data and contacts federal agencies that have veterans' preference issues. In the process of reviewing which states have state veterans' preference laws in effect, and to encourage other states who do not have veterans' preference state laws to enact them.

Staff meets regularly with senior staff of OPM to express concerns regarding veterans' preference. The American Legion is deeply concerned with the practice of HR divisions eliminating applicant pools due to "veteran blocking." The most qualified person, according to the scoring, must be considered for employment AND the most qualified veteran cannot be passed over for a non-veteran but may be passed over to hire another veteran. Veteran blocking entails the following: There have been instances of veterans meeting the top 3 spots, and even the top 60 spots, for the most qualified positions but hiring managers and HR specialists have requested another list of applicants because they claim they weren't the right person for the job. This action is egregious to qualified veterans and must have oversight and be corrected. The American Legion supports the strongest veterans' preference laws possible at all levels of government and opposing any attempt to weaken such laws.

Small Business

Deputy Director Joe Sharpe is a member of Small Business Administration's Veterans Advisory Committee

Out of 7.4 million total employers in the current U.S. Census data, about 115,000 businesses currently employ members of the Reserve components, according to a DoD survey. The top five industries represented are health services (19 percent), business services (16 percent), engineering and management services (12 percent), educational services (11 percent) and special trade contractors (10 percent). Large businesses are the biggest employers of Reservists (25 percent), followed by the Federal government (20

percent). But small businesses, those with fewer than 100 employees, aren't far behind (18 percent), and 9 percent of Reservists are self-employed.

The commission's Small Business Task Force is extremely effective. It includes members from government and private industry, and is dedicated to creating a favorable climate for veteran business owners and veteran entrepreneurship. The Veterans' Small Business Task Force conducted a veterans' career fair in Reno during the Legion's National Convention in August 2007 and will be conducting another one in Phoenix, Arizona during National Convention there in August.

In conjunction with this fair, the task force will also be conducting a veterans' small business training course consisting of two days of intensive training for both new and established veteran-owned small businesses to prepare them for bidding on Federal Government contracts

Through collaboration with government and non-government agencies, and other veteran service organizations, The American Legion Advisory Task Force assists with development and implementation of effective solutions to create a favorable climate for veteran business owners and entrepreneurs.

The Task Force holds monthly meetings, at the National Headquarters and via telephone conference calls. Staff and members of the task force have testified to the Small Business and Entrepreneurship committees in both houses of Congress. In addition, our partners in Vet-Force, a collaboration of VSO's and veteran advocates, and the Small Business Task force has repeatedly pressured DoD, GSA, SBA, and just about every Federal agency to adhere to:

1. PL 106-50; 3 percent of all Federal contracts per government agency are set aside for SDVOB
2. PL 108-183; SDVOB's sole source and restricted competition contracts for goods and services used by the U.S. Government
3. Executive Order 13360; increases opportunities for SDVOB's

Deputy Director Sharpe currently represents The American Legion on the Small Business Administration's Advisory Committee on Business Affairs and advises on areas of significant interest which include:

- Adequate staffing and funding of the SBA Office of Veterans Business Development and Office of Federal Contract Assistance for Veteran Business Owners;
- The reported inadequacy of SBA Surety Bonding levels necessary to support SDVOB success in the federal marketplace;
- Special access to capital for veterans, service-disabled veterans and self-employed members of the Reserve components of the U.S. Military;
- Improved SBA transition assistance for discharged members of the U.S. military in their transition to civilian status;
- Exploration of changes to the GI Bill of Education to enable the use of benefits for the establishment and operation of small business concerns;
- Exploration of conducting research to determine the material effect of military service on successful small business ownership, for service-disabled veterans, for veterans, and for Reserve component members of the U.S. military; and,
- The extension and permanent establishment of the SBA Advisory Committee on Veterans Business Affairs.

Recently, the Pentagon has started taking steps toward getting to know those who employ its Citizen Warriors. The DoD began requiring Reservists to provide employment information. Defense officials are looking at everything from limiting lengths of deployments to improved working relationships with employers, even partnering to help a Reservist grow in both his or her military and civilian careers jointly. Just as Citizen Warriors need to adjust to a regular cycle of call-ups and a steady ops temp for the foreseeable future, so, too, will their employers. To do so, companies will have to be proactive in their business planning, but could also use help from the Federal government and cooperation from Reservists themselves.

Business Development Workshop held at Mid-Winter Conference and Reno

The National Economic Commission hosted an extremely successful? Business Development Workshop in which—150 participants attended. The Northeast Veterans Business Resource Center (NEVBRC) assembled top experts from the private and Federal sectors. Timothy Foreman from Department of Defense Marketing provided tips and tricks when it comes to marketing to the government. Shaunta Johnson, Director of the DC Regional office for Small Business for the Government Services Administration (GSA) presented Small Business Contracting Opportunities. Other topics included Sub Contracting Opportunities for Small Businesses Bonding and Access to Capital, registering with the Government Start a business, purchase an existing business, and how to begin a franchise.

SBA new Patriot Express Pilot Loan

Patriot Express is a streamlined loan product based on SBA's highly successful SBA Express Program, but with enhanced guarantee and interest rate characteristics. The new SBA Patriot Express Pilot Loan Initiative is a 7 (a) loan initiative offered by SBA's widest network of lenders nationwide and features our fastest turnaround time for loan approvals. Loans are available up to $500,000 and qualify for SBA's maximum guaranty of 85 percent for loans of $150,000 or less and 75 percent for loans over $150,000 up to $500,000. For loans above $350,000, lenders are required to take all available collateral. The Patriot Express loan can be used for most business purposes, including start-up, expansion, equipment purchases, working capital, inventory or business-occupied real-estate purchases.

Publications and Online Legion Site

State Approving Agencies

The American Legion is deeply concerned with the timely manner that veterans, especially returning wartime veterans, receive their education benefits. Annually, approximately 300,000 service members (90,000 of them belonging to the National Guard and Reserve) return to the civilian sector and use their earned education benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

Any delay in receipt of education benefits or approval of courses taken at institutions of higher learning can adversely affect a veteran's life

The American Legion believes that every effort should be made to ensure that the Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB) and related veterans' education benefits are delivered without problems or delays. Furthermore, veterans are unique in that they volunteer for military service; therefore, these educational benefits are earned as the thanks of a grateful nation. The American Legion believes it is a national obligation to provide timely oversight of veterans' education programs to assure they are administered in a timely, efficient, and accurate manner.

A GAO report entitled "VA Student Financial Aid; Management Actions Needed to Reduce Overlap in Approving Education and Training Programs and to Assess State Approving Agencies" (GAO-07-384) focuses on the need to "ensure that Federal dollars are spent efficiently and effectively."

GAO recommends that VA should require State Approving Agencies (SAAs) to track and report data on resources spent on approval activities, such as site visits, catalog review, and outreach in a cost-efficient manner. The American Legion agrees. Additionally, GAO recommended that VA establish outcome-oriented performance measures to assess the effectiveness of SAAs efforts. The American Legion fully agrees. In response, VA Deputy Secretary Mansfield plans to establish a working group with SAAs to create a reporting system for approval activities and develop outcome-oriented measures with a goal of implementation in the FY 2008 budget cycle.

Finally, GAO recommended that VA should collaborate with other agencies to identify any duplicate efforts and use the agency's administrative and regulatory authority to streamline the approval process. The American Legion agrees. VA Deputy Secretary Mansfield responded that VA would initiate contact with appropriate officials at the Departments of Education and Labor to help identify any duplicate efforts.

Section 301 of PL 107-330 created increases in the aggregate annual amount available for state approving agencies for administrative expenses from FY 2003-FY 2007 to the current funding level of $19 million. The American Legion fully supports reauthorization of SAAs funding.

Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Service

The mission of the VR&E program is to help qualified, service-disabled veterans achieve independence in daily living and, to the maximum extent feasible, obtain and maintain suitable employment. The American Legion fully supports these goals. As a nation at war, there continues to be an increasing need for VR&E services to assist Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom veterans in reintegrating into independent living, achieving the highest possible quality of life, and securing meaningful employment. To meet America's obligation to these specific veterans, VA leadership must focus on marked improvements in case management, vocational counseling, and—most importantly—job placement.

The success of the rehabilitation of our severely disabled veterans is determined by the coordinated efforts of every Federal agency involved in the seamless transition from the battlefield to the civilian workplace. Timely access to quality health care services, favorable physical rehabilitation, vocational training, and job placement play a critical role in the "seamless transition" of each veteran, as well as his or her family.

Administration of VR&E and its programs is a responsibility of the VBA. Providing effective employment programs through VR&E must become a priority. Until recently, VR&E's primary focus has been providing veterans with skills training, rather than providing assistance in obtaining meaningful employment. Clearly, any employability plan that doesn't achieve the ultimate objective—a job—is falling short of actually helping those veterans seeking assistance in transitioning into the civilian workforce.

Vocational counseling also plays a vital role in identifying barriers to employment and matching veterans' transferable job skills with those career opportunities available for fully qualified candidates. Becoming fully qualified becomes the next logical objective toward successful transition. It is our observations from talking to veterans, counselors, Disabled Veteran Outreach Program Specialists (DVOPs) and Local Veteran Employment Representatives (LVERs) that it would be beneficial if VR&E counselors take on an additional duty of finding or assisting in employment of veterans. Because these counselors deal directly with veterans on a full time basis, as opposed to DVOPs and LVERs on a part time basis, they are more devoted and specialized in their approach to an individual veteran. These counselors may have input into the employability of a service-connected veteran, but The American Legion asserts that the VA must rely on an expert medical opinion from a qualified, competent physician to determine unemployability.

We appreciate the significance of a vocational assessment in establishing entitlement to total disability ratings for compensation based on unemployability of the individual (TDIU) and we welcome the participation of a vocational or rehabilitation specialist in this process. However, a medical opinion is still extremely important in determining unemployability and must be given proper consideration and weight.

Interagency Cooperation between DOL-VETS and VA

It is our experience that the interagency collaboration and communication between the VR&E program, and the Department of Labor (DOL) Veterans Employment and Training Service (VETS) is lacking.

In recent years, many states did not refer veterans from the VR&E program to VETS for assistance in obtaining employment. Veterans with high-tech skills and advanced education were referred to expensive commercial placement agencies that do not specialize in employment assistance for veterans, and difficult to place veterans were sent to VETS. Therefore, to assist in the correction of these deficiencies a Memorandum of Understanding between VA and DOL was developed and signed in October, 2005 stating that each agency would work for the smooth transition of veterans to the civilian work force. This agreement is authorized in accordance with Section 4102A (b) (3), title 38, U.S.C.

In discussions with numerous VETS representatives across the country, The American Legion is hearing a variety of opinions on the current implementation process and progress of the MOU. Some states report a total lack of communication and information sharing while other states already enjoy a strong relationship between the local VETS and VR&E Offices.

A majority of VETS representatives contacted spoke of a markedly improved level of communication between the two agencies, along with other positive developments such as improvement in local data sharing and combined training on the local and national levels. In addition, national representatives from the two agencies are currently reporting a close and cooperative relationship, and the expectation is that this relationship will continue to improve over time.

In some states, however, it has been reported that the signing of the MOU has not led to an improvement in cooperation between the two agencies. Some problems cited were a difference in the perceptions of the primary mission, differing education levels of VA case managers and the DVOPs and LVERs, and the unenforceable mandate for the two agencies to communicate and cooperate on a local level. The DVOPs and LVERs are controlled by each individual state and have their own requirements, making a state and federal program difficult to synchronize.

Concerns such as education levels of VA's case managers and DOL DVOPs and LVERs (case managers from the VA generally have BA or MA degrees while the DVOPs and LVERs require only a high school education), job philosophies, and performance standards are cited as problems that affect the delivery of employment and rehab services to veterans.

While poor coordination between VR&E counselors and their VETS counterparts have contributed to the shortfalls of the VR&E program, a number of states have begun to improve communications. The outlook is not completely negative. A majority of VETS representatives have commended their VR&E counterparts for their willingness to ensure the successful implementation of the joint MOU that is designed to improve rehabilitation, training and employment outcomes for disabled veterans.

The American Legion recommends exploring possible training programs geared specifically for VR&E Counselors through the National Veterans Training Institute (NVTI). Contracting for standardized or specialized training for VR&E employees could very well strengthen and improve overall program performance. NVTI serves as a valuable resource for VETS employment specialists and has contributed to a marked improvement in VETS performance.

Veterans' Preference Should Play A Large Role In Job Placement

The Federal government has scores of employment opportunities that educated, well-trained, and motivated veterans can fill given a fair and equitable chance to compete. Working together, all Federal agencies should identify those vocational fields, especially those with high turnover rates, suitable for VR&E applicants. Career fields like information technology, claims adjudications, and debt collection offer employment opportunities and challenges for career-oriented applicants that also create career opportunities outside the Federal government.

There are three ways veterans can be appointed to jobs in the competitive civil service: by competitive appointment through an OPM list of eligibles (or agency equivalent); by noncompetitive appointment under special authorities that provide for conversion to the competitive service; or, by Merit Promotion selection under the Veterans Employment Opportunities Act (VEOA).

Provide Military Occupational Skills and Experience Translation for Civilian Employment Counseling

The American Legion notes that due to the current demands of the military, greater emphasis on the Reserve component of the Armed Forces created employment hardships for many Reservists. The American Legion supports amending Section 4101(5), title 38, U.S.C., to add Subsection (D) to the list of "Eligible Persons" for Job Counseling, Training, and Placement Service for Veterans, to include members in good standing of Active Reserve and Guard Units of the Armed Forces of the United States who have

completed basic and advanced Duty for Training (ACDUTRA) and have been awarded a Military Occupation Specialty.

DOD provides some of the best vocational training in the nation for its military personnel. DOD establishes, measures and evaluates performance standards for every occupation with the Armed Forces. There are many occupational career fields in the Armed Forces that can easily translate to a civilian counterpart many occupations in the civilian workforce that require a license or certification. In the Armed Forces, these unique occupations are performed to approve military standards that may meet or exceed the civilian license or certification criteria.

Upon separation, many former military personnel, certified as proficient in their military occupational career, are not licensed or certified to perform the comparable job in the civilian workforce, thus hindering chances for immediate civilian employment and delaying career advancement. This situation creates an artificial barrier to employment upon separation from military service.

A study by the Presidential Commission on Servicemembers' and Veterans' Transition Assistance identified a total of 105 military professions where civilian credentialing is required. The most easily identifiable job is that of a Commercial Truck Driver in which there is a drastic shortage of qualified drivers. Thousands of veterans must venture through each state's laws instead of a single national test or transfer of credentials from the military. We have testified alongside members of the trucking industry to the U.S. House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity for the need for accelerated MGIB payments for these courses and other matters.

The American Legion support efforts to eliminate employment barriers that impede the transfer of military job skills to the civilian labor market. Our organization also supports efforts by the Department of Defense to take appropriate steps to ensure that servicemembers be trained, tested, evaluated and issued any licensure or certification that may be required in the civilian workforce. The American Legion support efforts to increase the civilian labor market's acceptance of the occupational training provided by the military.

Department Of Labor Veterans Employment and Training Service (DOL-VETS)

The American Legion's position regarding VETS programs is that this is and should remain a national program with Federal oversight and accountability. The American Legion is eager to see this program grow and especially would like to see greater expansion of entrepreneurial based, self-employment opportunity training. The mission of VETS is to promote the economic security of America's veterans. This stated mission is executed by assisting veterans in finding meaningful employment. The American Legion believes that by strengthening American veterans, we in turn strengthen America. Annually, DOD discharges approximately 300,000 service members. Recently separated service personnel will seek immediate employment or increasingly have chosen some form of self-employment. In order for the VETS program to assist these veterans to achieve their goals, it needs to:

- Improve by expanding its outreach efforts with creative initiatives designed to improve employment and training services for veterans;
- Provide employers with a labor pool of quality applicants with marketable and transferable job skills;
- Provide information on identifying military occupations that require licenses, certificates or other credentials at the local, state, or national levels;
- Eliminate barriers to recently separated service personnel and assist in the transition from military service to the civilian labor market;
- Strive to be a proactive agent between the business and veterans' communities in order to provide greater employment opportunities for veterans; and,
- Increase training opportunities, support and options for veterans who seek self-employment and entrepreneurial careers.

The American Legion believes staffing levels for DVOPs and LVERs should match the needs of the veterans' community in each state and not be based solely on the fiscal needs of the state government. Such services will continue to be crucial as today's active

duty service members, especially those returning from combat in Iraq and Afghanistan, transition into the civilian world. Education, vocational and entrepreneurial training and employment opportunities will enable these veterans to succeed in their future endeavors. Adequate funding will allow the programs to increase staffing to provide comprehensive case management job assistance to disabled and other eligible veterans.

Section 4103A, title 38 USC requires that all DVOP specialists shall be qualified veterans and preference be given to qualified disabled veterans in appointment to DVOP specialist positions. Section 4104(a)(4), title 38 U.S.C. states:

"[I]n the appointment of local veterans' employment representatives on or after July 1, 1988, preference shall be given to qualified eligible veterans or eligible persons. Preference shall be accorded first to qualified service-connected disabled veterans; then, if no such disabled veteran is available, to qualified eligible veterans; and, if no such eligible veteran is available, then to qualified eligible persons."

The American Legion believes that the military experience is essential to understanding the unique needs of the veteran and that all LVERs, as well as all DVOPs, should be veterans and should be additionally educated to be able to address the needs of veterans who desire entrepreneurial support.

The American Legion also supports legislation that will restore language to Chapter 41, title 38, U.S.C., that require that half-time DVOP/LVER positions be assigned only after approval of the DVET, and that the Secretary of Labor be required to monitor all career centers that have veterans on staff assigned. PL 107-288 has eliminated the requirement that DOL/VETS review all workforce centers annually and this has minimized Federal oversight of the programs since the ASVET has drastically cut funds allocated for this activity and established a policy that only 10 percent of the centers operated under title 38, U.S.C., will be reviewed, and PL 107-288 has removed the job descriptions of the DVOPs and LVERs from Title 38, U.S.C., and given the States the ability to establish the duties and responsibilities, thus weakening the VETS program across the country by eliminating the language that required these staff positions provide services only to veterans.

Veterans returning from Afghanistan, Iraq and other tours of duty are not always coming back to a hero's welcome—at least from employers. The jobless rate for veterans between ages 18 to 24 was 12 percent in 2007, almost three times the national unemployment rate of 4.6 percent. Numerous national publications have reported veterans are having a more difficult time finding jobs than non-veterans. According to a recent national survey, one in five veterans said finding a job took six months or longer; one in 10 said it took more than a year. The employment market is tougher for young veterans. This is a key reason why the funding for the VETS program is so critical.

Veterans need proper training and tools to begin new careers after they leave military service. The VWIP account has only received $7.3 million in annual funding, which has allowed the program to operate in only 11 states. This is absolutely unacceptable. There are thousands of veterans available for work, but they lack marketable, technological skills, especially for those jobs that exist in the Information Age economy. The problem is clearly a lack of adequate funding for veterans who are the only participants in this program. The budget baseline needs to increase to allow VETS to train eligible veterans in all 50 states in FY 2010.

Make Transitional Assistance Program (TAP)/Disabled Transitional Assistance Program (DTAP) A Mandatory Program

The American Legion is deeply concerned with the timely manner that veterans, especially returning wartime veterans, transition into the civilian sector. Annually, for the past 6 years, approximately 300,000 service members, 90,000 of them belonging to the National Guard and Reserve, enter the civilian sector each year.

DOD estimates that 68 percent of separating service members attends the full TAP seminars and only 35 percent of the Reserve components attend. The American Legion believes this low attendance number is a disservice to all transitioning service members, especially the Reserve component. Currently, numerous National Guard and Reserve troops have returned from the war in Iraq and Afghanistan only to encounter difficulties

with their Federal and civilian employers at home, and the number of destroyed and bankrupt businesses due to military deployment is still being realized.

In numerous cases brought to the attention of The American Legion by veterans and other sources, many of these returning service members have lost jobs, promotions, businesses, homes, and cars and, in a few cases, become homeless. The American Legion strongly endorses the belief that service members would greatly benefit by having access to the resources and knowledge that the Transitional Assistance Program (TAP) and Disabled Transitional Assistance Program (DTAP) can provide and the TAP/DTAP program needs to update their program to recognize the large number of guard and reserve business owners who now require training, information and assistance while they attempt to salvage or recover from a business which they abandon to serve their country.

Any delay in reintegration in to the civilian workforce can adversely affect a veteran's life. Every effort should be made to ensure that veterans are afforded all the opportunities that this great country can offer without delay.

The American Legion strongly supports the Transition Assistance Program and Disabled Transition Assistance Program. Additionally, The American Legion supports that DOD require all separating, active-duty servicemembers, including those from Reserve and National Guard units, be given an opportunity to participate in Transition Assistance Program and Disabled Transition Assistance Program training not more than 180 days prior to their separation or retirement from the Armed Forces.

The DOD Transition Assistance Program (TAP) was designed to help smooth the transition of military personnel (and family members) leaving active duty. TAP is a partnership among DOD, DOL, and VA. The program consists of four components:

1. **DOD Pre-separation Counseling;**
2. **DOL Employment Workshops;**
3. **VA Benefits Briefing; and,**
4. **Disabled Transition Assistance Program (DTAP).**

Once a service member has completed the four workshops above, they are eligible for one-on-one counseling and employment assistance training through their service. For demobilizing Guard and Reserve: DOD Pre-separation Counseling, DOL Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) Briefing, VA Benefits Briefing, and VA DTAP Briefing are provided on major military installations by the Transition Assistance Offices.

A new website designed to help all veterans was recently launched on June 11, 2007. The "TurboTap" is intended to be a one-stop transition center but not to replace the face-to-face interaction and the assistance that the full programs can provide.

Transition Assistance Program Employment Workshops are provided to transitioning service members at most military installations in the United States as well as in eight overseas locations. The two and one-half day employment workshops help service members prepare a plan for obtaining meaningful civilian employment when they leave the military. The workshop focuses on skills assessment, resume writing, job counseling and assistance, interviewing and networking skills, labor market information, and familiarization with America's workforce investment system.

Studies have shown that service members who participate in TAP employment workshops find their first civilian jobs three weeks earlier than veterans who do not participate in TAP. According to DOL's VETS, it is estimated that about 65 percent of service members leaving active duty do attend a TAP workshop. VETS is vital in ensuring that every TAP participant leaves the session with a draft resume, a practice interview session, and having visited their state job board.

DOL's VETS program is critical in supporting veterans as they transition from the military and into the private sector, assisting veterans to be awarded federal employment using their earned veterans' preference, and assisting veterans achieve substantially gainful employment.

At the end of the Cold War, DOD dramatically downsized its personnel strength. In an attempt to assist separating service members in making a successful transition back into the civilian workforce, Congress enacted PL 101-510 that authorized the creation of the TAP that provides separating servicemembers with three days of comprehensive training with emphasis on such topics as networking, how to conduct a job search,

resumé writing, career decision-making, and interview techniques, as well as current occupational and labor market conditions.

VETS provides professional veterans' employment personnel, DVOPs and LVERs, to participate in the TAP program. Higher demands placed on LVERs to deliver TAP modules, in addition to their normal employment assistance programs, has the potential for weakening their overall capability.

To ensure that all veterans, both transitioning and those looking for employment assistance well past their discharge, receive the best care, the DOL-VETS program must be adequately funded. However, we feel that the current funding levels are inadequate.

On the contrary to the demands placed upon VETS, funding increases for VETS since 9/11 do not reflect the large increase in service members requiring these services due to the Global War on Terror. In support of this fact, the inflation rate from January 2002 to January 2007 is 14.29 percent and yet for State Grants alone, funding has only increased a meek 1.19 percent ($158 million to $161 million).

More services and programs are needed and yet since 2002 the VETS program has only received a modest 4 percent increase. Transition assistance, education, and employment are each a pillar of financial stability. They will prevent homelessness, afford the veteran to compete in the private sector, and allow our nation's veterans to contribute their military skills and education to the civilian sector.

By placing veterans in suitable employment sooner, the country benefits from increased income tax revenue and reduced unemployment compensation payments, thus greatly offsetting the cost of TAP training. The necessity and severity of the situation is now.

The American Legion recommends $352 million to DOL-VETS for FY 2010.

Military Occupational Specialty Transition (Most) Program

The American Legion supports the new legislation, H.R. 6221 that will authorize $60 million for the next ten years to fund the Service Members' Occupational Conversion and Training Act (SMOCTA). SMOCTA is a training program developed in the early 1990's for those leaving military service with few or no job skills transferable to the civilian market place. SMOCTA has been changed to the Military Occupational Specialty Transition (MOST) program, but the language and intent of the program still applies.

If enacted, MOST would be the only Federal job training program available strictly for veterans and the only Federal job training program specifically designed and available for use by state veterans' employment personnel to assist veterans with barriers to employment.

Veterans eligible for assistance under MOST are those with a primary or secondary military occupational specialty that DOD has determined is not readily transferable to the civilian workforce or those veterans with a service-connected disability rating of 30 per cent or higher. MOST is a unique job training program because there is a job waiting for the newly trained veteran upon completion of training so that they can continue to contribute to the economic well being of the nation.

In March 1993, DOD, VA, and DOL signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), which defined their roles and responsibilities in the implementation of SMOCTA and DOD provided funding for SMOCTA. The VA and DOL were responsible for administering the program. Many LVERs and DVOPs publicly praised the effectiveness of this program because it successfully returned veterans to the civilian workforce. The American Legion recommends reauthorization of SMOCTA (now MOST) and adequate funding for the program.

Employment

DVOPs provide outreach services and intensive employment services to meet the employment needs of eligible veterans, with priority to disabled veterans and special emphasis placed on those veterans most in need. LVERs conduct outreach to local employers to develop employment opportunities for veterans, and facilitate employment, training and placement services to veterans. In particular, many LVERs are the facilitators for the Transition Assistance Program employment workshops.

There are inadequate appropriations to several states because of policies and practices that cause these states to receive fewer positions and/or less funding. This procedure caused a deterioration of the available services provided to veterans in those states, and adversely impacts the level of services provided.

Homelessness (DOL-VETS)

The American Legion notes that there are approximately 154,000 homeless veterans on the street each night. This number, compounded with 300,000 service members entering the private sector each year since 2001 with at least a third of them potentially suffering from mental illness, requires that intensive and numerous programs to prevent and assist homeless veterans are available.

Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP) is a competitive grant program. Grants are awarded to states or other public entities and non-profits, including faith-based organizations, to operate employment programs that reach out to homeless veterans and help them become gainfully employed. The purpose of the HVRP is to provide services to assist in reintegrating homeless veterans into meaningful employment within the labor force and to stimulate the development of effective service delivery systems that will address the complex problems facing veterans. HVRP is the only nationwide program focused on assisting homeless veterans to reintegrate into the workforce.

The American Legion recommends $40 million for this highly successful grant program in FY 2010.

Training

The National Veterans' Employment and Training Services Institute (NVTI) was established to ensure a high level of proficiency and training for staff that provide veterans' employment services.

NVTI provides training to Federal and state government employment service providers in competency based training courses. Current law requires all DVOPs and LVERs to be trained within 3 years of hiring. We believe that these personnel should be trained within 1 year.

The American Legion recommends $6 million of funding for NVTI in FY 2010.

Veterans Workforce Investment Program (VWIP)

VWIP grants support efforts to ensure veterans' lifelong learning and skills development in programs designed to serve the most-at-risk veterans, especially those with service-connected disabilities, those with significant barriers to employment, and recently separated veterans. The goal is to provide an effective mix of interventions, including training, retraining, and support services, that lead to long term, higher wage and career potential jobs.

The American Legion recommends funding of $20 million for VWIP in FY 2010.

Employment Rights and Veterans' Preference

The Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) protects the civilian job rights and benefits of veterans and members of the armed forces, including National Guard and Reserve members. USERRA also prohibits employer discrimination due to military obligations and provides reemployment rights to returning service members. VETS administers this law, conducts investigations for USERRA and veterans' preference cases, as well as conducts outreach and education, and investigates complaints by service members.

Since September 11, 2001, nearly 600,000 National Guard and Reserve members have been activated for military duty. During this same period, DOL/VETS have provided USERRA assistance to over 410,000 employers and service members.

Veterans' preference is authorized by the Veterans' Preference Act of 1944. The Veterans' Employment Opportunity Act (VEOA) of 1998 extended certain rights and remedies to recently separated veterans. VETS was given the responsibility to investigate complaints filed by veterans who believe their veterans' preference rights have been violated and to conduct an extensive compliance assistance program.

Veterans preference is being unlawfully ignored by numerous agencies. Whereas figures show a decline in claims by veterans of this conflict compared to Gulf War I, the reality is that employment opportunities are not being broadcast. Federal agencies as well as subcontractors are required by law to notify OPM of job opportunities but more often than not these vacancies are never made available to the public. The VETS program investigates these claims and corrects unlawful practices.

The American Legion recommends funding of $61 million for Program Management that encompasses USERRA and VEOA in FY 2010.

The American Legion also supports the strongest veterans' preference laws possible at all levels of government. We believe that the evidence compiled in this report will show the current state of enforcing the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) and veterans' preference laws to the nation's veterans.

The American Legion is deeply concerned with the protection of the veteran and the prevention of illegal and egregious hiring practices. Currently, veterans are filing claims after the non-compliance employment event occurred and therefore may become financially disadvantaged. Concurrent measures and continuous oversight must be emplaced to protect veterans from unfair hiring practices, not just reactionary investigations.

The following paragraphs are the perceived steps taken by the Federal government to protect veterans' employment and it demonstrates reactionary measures to assist veterans that may take months to resolve. Many veterans give up or do not file complaints because they must seek employment elsewhere or face serious financial difficulties.

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) administers entitlement to *veterans' preference* in employment. DOL, through VETS, provides assistance to all persons having claims under USERRA. DOL is the enforcement authority for USERRA, and it processes all formal complaints of violations of the law. The veteran may then request that the Department of Justice (DOJ) litigate on their behalf but only after a certain period has passed.

The following excerpt is from the DOJ website (www.usdoj.gov):

"If VETS is unsuccessful in resolving the complaint, the claimant may request that VETS refer the complaint to Office of Special Counsel (OSC). If the Special Counsel believes there is merit to the complaint, OSC will initiate an action before the Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB) and appear on behalf of the claimant.

"The DOJ is responsible for enforcing the provisions of the USERRA against state and local government employers and private employers. If the Department of Justice takes your case, it will serve as your attorney if you work for a private employer or a local government. If you work for a state government, the Department of Justice may bring a lawsuit in the name of the United States."

The DOJ website continues to state:

"USERRA authorizes the Department of Justice Office of Special Counsel (OSC) to investigate alleged violations of the act by Federal Executive Agencies, and to prosecute meritorious claims before the Merit Systems Protection Board on behalf of the aggrieved person. Under the Veterans Employment Opportunities Act of 1998 (VEOA), in order to seek corrective action, a preference eligible [veteran] is to file a written complaint with the U.S. Department of Labor, Veterans Employment and Training Service (VETS), within 60 days of the alleged violation. If the Secretary is unable to resolve a complaint within 60 days, the Secretary is to provide notification of an unsuccessful effort to resolve the complaint to the complainant."

The American Legion reiterates its position that protection of veterans' employment rights should be concurrent and continuous oversight must be emplaced to protect veterans from unfair hiring practices, not just reactionary investigations and lawsuits. We further state that the veteran must be protected at the onset of the hiring process, especially because corrective actions to remedy the veteran's plight are not guaranteed.

Finally, we recommend to this Committee that the DOJ provide a detailed description of their veterans' employment activities.

Veterans' Preference Cases	FY 2006	FY 2007
Cases Carried over from previous FY	67	29
Cases Opened	479	427
Total cases	546	456
Cases Closed	517	406
Cases carried to next FY	29	50

FY 2006

In 2006, VETS staff closed 1,377 USERRA complaints, recovering $2,346,142.04 in lost wages and benefits.

FY 2007

In 2007, VETS staff closed 1,200 USERRA complaints, recovering $1,886,572.95 in lost wages and benefits.

Veteran and Service Disabled Veteran Owned Businesses

The American Legion views small businesses as the backbone of the American economy. It is the driving force behind America's past economic growth and will continue to be the major factor as we move further into the 21st century. Currently, more than nine out of every ten businesses are small firms, which produce almost one-half of the Gross National Product. Veterans' benefits have always included assistance in creating and operating veteran-owned small businesses.

The impact of deployment on self-employed Reservists is tragic with a reported 40 percent of all businesses owned by veterans are suffering financial losses and in some cases bankruptcies. Many small businesses have discovered they are unable to operate and suffer some form of financial loss when key employees (who are members of the Reserve component) are activated. The Congressional Budget Office in a report, "*The Effects of Reserve Call-Ups on Civilian Employers,*" stated that it "expects that as many as 30,000 small businesses and 55,000 self-employed individuals may be more severely affected if their Reservist employee or owner is activated." The American Legion is a strong supporter of the "Hope at Home Act of 2007," which is a bipartisan bill that would not only require the Federal government to close the pay gap between their Reserves and National Guard service member's civilian and military pay but it would also provide tax credits up to $30,000 for small businesses with service members who are activated.

Additionally, the Office of Veterans' Business Development within the Small Business Administration (SBA) remains crippled and ineffective due to a token funding of $750,000 per year. This amount, which is less than the office supply budget for the SBA, is expected to support an entire nation of veterans who are entrepreneurs. The American Legion feels that this pittance is an insult to American military veterans who are small business owners; consequently, this undermines the spirit and intent of PL 106-50 and continues to be a source of embarrassment for this country.

The American Legion strongly supports increased funding of the efforts of the SBA's Office of Veterans' Business Development in its initiatives to provide enhanced outreach and specific community based assistance to veterans and self employed members of the Reserves and National Guard. The American Legion also supports legislation that would permit the Office of Veterans Business Development to enter into contracts, grants, and cooperative agreements to further its outreach goals and develop a nationwide community-based service delivery system specifically for veterans and members of Reserve components of the United States military.

The American Legion recommends $15 million in FY 2010 to enable implementation of a nationwide community-based assistance program to veterans and self employed members of the Reserves and National Guard.

The National Veterans Business Development Corporation

Congress enacted the Veterans Entrepreneurship (TVC) and Small Business Development Act of 1999 (PL 106-50) to assist veterans and service-connected disabled veterans who own small businesses by creating the National Veterans Business Development Corporation. Presently, the objectives of PL 106-50 (as originally

envisioned) are not being met at the present time due to the scope of the mission, staffing and funding requirements.

The American Legion believes that with limited funding and staffing, TVC should not try to duplicate or replicate preexisting services such as those provided by the Small Business Development Centers (SBDC). The American Legion recommends that the resource-training centers that TVC is currently providing funding for be given to the jurisdiction of the SBA's Veterans' Development Office.

The SBA's Veterans' Development Office is presently funding five such centers around the country and should be given the additional three. In addition, the SBA office should take on the responsibility of partnering with military and VA hospitals, TAPs, State Departments of Veterans Affairs, Procurement Technical Assistance Centers, Military Family Support Centers, and Veterans' Service Organizations to provide employment and entrepreneurship programs along with the addition of funding and necessary senior staff to oversee the implementation and development of such a program.

TVC would operate more effectively acting as a liaison with existing associations of small business owners and, by working with SBA programs, ensure the involvement of private and successful military alumni from the business community to help support SBA's successful reintegration of veterans and Reserve component entrepreneurs into the private and public American marketplace.

The American Legion also supports restructuring of the organization by changing the current Chief Executive Officer position into a congressionally appointed Director from the Senior Executive Service. That move would allow Congress greater oversight of expenditures and an enhanced ability to monitor performance. Restricting the role of the Board of Directors to fund raising, marketing and branding which will serve to increase small business opportunities to veterans along with relieving board members of the challenges of operating such a national outreach initiative, with only the guidance of the Chief Executive Officer.

The American Legion reiterates the SBA's Office of Veterans' Business Development should be the lead agency to ensure that veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan are provided with entrepreneurial development assistance. Comprehensive training should be handled by the SBA and augmented by TVC's on-line training. Resource Training Centers should include DOD and VA faculties. Currently, many military families are suffering financial hardship while their loved ones are recuperating in military hospitals around the country. Many spouses leave their jobs to be with that disabled service member only to watch their finances deteriorate. Seamless transition in many cases is just a wishful thought; however, if business development training was offered to military members, a small home-based business that is feasible could be the answer in guaranteeing a constant source of revenue for the family, in turn making them less dependent on the Federal government.

The American Legion has encouraged Congress to require reasonable "set-asides" of Federal procurements and contract for businesses owned and operated by veterans. The American Legion supported legislation in the past that sought to add service-connected disabled veterans to the list of specified small business categories receiving 3 percent set-asides. PL 106-50, "The Veteran Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development Act of 1999," included veteran small businesses within Federal contracting and subcontracting goals for small business owners and within goals for the participation of small businesses in Federal procurement contracts. It requires the head of each Federal agency to establish agency goals for the participation by small businesses owned and controlled by service-connected disabled veterans in that agency's procurement contracts.

Agency compliance with PL 106-50 has been minimal with only two agencies self-reporting that they have met their goals (the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Small Business Administration). In 2004, President Bush issued Executive Order 13360 to strengthen opportunities in Federal contracting for service-disabled veteran-owned businesses.

Recommendations

1. Incorporate Executive Order 13360 into SBA Regulations and Standard Operating Procedures

The American Legion endorses these recommendations given from the "SBA Advisory Committee on Veterans Business Affairs" FY 2006 SBA report:

- "The SBA needs to reemphasize implementation of Executive Order 13360 and establish it as a Federal procurement priority across the entire Federal sector. Federal agencies need to be held accountable, by the SBA, for their implementing Executive Order 13360 and their progress toward the 3 percent goal. The SBA needs to establish a means to monitor agencies progress and where appropriate, establish a vehicle to report or otherwise identify those that are not in compliance, and pursue ongoing follow-up."
- "To achieve the SDVOSB procurement goal contained in Executive Order 13360, the SBA must identify all agencies affected by the Executive Order under the directive of Congress. Then the SBA should assist these agencies to develop a demonstrable, measured strategic plan and establish realistic reporting criteria. Once the information is received, disseminate this data to all agencies, Veterans Organizations and post on SBA website as a bellwether of program progress."

2. Change to Sole Source Contracting Methods

"To provide parity among special emphasis procurement programs the SBA should take immediate, appropriate steps to promulgate regulations to revise 13 CFR 125.20. The proposed revision would eliminate existing restrictions on the award of sole source contracts to SDVOSB such as the "Rule of Two. The change should mirror 13 CFR 124.508 (c) which applies to 8 (a) Program participants and states…In order to be eligible to receive a sole source 8 (a) contract, a firm must be current participant on the date of the award…Accordingly, adopting this language would eliminate all restrictions on sole source awards to SDVOSBs."

3. Develop a User Friendly Veteran Procurement Database

The American Legion also support that the Federal government and DOD utilize its available technology to create, fund and support a veteran procurement-spending database within the DOD that would finally bring veteran owned and service-disabled veteran-owned businesses on equal footing with all other small business special interest groups when it comes to Federal procurement opportunities.

Home Loan Guaranty Program

VA's Home Loan Guaranty program has been in effect since 1944 and has afforded approximately 18 million veterans the opportunity to purchase homes. The Home Loan programs offer veterans a centralized, affordable and accessible method of purchasing homes in return for their service to this nation. The program has been so successful over past years that not only has the program paid for itself, but has also shown a profit in recent years. Administrative costs constitute a relatively small portion—less than 10 percent—of the total capital and operating costs. The predominant costs are claims costs and other costs associated with foreclosure and alternatives taken to avoid foreclosure. Each claim costs the Federal government about $20,000. However, revenues that VA collects from different sources, including the funding fee that borrowers pay, property sales, and proceeds from acquired loans and vendee loans, offset this cost.

The VA funding fee is required by law and is designed to sustain the VA Home Loan Program by eliminating the need for appropriations from Congress. Congress is not required to appropriate funding for this program; however, because veterans must now 'buy' into the program, it no longer serves the intent of helping veterans afford a home.

The fee, currently 2.15 percent on no-down payment loans for a first-time use, is intended to enable the veteran who obtains a VA home loan to contribute toward the cost of this benefit, and thereby reduce the cost to taxpayers. The funding fee for second time users who do not make a down payment is 3.3 percent. The idea of a higher fee for second time use is based on the fact that these veterans have already had a chance to use the benefit once, and also that prior users have had time to accumulate equity or save money towards a down payment.

The following persons are exempt from paying the funding fee:

- Veterans receiving VA compensation for service-connected disabilities.

- Veterans who would be entitled to receive compensation for service-connected disabilities if they did not receive retirement pay.
- Surviving spouses of veterans who died in service or from service-connected disabilities (whether or not such surviving spouses are veterans with their own entitlement and whether or not they are using their own entitlement on the loan).

The funding fee makes the VA Home Loan program less beneficial compared to a standard, private loan, in some aspects. The current rate for mortgages (July 2008) is 6.5 percent. The funding fee would be in addition to the rate given by the lender. A $300,000 loan would generate a fee in addition to any rate the veteran would achieve. The funding fee mandates the participant to buy in to the program; however, that goes directly against the intention of the law, to provide veterans a resource for obtaining a home.

The American Legion believes that it is unfair for veterans to pay high funding fees of 2 to 3 percent, which can add approximately $3,000 to $11,000 for a first time buyer. The VA funding fee was initially enacted to defray the costs of the VA guaranteed home loan program. The current funding fee paid to VA to defray the cost of the home loan has had a negative effect on many veterans who choose not to participate in this highly beneficial program.

Therefore, The American Legion strongly recommends that the VA funding fee on home loans be reduced or eliminated for all veterans whether active duty, Reservist, or National Guard.

Specially Adaptive Housing

The American Legion is pleased to support the VA Secretary's efforts to improve the housing arrangements to better suit disabled veterans' needs, with specific emphasis on severe burn injuries, and to accommodate those veterans with severe burns. The American Legion additionally applauds efforts to assist disabled veterans to receive adaptive equipment for automobiles.

The American Legion conveys that specially adaptive housing should also include those veterans suffering from Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), and other debilitating injuries. We are also concerned with the ambiguity of the term "severe" in that there are many different levels of injury where a severe injury to one individual may not be as severe to another.

Homeless Veterans

The American Legion supports the efforts of public and private sector agencies and organizations with the resources necessary to aid homeless veterans and their families. The American Legion supports proposals that will provide medical, rehabilitative and employment assistance to homeless veterans and their families.

Homeless veteran programs should be granted full appropriations to provide supportive services such as, but not limited to, outreach, health care, habilitation and rehabilitation, case management, daily living, personal financial planning, transportation, vocational counseling, employment and training, and education.

The American Legion applauds the VA, HUD, and the Senate Appropriations Committee for ensuring PL 110-161, the FY 2008 Consolidated Appropriations Act, included $75 million for the HUD-VASH program. This funding allowed HUD and VA to make up to 10,000 supportive incremental housing vouchers available to homeless veterans. Looking ahead to FY 2009 funding for veterans permanent housing, HUD has requested another $75 million for up to 10,000 additional vouchers for the HUD-VASH program. The American Legion urges the Appropriations Committee members to support this amount in new legislation, and to double that amount in FY 2010.

Veterans need a sustained, coordinated effort that provides: secure housing and nutritious meals; essential physical health care; substance abuse aftercare and mental health counseling; and personal development and empowerment. Veterans also need job assessment, training and placement assistance. The American Legion believes all programs to assist homeless veterans must focus on helping veterans reach their highest level of self-management.

Homeless Providers Grant and Per Diem Program Reauthorization

In 1992, VA was given authority to establish the Homeless Providers Grant and Per Diem Program under the Homeless Veterans Comprehensive Service Programs Act of 1992, PL 102-590. The Grant and Per Diem Program is offered annually (as funding permits) by the VA to fund community agencies providing service to homeless veterans.

VA can provide grants and per diem payments to help public and nonprofit organizations establish and operate supportive housing and/or service centers for homeless veterans. Funds are available for assistance in the form of grants to provide: transitional housing (up to 24 months) with supportive services; supportive services in a service center facility for homeless veterans not in conjunction with supportive housing; or, to purchase vans.

The American Legion strongly supports increasing the funding level to $200 million annually for the Grant and Per Diem Program.

VBA has 20 full-time and 37 part-time homeless veteran outreach coordinators to enhance prompt claims for homeless and at-risk veterans. VBA identified and expedited more than 21,000 claims from homeless veterans since 2003. Approximately 44 percent of compensation claims and 77 percent of pension claims are approved annually.

Health Care for Homeless Veterans (HCHV) sites provide outreach, physical and psychiatric treatment, referrals, and case management to homeless veterans. HCHV staffs assist over 60,000 homeless veterans each year and place homeless veterans into community-based facilities under contract to local VA medical facilities.

Domiciliary Care for Homeless Veterans Program (DCHV) operates 34 sites, with 1,833 dedicated domiciliary beds, providing time-limited residential treatment with long-term physical, psychological, and rehabilitative counseling and services including aftercare. This program annually provides residential treatment to nearly 5,200 homeless veterans.

Veterans Industries/Compensated Work Therapy Program (VI/CWT) offers vocational and rehabilitative services, ranging from evaluation and counseling to participation in compensated work and vocational training. Since 1994 over 32,000 veterans have been successfully reintegrated into society as responsible members of the community through this program.

Compensated Work Therapy/Transitional Residence (CWT/TR) program operated in 64 community-based locations (with a total of 469 operational beds) provide residences to disadvantaged, at risk, and homeless veterans, while they participate in the VI/CWT. Nearly 6000 veterans have been housed under this program.

Homelessness impacts every community in the nation. Approximately 200 community-based veterans' service organizations across the country have successfully reached homeless veterans through specialized programs. Veterans who participate in these programs have a higher chance of becoming productive citizens again.

A full continuum of care—housing, employment training and placement, health care, substance abuse treatment, legal aid, and follow-up case management—depends on many organizations working together to provide services and adequate funding. The availability of homeless veteran services, and continued community and government support for them, depends on vigilant advocacy and public education efforts on the local, state and federal levels.

The FY 2007 Department of Veterans Affairs Community Homelessness Assessment, Local Education and Networking Groups (CHALENG) report estimates that approximately 154,000 veterans are homeless at any point in time. Prior reports state that one out of every three homeless men sleeping in doorways, alleys or boxes in our cities and rural communities has put on a uniform and served this country. According to the February 2007 Homeless Assessment Report to Congress (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development 2007), veterans represent 19 percent of all homeless people in America.

For FY 2007, The VA Health Care for Homeless Veterans (HCHV) reports that 68,000 homeless veterans are enrolled in their programs. Community-based organizations are attempting to assist the overwhelming remainder of veterans who are homeless.

In addition to the complex set of factors affecting all homelessness (the extreme shortage of affordable housing, livable income, and access to health care), a large number

of displaced and at-risk veterans live with lingering effects of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), substance abuse, and a lack of family and social support networks. Many times these veterans have mental health disorders related to their honorable service to their country, and are unable to compensate for their condition. They unfortunately deteriorate to unrecognizable individuals compared to their pre-military experience.

Potential Homeless Veterans of Operation Iraq Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom (OIF/OEF)

Some OIF/OEF veterans are at high risk of becoming homeless**.** Combat veterans of OIF/OEF and the Global War on Terror who need help—from mental health programs to housing, employment training and job placement assistance—are beginning to trickle into the nation's community-based homeless veterans' service organizations. Already stressed by an increasing need for assistance by post-Vietnam Era veterans and strained budgets, homeless services providers are deeply concerned about the inevitable rising tide of combat veterans who will soon be requesting their support.

Since 9/11, nearly 800,000 American men and women have served or are serving in a war zone. Rotations of troops returning home from Iraq are now a common occurrence. Military analysts and government sources say the deployments and repatriation of combat veterans is unlike anything the nation has experienced since the end of the Vietnam War.

The signs of an impending crisis are clearly seen in VA's own numbers. Under considerable pressure to stretch dollars, VA estimates it can provide assistance to about 100,000 homeless veterans each year, only 20 percent of the more than 500,000 who will need supportive services. Hundreds of community-based organizations nationwide struggle to provide assistance to as many of the other 80 percent as possible, but the need far exceeds available resources.

VA's HCHV reports 1,049 OIF/OEF era homeless veterans with an average age of 33 years young. HCHV further reports that nearly 65 percent of these homeless veterans experienced combat. Now receiving combat veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan daily, the VA is reporting that a high percentage of those casualties need treatment for mental health problems. That is consistent with studies conducted by VA and other agencies that conclude anywhere from 15 to more than 35 percent of combat veterans will experience some clinical degree of PTSD, depression or other psychosocial problems.

Homeless Women Veterans and Children

Homeless veterans' service providers' clients have historically been almost exclusively male. That is changing as more women veterans and women veterans with young children have sought help. Additionally, the approximately 200,000 female Iraq veterans are isolated during and after deployment making it difficult to find gender-specific peer-based support. Access to gender-appropriate care for these veterans is essential.

More women are engaging in combat roles in Iraq where there are no traditional front lines. In the past 10 years, the number of homeless women veteran has tripled. In 2002, the VA began a study of women and PTSD. The study includes subjects whose PTSD resulted from stressors that were both military and non-military in nature. Preliminary research shows that women currently serving have much higher exposure to traumatic experiences, rape and assault prior to joining the military. Other reports show extremely high rates of sexual trauma while women are in the service (20-40 percent). Repeated exposure to traumatic stressors increases the likelihood of PTSD. Researchers also suspect that many women join the military, at least in part, to get away from abusive environments. Like the young veterans, these women may have no safe supportive environment to return to, adding yet more risk of homeless outcomes.

CHALENG sites continue to report increases in the number of homeless veterans with families (i.e., dependent children) being served at their programs. It reports that 98 sites (71 percent of all sites) reported a total of 1,038 homeless veteran families seen. This was a 5 percent increase over the previous year's 989 homeless veteran families.(FY 2007 VA CHALENG report).

Homeless veteran service providers recognize that they will have to accommodate the needs of the changing homeless veteran population, including increasing numbers of

women and veterans with dependents. Access to family housing through the distribution of the thousands of new Section 8 vouchers that will be made available through the HUD-VASH program will offer an important new resource allowing VA staff to assist the veteran and her family.

The American Legion supports adequate funding for all domiciliary programs for all qualified veterans.

FINANCE COMMISSION

Kenneth D. Danilson, Iowa Chairman
George A. Buskirk Jr., Indiana, National Treasurer
Paul M. Allen, Minnesota, Director

The primary obligation of the Finance Commission is to prepare a yearly budget for the National Executive Committee, handle funds under that budget, and exercise reasonable oversight to see that the various divisions and departments of the national organization operate within appropriations. The Finance Commission includes seven members, with the national adjutant as ex-officio secretary and the national commander and national treasurer as ex-officio members. Also attending these meetings are the executive directors of the Washington and Indianapolis offices and the finance director and liaison observers from the National Executive Committee.

The national organization had an operating deficit of $2,926,304 for 2007. Up to and including January 10, 2007, we received $9 dues per member, allocating $6 to the General Fund and $3 to The American Legion Magazine. After January 10, 2007, we received $13.50 dues per member, allocating $10.50 to the General Fund and $3 to The American Legion Magazine.

Income of the national organization derives from annual membership dues, interest on investments, magazine advertisements, Emblem Sales, contributions and other approved activities.

A full financial statement is incorporated in the auditor's report. Your attention is also directed to the Reports of Committees and Trusts, which can be found in this publication.

These entities include:

American Legion Child Welfare Foundation, Inc.
American Legion Endowment Fund Corp.
American Legion Life Insurance and Trust Committee
American Legion Emblem Committee
American Legion Overseas Graves Decoration Trust

EMBLEM COMMITTEE

Alvan T. Fuller, Massachusetts, Chairman
Jeffrey O. Brown, Indiana, Director

The American Legion emblem is the exclusive property of the National Headquarters. The sale of the emblem, emblem pins, merchandise carrying the emblem and other items of organizational equipment is the responsibility of the National Headquarters in Indianapolis. The following tables show gross sales, net earnings, etc., for the entire calendar year 2007 and for the first three months of 2008.

January 1 to December 31, 2007
(12 months)

Gross Sales	**$11,005,611**
Cost of Goods Sold	**5,905,699**
Overhead	**3,538,218**
Operating Profit	**1,561,694**

Total number of 2007 orders processed was 102,898.

January 1 to March 31, 2008

(3 months)

Gross Sales	**$2,287,221**
Cost of Goods Sold	**1,232,403**
Overhead	**798,538**
Operating Profit	**256,280**

Total orders processed for first 3 months of 2008 was 20,511.

THE AMERICAN LEGION LIFE INSURANCE PROGRAM
Kevin J. Bartlett, Michigan, Chairman
G. Paul Dunn, Oklahoma, Member Benefits Administrator

When considering the plans offered through The American Legion Life Insurance Program, it is important to remember these plans are for supplemental coverage only and are not meant to be the only coverage a member has. In addition, these plans are not meant to replace existing coverage. These plans are not designed to compete with individual/private insurance plans or employer benefit plans.

As with any insurance coverage, members should carefully consider these plans and read and understand all materials received including rates, benefits, features, scheduled premium increase or benefit reductions.

Claims

The primary feature of The American Legion Insurance Plan is the benefits paid to beneficiaries of deceased insured Legionnaires. In 50 years, claims have been paid amounting to more than $337 million in benefits. These benefits were paid at no cost to the National Organization of The American Legion and no expenses to the general membership, other than certificate-policyholders. The insurance plan has proven to be a self-sustaining program. By the end of 2008, the total benefits paid will be nearly $350 million.

The Insurance Committee approved resolutions to fund the following programs for 2009: American Legion Baseball, Boys Nation, Boy Scout of the Year, National Oratorical, and Junior Uniformed Groups at the National Convention. The total amount of funds requested is $1,100,000, which will require approval by the National Finance Commission and the National Executive Committee at the 2008 October NEC meetings.

The NEC approved Res. No. 15 in May 2008, naming Gallagher Benefit Services as our new broker for the Insurance Program, effective June 1, 2008. The new administrator is DRIASI (Direct Response Insurance Administration Services, Inc.).

We have been working with the new broker to resolve issues related to the transfer. Among the issues are the transfer of insured's records from the previous administrator. In the interim we are contacting members and requesting insurance record information from them via the Internet, Magazine and *Dispatch*.

All insurance marketing was suspended when the new broker selection took effect. Gallagher is working with insurance carriers to develop products and resume marketing. This process is ongoing.

FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMISSION
Michael D. Helm, Nebraska, Chairman
Philip D. Riley, Virginia, Director

The following annual report covers the activities of The American Legion's Foreign Relations Commission Foreign Relations Council for the 2007-2008 program year ending June 30, 2008.

Overview

The Foreign Relations Commission is guided by two principles communication and advocacy. The first is primarily to relay to members and the leadership major foreign policy changes and international issues affecting the United States and The American Legion. The second is to and advocate the adopted resolutions and positions of the

membership to the Congress and Federal Agencies to enact or promote those policies and programs supported or opposed by The American Legion.

The Commission conducts meetings and programs throughout the year to keep the membership fully informed on current foreign policy issues. In addition, the Commission through its speaker program encourages debate and discussion on key foreign relations topics with government representatives and policy experts and our grassroots membership. The Commission strives throughout the year to provide diverse and challenging speakers from Ambassadors and policy analysts to Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) representatives and directors. These speakers provide critical information and generate stimulating discussion that has been invaluable in keeping our membership informed and a useful tool to help in their duties to direct and develop the foreign relations policies of The American Legion.

The Commission also works to influence the Administration and Congress and encourages the bipartisan development of foreign policies, which are consistent with the principles of Democratic Activism as well as our entire portfolio of active resolutions. The American Legion works with Congressional Committees, Members and Staff along with Department of State agencies throughout the year, generating, promoting and advocating legislation and policies that are in keeping with the established resolutions adopted by the membership.

Mr. Michael D. Helm, of Kansas and member of the Department of Nebraska, was appointed in the Fall of 2004 and currently serves as the Chairman of the Foreign Relations Commission.

Foreign Relations Commission Resolutions

Of the resolutions that were adopted at the 89th National Convention in Reno, NV, there is a an emphasis on The Legion's steadfast resolve for the full accounting of POWs and MIAs; support for human rights and freedom; the promotion of peace; and caring for veterans and their families who live abroad. The Foreign Relations Commission has throughout the year worked diligently to implement and address key foreign relation's issues concerning The American Legion.

Major Issues

Resolution 16: Defense POW/MIA Accounting Office (DPMO) Funding

Support for adequate and appropriate funding for the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Office (DPMO) for their current and future mission to ensure the accountability for our Nation's servicemen and servicewomen.

Resolution 17: The American Legion's support for World Press Freedom

Support for adequate and appropriate funding for the Department of State and U.S. Government News Media Organizations under the Broadcast Board of Governors such as: The Voice of America, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Radio Free Asia, Radio Marti TV, and the Middle East Broadcasting Network (MBN); in addition to the protection of international journalists and recognition of individuals in the media who draw attention to oppression, injustice, and tyrannies that threaten open and free societies around the world.

Resolution 2: Republic of China Policy Resolution

Support for the United States to encourage the parties on both sides of the Taiwan Strait, the People's Republic of China and the Republic of China (Taiwan) to promote peaceful dialogue and avoid any negative actions by either side to change the status quo, which would lead to military conflict.

Resolution 172: Equitable Non-Resident Alien Survivors' Benefits

Call for The American Legion to petition the Social Security Administration's Office of International Programs to expedite the negotiation of international agreements with the governments of Costa Rica, Guatemala, Nicaragua, and Panama necessary to permit the recession of the nonpayment provisions of Section 404.460 of the Social Security Act, thereby allowing the payment of survivors' benefits and any their legally accrued benefits to the non-resident alien spouses and children of U.S. veterans residing in the above named countries.

Meetings of the Commission

The Foreign Relations Commission met in general sessions over the course of the reported year on October 15th through 16th, 2007 during the Fall NEC meeting at the Circle West Room of the Sheraton Hotel, Indianapolis, IN; on March 31st through April 2nd 2008 during the 48th Annual Washington Conference at the Renaissance Hotel, Washington, D.C.; and on May 5th through 8th during the Spring NEC meeting also convened at the Circle West Room of the Sheraton Hotel, Indianapolis, IN. The following is a summary of those sessions:

Fall NEC

On October 15, The Commission officially welcomed the new Director of the National Security and Foreign Relations Division Philip D. Riley. Following Mr. Riley's introduction covering his background and experience in the military, and his hopes and goals for the division, the professional staff gave a power point presentation on the budget and appropriations status in Congress and other foreign relations issues. On October 16, the Foreign Relations and National Security Commissions met in joint session. The Commissions were pleased to have with them Past National Commander John Brieden in attendance and thanked him for his participation in the program. The Commissions and the staff also discussed security issues and the appropriations and authorizations for the Department of State and the Department of Defense.

Washington Conference

The Foreign Relations Commission, in a joint session with the National Security Committee, met and were addressed by four speakers: Brigadier General (BG) Michael S. Tucker, Assistant Surgeon General for Warrior Care and Transition, U.S. Army Medical Command; Dr. Edward J. Lacey, Deputy Director, Secretary of State's Policy Planning Staff, U.S. Department of State; Brock D. Bierman, FEMA Small State and Rural Advocate and Director, Community Preparedness Division, Citizen Corps; and Brigadier General (BG) Gregory J. Zanetti, Deputy, Commander, Guantanamo Joint Task Force.

BG Tucker discussed the Army's recently implemented "Comprehensive Care Plan" He stated that this new program includes educational, vocational and life-skills development, leadership and mentoring, relationship coaching and behavior-health treatment in addition to medical treatment and physical and occupational therapy. Dr. Lacey discussed a detailed list of international issues that face the United States today. Those issues included: Iraq and Afghanistan stabilization; Iran's negative influence in the Middle East; the nuclear disarmament of North Korea; free trade with Columbia, Panama, Peru and South Korea. Also, he addressed the trade deficit concerning China and the importance of the climate change question. Dr. Lacey made it a point to put special emphasis on maintaining and broadening good relations between U.S. and India. He expressed that the relations between the U.S. and India are important to U.S. Foreign Policy and must continue to be cultivated. Mr. Bierman discussed how FEMA addresses the needs of rural communities by preparing requests for disaster declarations. He also stated that National Preparedness Directorate's Community Preparedness Division administers the Citizen Corps Program and other grass-roots initiatives that are working to engage citizens and non-governmental organizations in community preparedness activities, including The American Legion. BG Zanetti discussed the many ways detainees at Guantanamo Bay (also known as "Gitmo") are given fair and humane treatment, from culturally appropriate meals to numerous spiritual and recreational opportunities. Meanwhile, the detainees "believe the camps are an extension of the battlefield," Zanetti explained, adding that they have attempted to form new terror cells inside the fences, and frequently fling feces at the guards. Also, he spoke often of a general "disconnect" between public perception and what really goes on at Guantanamo Bay—particularly when it comes to allegations of torture against detainees.

POW/MIA Update

The expert panel on the POW/MIA issues was comprised of Ambassador Charles A. Ray, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for POW/Missing Personnel Affairs (DPMO); Johnie Webb, Deputy to the Commander for Public Relations and Legislative

Affairs Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC); and Ann Mills Griffiths, Executive Director, National League of POW/MIA Families.

Ms. Griffiths conveyed that family members, veteran organizations and other POW/MIA supporters throughout the country consistently opposed steps to improve economic and political relations with Vietnam until their leadership made the decision to cooperate fully to resolve the POW/MIA issue. She stated that Vietnam has violated their agreement that established normalization with the U.S. by not living up to their end of the deal in terms of POW accounting issues. Also in a comment directly related to American Legion Resolution 27: Vietnam Underwater Recovery Policy (2006), Ms. Griffiths stated that the under water investigations are not going well and that the U.S. Navy is slow to move despite Vietnam authorizing port calls for U.S. sailors and ships. Furthermore, she stated that Vietnam balks at the idea of under water recovery efforts.

Members of the audience were very interested to hear about DPMO's recent announcement that the remains of a U.S. serviceman, missing in action from the Korean War, have been identified and will be returned to his family for burial with full military honors. He is U.S. Army Sgt. Harry J. Laurence of Cleveland, Ohio. He will be buried April 9 in Arlington National Cemetery near Washington, D.C.

The mission of the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC), Mr. Webb stated, is to achieve the fullest possible accounting of all Americans missing as a result of the nation's past conflicts. The highest priority of the organization is the return of any living Americans that remain prisoners of war, he said.

The Legionnaires in attendance also showed keen interest regarding DNA (Deoxyribonucleic acid) donors and how new bio-tech advances can be utilized to find POWs and MIAs. Many DoD groups external to DPMO play critical roles in achieving the fullest possible accounting. They bring together many different specialties and perform the majority of the fieldwork. Mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA) sequencing provides additional scientific detail to lend support for remains identification. Families of POWs and MIAs should provide a blood sample to help establish a comprehensive family database. To provide a blood sample, families should contact DPMO.

Business Meeting

Foreign Relations Commission Chairman Mike Helm led commission members in a discussion regarding the possible solutions to the current questions surrounding the all important subject of energy independence and how this issue relates to foreign relations. The discussion included a good exchange between the Chairman and the commission members that covered many facets of the issue including whether or not the commission should urge the U.S. Government to expeditiously enact legislation that promotes the research and development, implementation, utilization of all conventional and alternative fuels not connected to OPEC or OAPEC. Also, incentives for American companies to produce in other friendly nations as well as domestically and, provide the legislation and policy guidance for U.S. industry and state infrastructure changes necessary to facilitate the usage of alternative energy sources and fuels were discussed. Chairman Helm invited National Security and Foreign Relations Division Director Philip D. Riley to the podium to speak on the matter. Mr. Riley challenged the committee to think of energy as an issue that is critical to our strength as a nation and the consequence of continuingly ignoring this issue will have negative implications for generations to come. The committee concluded the meeting with a consensus that included the idea that the energy realm is absolutely one of the many fronts on the Global War on Terror (GWOT). Commission members agreed to review these ideas and return to the next meeting with concrete positions.

Also, another important topic covered in the Foreign Relations business meeting was a proposed *resolution which, if adopted, would establish a formal collaboration between The American Legion and the War Veterans Committee (WVC). The WVC is a group recognized by the Commonwealth of Independent States, also known as countries of the former Soviet Union. The WVC has expressed its interest to The American Legion in sharing important information on POW/MIA information regarding both sides. In return the WVC is asking The Legion to help them learn about establishing an organizational

structure, management, membership rules, dues regulations, veterans' benefits and organizational budgets.

The Fiscal Year 2009 Federal Budget along with the Foreign Relations Views and Estimates were also reviewed. Serious efforts to improving critical world situations through vigorous and thorough diplomacy are vital to the peace and security of the United States and the world. Diplomacy is cost effective. War is costly and deadly. Given the current state of the world, America needs to take actions that emphasize its wish to build new and meaningful international relationships which promote peace, justice and democracy. This is the mission of the Department of State (DoS). The government's long arm for peace deserves the same significant rate increase in its authorized and appropriated budget as the government's first and sustaining arm for achieving strong defense, security and peace.

In the FY 2008 Federal budget, 59 percent of discretionary appropriations were dedicated to Defense spending. In comparison, just 4 percent of the discretionary appropriations were dedicated to Foreign Relations/International Affairs (*National Priorities Project Jan. 9, 2008*). Between 2007 and 2008, the total discretionary budget authority for DoD increased from $548 billion to $623 billion; that's a 13.6 percent increase. In that same time period, the total discretionary budget authority for the DoS and affiliated international programs increased from the meager amount of $32.5 billion to $34.9 billion; just a 7.4 percent increase.

The American Legion vigorously supports funding for the DoS in order that it can maintain a credible initial deterrent to international threats to the United States and effectively promote American interests abroad.

Other highlights from the meeting included a review of the following items: The American Legion's support of the U.S. State Dept.'s GWOT-Related Programs; Tension over NATO membership between Macedonia and Greece; and an overview of the Foreign Relations Commission Priorities Report that included the following matters: Iraq/Afghanistan; Combating international Islamic Extremists; Environment / Energy/ Energy Independence; Iran/North Korea; Africa; Israeli/Palestinian Relations; India/Pakistan Tension; China; Cultivating Democracies/Nation Building; and Mexico/Canada relations/trade.

Spring NEC

An executive session of the Foreign Relations Commission met on May 5, 2008 in the Circle West Room of the Radisson Hotel, to discuss a variety of issues. Being a renewal year, the Commission reviewed all resolutions with legislative intent and made plans to continue, amend, or dispose those resolutions as necessary. Also, the Commission reviewed its newly proposed War Veterans Committee resolution. In conclusion, the professional staff gave a briefing on the current budget and appropriations status in Congress and other foreign relation topics of interest.

On Tuesday, May 6, 2008, the Foreign Relations and National Security Commissions met in joint session. A video presentation on Joint Accounting Command was reviewed. A short discussion followed along with comments by staff regarding related resolutions and prospective appropriations and authorizations for the POW/MIA issues in the next congressional session. On May 7th the Commission presented Resolution No. 13 to the NEC for approval and subsequently was unanimously approved. Resolution No. 13 is also known by its title: "War Veterans Committee".

The National Security and Foreign Relations Division

Responsibility for the daily conduct of the extensive work of The American Legion in defense and foreign policy is assigned to the National Security and Foreign Relations Division located in the Washington, D.C. office.

The staff of the Division consists of: Philip D. Riley, Director; Alec Petkoff, Deputy Director; Joseph Grassi, Assistant Director; Angela L. Rose, Tina Hines, Executive Secretary to the Director; and Roshawn Hyde, Secretary. During the year, the combined Division works diligently to fulfill its responsibility in implementing the mandates and policies of The American Legion relating to national defense and foreign affairs.

The division coordinates the National Commander's foreign travel as well as managing a variety of special assignments. The duties included answering correspondence, E-mail and telephone inquiries; maintaining liaison with the Departments of Defense, State, Homeland Security, Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, the Selective Service System, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and others. In addition, a continuous variety of contacts are made with other organizations throughout Washington, D.C. from policy think tanks to commercial and private associations. The foreign relation's responsibilities also include continuing liaison with embassies, and a variety of governmental and non-governmental agencies.

Most importantly, the National Security-Foreign Relations Division provides a steady flow of information on defense matters to members of both commissions and the leadership at all levels of our organization as well as Congress, the Department of State and the general public. Coordinating foreign travel, writing and delivering speeches, preparing reports and testimony, are also duties of the staff. Additionally, promotional material is prepared and distributed to support the national programs in the national security field. Numerous press interviews, background briefings and public releases are coordinated with our Media Relations Office.

Continual use is made of all American Legion national publications, such as The Dispatch and The American Legion Magazine and the Weekly Activity Report, which are a primary means for distribution of factual information and program support in the fields of national defense and foreign relations.

INTERNAL AFFAIRS COMMISSION
Larry Besson, Illinois, Chairman
John W. Querfeld, Illinois, Director

The National Internal Affairs Commission was established by resolution of the National Executive Committee in 1947. The original charge for this constitutional commission still remains: "***to formulate and recommend policies and to oversee the implementation of adopted policies relating to activities conducted for organizational purposes.***"

Among those purposes are all those not properly the responsibility of any other national commission, as well as membership strategies, post formation, clerical and records administration for posts and individual members, and special projects. The commission also is required from time to time to provide guidance and assistance to the National Adjutant on necessary administrative operations of the National Headquarters.

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, which potentially affect posts and departments, and recommends appropriate courses of action.

The commission has four standing committees assigned to it for supervision and coordination. They are Trophies, Awards and Ceremonials, Resolutions Assignment, Constitution and By-Laws, and Membership & Post Activities. The latter has separate reporting responsibilities to the National Convention and the National Executive Committee.

Internal Affairs is responsible for overseeing and reviewing the activities of the Sons of The American Legion, which is not a separate organization, but rather, a major program of the organization.

The commission also oversees long-term programs and activities such as the National Legion College, National Paid-Up-For-Life Program, the National Emergency Fund, Troop Support Services (TS2) and Legion Riders.

The American Legion National College

Each November, The American Legion National College can host as many as fifty talented young Legionnaires at National Headquarters in Indianapolis for a week of intensive training. These students return to their Departments armed with newly acquired or sharpened skills in leadership, marketing, communication, and fundraising. Student

candidates are nominated by the Departments and selected by a National Selection Committee.

Candidates for the National College must be veterans from the Lebanon/Grenada period (August 1982) or later with demonstrated potential for higher leadership roles.

The American Legion National College is a worthwhile investment for every Department. Graduates are making a difference in leadership roles and membership teams across the country. Many have already been appointed to Department and National level positions while others are used in various leadership and teaching roles in Department Legion Colleges.

Sons of The American Legion

The Sons of The American Legion will conduct its 37th National Convention at the Phoenix Convention Center, Phoenix, Arizona.

For the 34th consecutive year, the Sons of The American Legion are at an "All Time High" in membership. The SAL closed its membership at the end of 2007 with a record 321,461 members. This number represents a 2.7% percent increase over the previous year.

Membership figures for the 2008-year have exceeded the figures for the final 2007 membership year of 321,461. By August 2008, the S.A.L. has another "All Time High" for membership year 2008 and projected to finish the year at 328,000 members.

The S.A.L. continues its support of American Legion programs and is heavily involved with support to our nation's veterans in the VAVS program. In 2007, the S.A.L. provided over 223,923 volunteer hours in VA homes and hospitals. Donations in cash and goods to these veterans exceeded $915,688, nationwide. Other projects include Americanism programs of which $1,671,587 was donated along with 390,450 hours of service. This was remarkable considering only than 15% of the Squadron's submitted reports. The S.A.L. also raised over $321,228 in the year 2007 for the Child Welfare Foundation surpassing all previous years. The Sons also provided several grants through The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation. The Sons of The American Legion have contributed over three million dollars to The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation.

The Sons continue to support to Legion programs with major emphasis on VAVS, National Emergency Fund, and the Children's Miracle Network as well as other vital programs. As an integral part of The American Legion family, the Sons continue to serve and provide assistance to Posts and their communities.

National Emergency Fund

From January 1, 2008 through August 1, 2008 only $244,375 was awarded to American Legion family members. During the same period a total of $363,500 in donations were received. The final grant total for the devastation in Texas, Louisiana and Mississippi hurricanes are still undetermined. Our total grant monies awarded since the NEF was reinstated in 1989 is over $6.8 million.

We annually grant approximately $375,000 to our members and American Legion Posts who incur devastation from a declared natural disaster (i.e., wind, rain, fire and earthquakes). The grants are used for immediate needs—lodging, food and clothing—and not as a substitute for insurance.

What makes the NEF program so unique is that our members know they can turn to The American Legion for immediate financial assistance without the red tape or repayment requirements normally associated with other agencies. With the help of all The American Legion members, the National Emergency Fund will continue to meet the needs of our American Legion family after local, state and national disasters.

Consolidated Post Reports

The Consolidated Post Report—one of The American Legion's most valuable documents—is our annual report card to Congress. It provides a summary of the collective assistance provided to the nation from our Legion posts. Fifty-nine (59) percent of American Legion posts submitted reports to National Headquarters for the 2007-2008 reporting year.

The total figures show the cost to outfit color guards, firing squads and other uniformed groups was $2,659,428; Legion Baseball team support cost, $6,968,886; cash contributions to VA Voluntary Services, $2,387,806 with more than 999,230 hours of voluntary services provided; 2,023 Boy Scout Units sponsored, with 53,486 Scouts involved at a cost of $1,670,051; and a total of 7,704 scholarships presented, collectively valued at $4,115,863.

In addition, 3,416,945 hours were spent performing community service work, valued at $6,875,871; a total of 94,395 pints of blood were collected and additional millions of dollars in goods and cash were contributed to programs helping veterans and their families. These facts and figures represent just over half of all American Legion Posts.

TROPHIES, AWARDS AND CEREMONIALS
Randall W. Busch, Nebraska, Chairman

This committee supervises all of the official national awards and recommends to the National Executive Committee recipients for the Distinguished Service Medal; over the years, some of those awarded The American Legion's highest honor were: General John J. Pershing, Ignace Jan Paderewski of Poland, Henry Ford, Ernie Pyle, Bob Hope, Babe Ruth, Dr. Jonas E. Salk, Bishop Fulton J. Sheen, the dead & missing of the Vietnam War, 10 men who have served as President of The United States in the 20th Century, plus many other citizens of renown who have made lasting and significant contributions. The recipient for 2008 is the 43rd President of the United States of America, George W. Bush.

This committee oversees the awarding of over 60 awards within The American Legion for national recognition in our various programs and services.

RESOLUTIONS ASSIGNMENT
C. Wayne Schrader, Illinois, Chairman

The Resolutions Assignment Committee meets at least three days before the convening of the annual 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, several hundred resolutions will be assigned.

CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS
Vincent Gaughan, Illinois, Chairman

The National Constitution and By-Laws of The American Legion can only be amended by the duly elected delegates at a National Convention.

However, the Constitution and 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 AND POST ACTIVITIES COMMITTEE
Linda Perham, Vermont, Chairman
Billy R. Johnson, Georgia, Membership Director

Membership and programs go hand-in-hand to make The American Legion an organization able to provide the people and resources to serve the needs of the veteran and his/her family. The Membership and Post Activities reported a continuing membership of nearly 2.6 million members worldwide.

Membership

Final 2006 Membership	2,615,162
Final 2007 Membership	2,629,364
2008 Membership as of August 1, 2008 (projected)	2,610,000

45th Annual National Membership Workshop

The 45th Annual Membership Meeting was held in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 1-2, 2008, with over 300 Department and District Officers in attendance from nearly all 55 Departments.

Many of those attending arrive in Indianapolis with a very good understanding of the membership program, especially as it pertains to their areas. But, by the time the workshop concluded they were prepared to face the day-to-day membership challenges with a better understanding of The American Legion as it relates to potential members.

The goal of this workshop is to provide these essential membership workers with the tools, knowledge, and desire to grow the membership in The American Legion. Whether it is membership recruitment or program implementation - it is all about veterans helping veterans and providing communities the essential programs to maintain a quality of life for which all veterans fought and served to preserve.

New Post Development/Revitalization Program

The Membership and 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 field application.

The success of the program is evident, based on the revitalization/development of more than 750 American Legion Posts in the program's twelve-year history. Efforts have now expanded into Metropolis areas. Many Departments have been successful in this program without any actual assistance from National Staff. Whether a Department requests field assistance or just the training workshop, if the guidelines are followed, there will be successful results.

All Departments are encouraged to participate in this program. The program, however, requires a commitment from every level of leadership, if it is to be successful.

NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION

Jimmie Foster, Alaska, Chairman
Steve Robertson, Louisiana, Director

This report covers activities of the National Legislative Commission from August 18, 2007 through August 15, 2008. During this period, the Commission met four (4) times to review the legislative program and to make recommendations to the National Executive Committee. Reports of these meetings are contained in the published proceedings of the National Executive Committee.

Purpose, Personnel and Organization

The National Legislative Commission represents The American Legion before the Congress of the United States on all legislative matters in which The American Legion is officially interested. The Commission also assists the National Executive Committee in formulating an appropriate legislative program for each session of Congress. The Commission consists of 33 members and five (5) National Executive Committee liaisons.

To further assist the Commission in its work, the National Executive Committee in 1975 created the National Legislative Council, composed of Legionnaires whose judgment and advice are respected by their elected Members of Congress. There is one council member for each Member of Congress. A Council Chairman, who is assisted by a Vice Chairman in 50 State Departments, heads the Council. 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 its 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, two assistant directors, a grassroots coordinator, one secretary, a librarian and a research analyst. The

director and assistant directors are registered lobbyists and submit quarterly lobbying reports to Congress. Because The American Legion is a federally chartered organization, an annual report is also prepared and submitted to Congress.

110th Congress, First Session

The budget process remained the focus of congressional attention during the First Session of the 110th Congress. When October 1, 2007 arrived—the official start of Fiscal Year (FY) 2008—none of the 12 funding measures that are needed to operate the federal government had become law. Only the Department of Defense (DOD) appropriations bill for FY 2008 (Public Law 110-116), enacted on November 13, was passed as a free-standing measure.

Between late September and late December 2007, four continuing resolutions (CRs) were passed and enacted which extended funding through the end of the year at FY 2007 amounts. The remaining eleven appropriations bills—including the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) funding bill—were combined into a single omnibus spending measure to fund the federal government for the remainder of FY 2008. This measure, Public Law (P.L.) 110-161, was signed by the President on December 26, 2007. The First Session of the 110th Congress adjourned on December 19, 2007.

Americanism

Since its formation in 1919, The American Legion has been concerned with illegal immigration. It is estimated that between 12-15 million illegal immigrants reside in this country, with 500,000 illegals thought to be entering this country every year. Since the attacks of September 11, 2001 these concerns have been magnified.

Legislation was introduced in the opening months of the 110th Congress that sought to address the strained immigration system. During May and June, the Senate debated two bills but neither bill proceeded beyond the Senate floor. Many Americans nationwide—to include many members of The American Legion family—contacted their senators in a classic case of grassroots lobbying at its finest.

During debate on H.R. 1585, the FY 2008 Department of Defense (DOD) authorization act on September 11, Senator Dick Durbin (IL) introduced an amendment which contained language originally contained in a bill called the "DREAM Act." This language gave illegal alien students special in-state college tuition discounts not available to native-born American students or legal immigrant students. Another wave of grassroots action persuaded the Senate leadership to remove the DREAM Act from H.R. 1585.

In January 2007, Sen. Sam Brownback (KS) introduced S. 415, the "Veterans' Memorials, Boy Scouts, Public Seals and Other Expressions of Religion Protection Act" (PERA). This bill is similar to legislation he introduced in 2006. Rep. Dan Burton (IN) introduced a House companion measure the next day, H.R. 725. S. 415 has 21 cosponsors, while H.R. 725 has 63 cosponsors.

These measures stop the awarding of taxpayer dollars in legal fees to groups filing lawsuits against veterans' memorials and other public displays of religion. They amend the 1976 Civil Rights Attorney's Fees Awards Act, which allows groups—such as the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)—to recover attorney's fees when they sue cities and towns in cases related to public displays of religion and faith. The bills require parties in Establishment Clause cases to pay their own attorney's fees. Plaintiffs would still be allowed to sue on the merits of such cases.

Former National Commander Paul Morin applauded Sen. Brownback for re-introducing this measure. He said, "Legal attacks against veterans' memorials that display religious symbols must not be rewarded by judges reaching into the taxpayer pockets to enlarge the coffers of wealthy organizations such as the [ACLU]. These judicial rewards of taxpayer dollars only encourage more lawsuits against our traditions and memorials."

Children & Youth

Funding for the Departments of Commerce and Justice and Science programs was included in P.L. 110-161, the Consolidated Appropriations Act for FY 2008, which was enacted on December 26, 2007. This measure funds various Department of Justice (DoJ) programs supported by The American Legion, including:

- $6.7 billion for the FBI,
- $1.88 billion for the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA),
- $1.07 billion for the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (BATF),
- $908 million for State and Local Law Enforcement Assistance grants,
- $851 million for the U.S. Marshals Service, and
- $383 million for the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP).

Economics

Funds for the Department of Labor were included in P.L. 110-161, the consolidated appropriations act for FY 2008. The measure funds veterans programs under the Assistant Secretary of Labor for Veterans Employment and Training (ASVET). The chart below outlines funding for ASVET accounts requested by the Administration for FY 2008 and the amounts contained in the final measure. However, before the bill became law, a 1.7 percent across-the-board reduction was included, reducing the modest funding gains to the level of the President's original FY 2008 request.

Programs	**White House Request FY 2008**	**P.L. 110-161 FY 2008**
State Administration Grants	$161.9 million	$165.3 million
Federal Administration	$33.3 million	$33.3 million
Natl. Veterans Training Institute (NVTI)	$1.9 million	$2.0 million
Homeless Veterans Program	$23.6 million	$24.0 million
Veterans' Workforce Investment Programs	$7.4 million	$7.5 million
Totals	***$228.1 million***	***$232.1 million***

Foreign Relations

FY 2008 appropriations for the Department of State and Foreign Operations programs were contained in P.L. 110-161. The measure contain $32.8 billion in total funding, $1.5 billion more than in FY 2007, but $2.1 billion less than requested by the White House. Among the earmarks in the bill:

- $5 billion in global assistance to fight HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria;
- $2.4 billion in military assistance to Israel;
- $1.7 billion in economic and military aid to Egypt;
- $400 million in assistance for nations of the former Soviet Union;
- $328 million for the Andean Counterdrug Initiative; and,
- $300 million in military assistance to Pakistan, a close partner in the Global War on Terror.

National Security

On November 13 the President signed P.L. 110-116, the FY 2008 Department of Defense (DOD) appropriations bill. The measure provides $459.3 billion for DOD discretionary programs for FY 2008, $39.7 billion more than was enacted for FY 2007, but $3.5 billion less than requested by the President. The measure does not include funding for the Global War on Terror in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Some of the major accounts include:

- $23.5 billion for the Defense Health Program;
- $8.7 billion for ballistic missile defense;

- $6.6 billion for continued research and development (R&D) and procurement of 12 F-35s, the Joint Strike Fighter;
- $3.6 billion for 20 F-22 fighters;
- $3.5 billion for continued R&D of the Army's Future Combat System;
- $3.09 billion for the purchase of one Virginia-class submarine;
- $2.9 billion for construction and advanced procurement of two DD-1000 next-generation destroyers;
- $1.5 billion for the Army's program to destroy chemical agents and munitions;
- $985 million for DOD drug interdiction and counter-drug activities; and,
- $428 million for the Former Soviet Union Threat Reduction account.

In addition to these amounts, Congress added $70 billion to P.L. 110-161—the consolidated spending bill for FY 2008—to continue funding military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. This funding amount was passed by the Senate, which replaced a House-passed version that would have funded military operations with only $17 billion. After the Senate passed its version, the House agreed to the Senate figures.

FY 2008 appropriations for the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) were a part of P.L. 110-161. The measure provides $34.85 billion for DHS programs, an increase of nearly $3 billion over FY 2007 and $500 million above the White House request. Some of the key provisions include:

- $9.4 billion for the Bureau of Customs and Border Protection;
- $8.3 billion for the U.S. Coast Guard;
- $5.5 billion for the Transportation Security Administration;
- $4.7 billion for the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement;
- $4.1 billion in grants for state and local "first responders;"
- $1.6 billion for border security fencing along the U.S.-Mexico border;
- $1.4 billion for the U.S. Secret Service; and
- $770 million for the Federal Air Marshals program.

Selective Service System funding for FY 2008 is contained in the portion of P.L. 110-161 related to Financial Services and General Government. The measure appropriates $22 million, an amount $2.8 million less than FY 2007. The American Legion continues to support funding for the Selective Service System in case of national emergency.

Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

VA funding for FY 2008 was signed by the President on December 26 as part of P.L. 110-161. The chart below shows the allocations for VA discretionary spending as passed for FY 2007, as contained in the original conference report, as contained in the final public law, and the emergency spending amounts designated in the public law.

Discretionary Funding Programs	**FY 2007 Funding**	**Conference Report H.R. 2642**	**FY 2008 P.L. 110-161**	**Emergency Spending Amounts***
Medical Services	$25.5 bil.	$29.1 bil.	$27.2 bil.	$1.9 bil.
Medical Administration	$3.2 bil.	$3.5 bil.	$3.44 bil.	$75 mil.
Medical Facilities	$3.6 bil.	$4.1 bil.	$3.6 bil.	$508 mil.
Total Medical Care	*$32.3 bil.*	*$36.7 bil.*	*$34.2 bil.*	*$2.5 bil.*
Medical/Prosthetics Research	$414 mil.	$480 mil.	$411 mil.	$69 mil.
Major Construction	$399 mil.	$1.1 bil.	$727 mil.	$342 mil.
Minor Construction	$199 mil.	$631 mil.	$233 mil.	$397mil.
State Veterans' Homes Construction Grants	$85 mil.	$165 mil.	$85 mil.	$80 mil.
State Veterans' Cemeteries Construction	$32 mil.	$39 mil.	$32 mil.	$8 mil.

Grants				
Natl. Cemetery Administration	$161 mil.	$195 mil.	$167 mil.	$28 mil.
General Operating Expenses	$1.5 bil.	$1.6 bil.	$1.47 bil.	$133 mil.
Information Technology	$1.2 bil.	$2.0 bil.	$1.86 bil.	$107 mil.

** The "Emergency Spending Amounts" column—a total of $3.7 billion—is additional spending, included in the conference report for H.R. 2642, the original VA-Military Construction measure but allocated in the consolidated appropriations law (P.L.110-161) as "emergency spending." Adding the last two columns above will yield funding amounts approved by Congress; President Bush on January 17, 2008 declared a need for the emergency spending, allowing it to be released and allocated to the needed areas.*

The American Legion has contacted congressional members and the leadership of both chambers asking that veterans' medical care funding not be held hostage to political considerations. This unceasing yearly impasse in veterans' funding only strengthens The American Legion's contention that veterans' medical care funding should be made mandatory in the federal budget, sharing this status with Social Security and Medicare spending.

President Bush on November 5 signed P.L. 110-110, the "Joshua Omvig Veterans Suicide Prevention Act," which passed the Senate on September 23 by unanimous consent and the House by a 417-0 recorded vote.

P.L. 110-110 directs VA to develop and implement a comprehensive program designed to reduce the incidence of suicide among veterans. It seeks to strengthen cooperation between DOD and VA, as well as create a comprehensive program to screen veterans for mental health and suicide risk factors. It also underscores the importance for further research, peer counseling, family education and involvement, and increases training for suicide prevention education for all staff at VA.

Too many American service members are returning from the battlefields of the Global War on Terrorism with hidden injuries. According to DOD, 60,000 troops have been diagnosed with post traumatic stress disorder or traumatic brain injuries. Sadly, only a small number of our veterans receive or seek the help that they need. In addition, The Veterans Health Administration estimates there are 1,000 suicides per year among veterans receiving VA health care, and as many as 5,000 per year among all living veterans.

On November 5, the President signed P.L. 110-111, the "Veterans Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2007." This measure passed the House on March 21 by a 418-0 vote, then was approved by the Senate on October 18 by unanimous consent. Veterans' disability compensation and dependency and indemnity compensation will be increased by 2.3 percent. This amount was contained in the President's original budget request for FY 2008. The COLA went into effect on December 1, 2007.

On December 26, President Bush signed P.L. 110-157, the "Dr. James Allen Veteran Vision Equity Act of 2007." This measure expands benefits for veterans who suffered service-connected blindness in one eye and later lost vision in the second eye. Current law provides benefits if vision in the second eye is 5/200 or less. P.L. 110-157 would ease the requirement for benefits to 20/200 vision. Also, veterans blinded in one eye receive 30 percent disability payments; those who have lost sight in the second eye will qualify as 70 percent disabled.

The new law will also provide a three-year extension of a VA work-study program. It will further direct the VA secretary to work with the Department of Health and Human Services to confirm the employment status of veterans who claim that they cannot work.

Between 1899 and 1946, the Philippine Islands were administered as American territory and protected by the American military. During World War II—after the Philippines were captured by the Japanese in May 1942—American military personnel and their Filipino brothers-in-arms fought a two-year guerrilla war to disrupt the Japanese military machine.

At the conclusion of the war, many Philippine veterans believed they would receive the same military benefits as American veterans, since the Filipinos were considered US

nationals and were serving as a part of American Armed Forces in the Far East. Initially, these Filipino World War II soldiers were given benefits equivalent to US soldiers.

However, passage of the First and Second Rescission Acts of 1946 (PLs 79-301 and 79-391) took away those benefits, by declaring that the service of Filipino World War II veterans was not valid service for VA benefits. Consequently, their benefits were reduced to 50 percent of the dollar amounts received by US veterans. In addition, Filipino veterans are ineligible to have nonservice-connected disabilities treated at VA facilities.

Shortly after the two Rescission Acts became law, the US government ruled that these loyal Filipino veterans could become naturalized American citizens. They would be permitted to receive full VA benefits—including disability payments, health care and burial benefits—equal to those received by US veterans. The only proviso was that the Philippine veterans must reside in the U.S., those who stayed in the Philippines were denied these benefits.

Since that time, the US government has steadfastly refused to reverse this injustice. The American Legion has been working over the past six decades to restore full value of these benefits to Filipino veterans, who the US government has treated like second-class veterans. Approximately 120,000 Filipinos served in the Commonwealth Army during World War II. Of that number, about 60,000 Filipino veterans currently reside in the United States and the Philippines. VA estimates that by the year 2010 that number will be reduced to 20,000.

For the past 25 years, legislation to address this inequality has been introduced in both congressional chambers. In the 110th Congress, Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee Chairman Daniel Inouye (HI) introduced S. 57, the "Filipino Veterans Equity Act of 2007." A companion measure, H.R. 760, was introduced by House Veterans' Affairs Committee Chairman Bob Filner (CA). Rep. Filner's bill would grant a yearly pension of $8,400 to married Filipino veterans living overseas, $6,000 for single veterans, and $3,600 for surviving spouses. H.R. 760 has 116 cosponsors, while S. 57 has 15 cosponsors.

However, during a committee markup on July 17, 2007 an amended version of H.R. 760 was approved and sent to the House. This version would terminate special monthly pensions (SMPs) for about 20,000 severely disabled, economically disadvantaged and elderly wartime veterans to pay for the additional benefits that would result from passage of H.R. 760. This would go against a decision in the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims made one year ago, entitled *Hartness v. Nicholson*, which requires an award of SMP to nonservice-connected pension eligible veterans who are 65 years of age or older and are at least 60 percent disabled or considered permanently housebound.

Language relating to Filipino veterans similar to H.R. 760 was included in S. 1315, a veterans' benefits package considered by the Senate. The American Legion adamantly opposes the diminishing of earned benefits to one group of veterans in order to fund earned benefits for another group of veterans—hardly the thanks of a grateful nation.

110th Congress, Second Session

The Second Session of the 110th Congress convened on January 15, 2008. Major issues on the agenda for both chambers include the global war on terrorism, the continued presence of US forces in Iraq, and the FY 2009 VA budget. To date, The American Legion has participated in 30 congressional hearings during the Second Session.

The President's FY 2009 discretionary funding recommendations for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) reflect a $1.7 billion increase over FY 2008 funding. However, the bulk of that increase includes fiscal assumptions by administration officials—proposed and defeated last year—which The American Legion finds unacceptable. These proposals include:

- Charging enrollment fees ranging from $250 to $750—based on family income—to cover the cost of enrolling veterans in Priority Groups 7 and 8 regardless of other health insurance coverage.
- Increasing pharmacy co-payments for certain veterans from $7 to $15 per prescription.
- Continuing the prohibition for the enrollment of new Priority Group 8 veterans.

- Eliminating the practice of reducing the VA first-party co-payments debts with collections recoveries from third-party health plans

Rather than consider ways to allow the VA health care system to accommodate the veterans currently using it, the White House budget for VA seeks to drive tens of thousands of veterans away from the health care system, in addition to continuing to prohibit over a million Priority Group 8-eligible veterans from enrolling in the VA medical system. The American Legion vehemently opposes this particular administration strategy.

On February 22, the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee sent its VA budget recommendations for FY 2009 to the Senate Budget Committee. The VA panel's proposal calls for $49.7 billion for VA discretionary funding. This amount is a $6.6 billion increase over FY 2008 levels, and a $4.9 billion increase over the President's budget proposal. The committee rejected the proposed prescription co-pay increase and the enrollment fees. In addition, the committee urged that the ban on enrollment of Priority Group 8 veterans, in place since 2003, be lifted. The committee report noted, "Many of the Priority 8 veterans bring private health care coverage with them and are also subject to co-payments, effectively bringing revenue into the system, thereby offsetting the cost of their care." Consequently, the committee added $700 million to VA's budget to restore some form of access for these veterans.

On February 28, the House Veterans' Affairs Committee sent its VA budget recommendations for FY 2009 to the House Budget Committee. The VA panel's proposal calls for $48.6 billion for VA discretionary funding. This amount is a $5.5 billion increase over FY 2008 levels, and a $3.8 billion increase over the President's budget proposal. The House panel also rejected the proposed prescription co-pay increase and the proposed enrollments fees, as well as supporting the rescission of the ban on Priority 8 veterans.

On March 13, the House passed its version of the FY 2009 budget resolution, House Concurrent Resolution (H. Con. Res.) 312. The vote for passage was 212-207. The Senate version of the FY 2009 budget resolution, Senate Concurrent Resolution (S. Con. Res.) 70, passed that chamber on March 14 by a 51-44 tally. Both chambers' budget blueprints call for an increase of $3.2 billion above the President's FY 2009 request for VA funding. On June 4, the Senate voted 48-45 to agree to the conference report to S. Con. Res. 70. The following day the House voted in favor of the report by a 214-210 tally. It should be stressed that the budget resolution is not law, but merely the guideline for spending bills.

The chart below shows: VA discretionary funding for the current year (FY 2008); proposed funding contained in the President's 2009 budget resolution; and, The American Legion's FY 2009 proposal as presented in testimony by National Commander Conatser last September as well as in March of this year.

Programs	**Total FY 2008 VA Funding**	**White House Request FY 2009**	**Legion Request FY 2009**
Medical Services	$29.1 bil.	$29.5 bil.	$38.4 bil.
Medical Administration	$3.5 bil.	$4.6 bil.	
Medical Facilities	$4.1 bil.	$4.7 bil.	
Medical Care Total	$36.7 bil.	$38.7 bil.	
Medical Care Recovery Fund	[$2.4 bil.]	[$2.5 bil.]	$2.1 bil.*
Med./ Prosthetic Research	$480 mil.	$442 mil.	$476 mil.
Major Construction	$1.1 bil.	$582 mil.	$1.56 bil.
Minor Construction	$630 mil.	$329 mil.	$485 mil.
State Veterans Homes Construction Grants	$165 mil.	$85 mil.	$275 mil.

State Veterans Cemetery Construction Grants	$40 mil.	$32 mil.	$45 mil.
National Cemetery Admin.	$195 mil.	$181 mil.	$228 mil.
Information Technology	$2.0 bil.	$2.4 bil.	$2.3 bil.
Genl. Operating Expenses	$1.6 bil.	$1.7 bil.	$2.8 bil.

** The American Legion continues to support using Medical Care Recovery Funds as supplements, not offsets, to discretionary VA funding.*

Congressional elections will take place this November. All 435 seats in the House of Representatives and 35 Senate seats will be in play. As of August 8, five senators are retiring. In the House, 32 members have announced plans to retire or are running for a Senate seat or governorship. Four House incumbents were defeated for re-nomination, two others while running for nomination to another office. There are still several primaries in September.

Americanism

The concerted efforts of millions of concerned Americans—including The American Legion and the Citizens Flag Alliance (CFA)—to pass a constitutional amendment to protect the American flag fell one vote short of passage by the Senate during the last session of the 109th Congress. Last year, Representative John Murtha (PA) introduced House Joint Resolution (H.J. Res.) 12, once more seeking to protect the American flag from acts of physical desecration through passage of a constitutional amendment. The measure currently has 68 cosponsors. A Senate companion measure, Senate Joint Resolution (S.J. Res.) 40, was introduced by Sen. David Vitter (LA) on June 12.

The American Legion will continue to seek passage of a constitutional amendment to protect the American flag because it is the right thing to do. Let the people decide.

Children & Youth

On June 23 the Senate Appropriations Committee approved S. 3182, the FY 2009 funding measure for the Departments of Commerce and Justice and Science programs. Funding for Justice Department programs supported by The American Legion include:

- $7.3 billion for the FBI, a $592 million increase over the current fiscal year,
- $1.95 billion for the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), a $97 million increase over FY 2008
- $1.04 billion for the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (BATF), a $59 million increase over the current year,
- $1.4 billion for State and Local Law Enforcement Assistance grants, a $480 million increase over FY 2008,
- $968 million for the U.S. Marshals Service, a $104 million increase over the current year, and
- $400 million for the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), a $16 million increase over FY 2008.

Economics

On February 14, the President signed P.L. 110-186, the "Military Reservist and Veteran Small Business Reauthorization and Opportunity Act of 2008." The legislation, introduced by Rep. Jason Altmire (PA), expands small business opportunities for veterans and helps military reservists keep their businesses afloat during and after deployment.

More than 20 percent of all U.S. service members have either purchased or started new businesses, providing significant contributions to job growth and local economies. Because service members are removed from the workforce for an extended period of time, they often face difficulties securing capital or technical assistance upon their return from active duty. Additionally, while many veterans acquire specialized skills as part of

their military training, they often find it challenging to transfer those skills into profitable resources. This legislation helps mitigate those challenges.

P.L. 110-186 updates several of the Small Business Administration's (SBA) programs focused on military personnel. The legislation increases funding for the SBA's Office of Veterans Business Development; makes available additional capital for veterans through the SBA's 7(a) and disaster loan programs; and increases the number of Veterans Business Outreach Centers across the country. The law also establishes an interagency taskforce to improve coordination and outreach to veteran and reserve component entrepreneurs by federal agencies.

Since the introduction of the Montgomery GI Bill in 1985, The American Legion has worked tirelessly to update and improve the program. The ongoing Global War on Terrorism has exposed some glaring weaknesses in the program. This is particularly apparent with regard to the numbers of National Guard and Reserve personnel who have been activated for service in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The costs of a college education have increased substantially over the last 20 years. The average cost of tuition, fees, room and board at a four-year public institution has increased by 278 percent. Recently separated veterans are seeking higher education, using their Montgomery GI Bill educational benefits, with an emphasis on reentering the civilian workforce. Benefits should remain commensurate with the sacrifice and service of the veterans who need adequate educational assistance, which meets their career objectives.

On June 30, President Bush signed P.L. 110-252, the Supplemental Appropriations Act for 2008. In addition to providing funding for the Global War on Terrorism through June 2009, the new law also incorporates new and updated provisions for the Montgomery GI Bill. This measure assures veteran beneficiaries a chance at a free four-year degree. These new provisions go into effect on August 1, 2009.

This GI Bill—the "Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008"—is much closer to the spirit of the original 1944 GI Bill of Rights, the "Servicemen's Readjustment Act." The rising costs of college have far outpaced the previous educational benefits open to our military. P.L. 110-252 will make a real difference to many military veterans and their families.

For active duty service members, P.L. 110-252 gets rid of the current enrollment requirements, replacing them with language mandating active service in the military since Sept. 11, 2001, for partial GI Bill benefits. Anyone who has served active duty since then is eligible for four years of tuition costs at an in-state university, plus an additional $1,000 each month for housing and living expenses. Each year, veterans will also be eligible for $1,200 in tutoring services and $1,000 to cover books and supplies. Altogether, the benefit could top more than $25,000 a year in the most expensive states. In a change from previous GI Bill programs, the tuition funds earned by the participants will be sent directly to the educational institution.

If service members or veterans attend state schools that are less expensive, they won't get to pocket the difference. If they decide to go to a private school or out-of-state college, they'll have to cover the difference between their higher tuition bill and the state-assigned reimbursement figure. The benefit is now available for up to 15 years, instead of 10, giving service members extra time after leaving the military to either use their benefit or transfer it to a family member.

Under a provision backed by the Pentagon, service personnel who served at least 10 years on active duty will be able to transfer their benefit to a spouse or dependent children. Spouses can receive the money even sooner, if their service member has served at least six years and agrees to another four-year contract. The transferred benefit only covers the cost of tuition, not the housing stipend and extra cash for books.

Families can divide the college benefit up in whatever manner best suits them, as long as they don't exceed 36 months. For example, a retired soldier can use two years of benefits to pay for a two-year degree program, then transfer the last two years to a spouse or child for their use. For long-serving service members, the changes mean that their college-age children could get a free college education starting in the fall of 2009.

National Guard and reservists who served at least three years on active duty in the past seven years automatically qualify for the full tuition benefit just like other troops.

Those who served less active duty time, but at least three months, will receive between 40 and 90 percent of the tuition benefit, based on a sliding scale. But more importantly, the tuition benefit can be used within 15 years of their separation from the service, instead of the current requirement that they remain in the Guard or Reserve to receive the money.

For those veterans who have already used their GI Bill benefits, these program changes don't offer any new money. Many of the most vocal supporters of the bill, veterans upset over how little they received for college, acknowledged the changes will help the next generation of young service members more than themselves. But veterans who have not yet used up their education benefits—or those who never signed up for the GI Bill while they were serving—can take advantage of the new rules. As long as they served at least three years after Sept. 11, 2001, they are eligible for the same free tuition.

Because Congress is considering technical corrections to this law—and both VA and DOD must develop regulations to implement this new program – those interested in using this program may get up-to-date information from the website www.gibill.va.gov .

The American Legion has been urging Congress to refine the Montgomery GI Bill program since its inception. These new enhancements will continue to allow service members to serve their country and be rewarded with college money.

On June 26, the Senate Appropriations Committee approved S. 3230, the FY 2009 appropriations measure for the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services and Education. The measure would fund veterans programs under the Assistant Secretary of Labor for Veterans Employment and Training (ASVET). The chart below outlines funding for ASVET accounts appropriated for FY 2008 and the amounts for FY 2009 contained in the Senate bill.

Programs	**P.L. 110-161 FY 2008**	**S. 3230 FY 2009**
State Administration Grants	$161.9 mil.	$168.9 mil.
Federal Administration	$33.3 mil.	$34.6 mil.
Natl. Veterans Training Institute (NVTI)	$1.9 mil.	$1.9 mil.
Homeless Veterans Program	$23.6 mil.	$25.6 mil.
Veterans' Workforce Investment Programs	$7.4 mil.	$7.4 mil.
Totals	***$228.1 mil.***	***$238.4 mil.***

Foreign Relations

On July 17 the Senate Appropriations Committee approved S. 3288, the FY 2009 funding bill for the Department of State and Foreign Operations programs. The measure provides $36.6 billion in total funding.

- $5.8 billion in global assistance to fight HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, measles and malaria;
- $2.4 billion in military assistance to Israel;
- $1.5 billion in economic and military aid to Egypt;
- $859 million in economic and military aid to Jordan;
- $725 million in economic and military assistance to Pakistan, a close partner in the Global War on Terror;
- $662 million in assistance for nations of Europe, Eurasia and Central Asia; and
- $315 million for the Andean Counterdrug Initiative.

National Security

The President on January 28, 2008 signed P.L. 110-181, the Department of Defense (DOD) authorization bill. The House had passed the measure on January 16 by a 369-46 vote, while the Senate voted 91-3 to approve the measure on January 22.

Authorizing legislation sets forth a blueprint or budget for spending. Often, these measures contain policy statements that would not be contained in an appropriations bill. Some of the major policy statements in this measure include:

- $17.6 billion to authorize procurement of Mine Resistant Ambush Protected Vehicles, with V-shaped hulls that deflect the blast of roadside bombs;
- $8.3 billion to support the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) process;
- $3.9 billion budgeted for family housing construction;
- $3.3 billion for more heavily armored Hummers for Iraq and Afghanistan;
- Increases in Army personnel for FY 2008 by 13,000, and a Marine Corps personnel increase of 9000;
- A 3.5 percent across-the-board pay raise for military personnel, half a percentage point above the President's request;
- Language providing full, immediate concurrent receipt to disabled retirees deemed "unemployable" by the VA, retroactive to Jan. 1, 2005;
- Language authorizing Guard and Reserve members to use their mobilization GI Bill benefits up to 10 years after separating from the Selected Reserve;
- Language allowing up to five years (formerly two years) for service members who served in Iraq and Afghanistan to be eligible for VA health care services;
- A new formula to allow a member of the Reserve components to begin drawing retirement pay prior to age 60; and
- A prohibition against DOD increasing TRICARE and pharmacy user fees.

On June 30, President Bush signed P.L. 110-252, the Supplemental Appropriations measure for 2008. This law includes appropriations to continue U.S. military operations in the Global War on Terrorism, as well as funding for various domestic programs.

The military funding portion of the law provides a total of $161.8 billion in support of military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. $95.9 billion of that amount will be for the remainder of Fiscal Year 2008, while $65.9 billion will be allotted for FY 2009 through next June. There are also no restrictions on how the war funding may be spent. The bill bars any permanent military bases in Iraq. It also requires that any money earmarked for Iraq reconstruction be matched dollar-for-dollar by the Iraqi government.

Further, P.L. 110-252 provides $24.7 billion for a variety of domestic programs. The measure includes $8.2 billion in funding for a 13-week extension of unemployment benefits nationwide, providing that individuals had worked at least 20 weeks to be eligible to collect the extended federal benefit. Other earmarks in the measure include:

- $5.8 billion to repair levees in Louisiana damaged by Hurricane Katrina in 2005;
- $2.7 billion for Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) disaster relief fund, the Army Corps of Engineers, and Small Business Administration to address recent flooding and tornadoes in the Midwest;
- $390 million to fight international narcotics trafficking;
- $374 million to help support international peacekeeping missions;
- $220 million for international disaster assistance for Myanmar (Burma); and,
- $178 million for the Bureau of Prisons for incarceration costs.

FY 2009 appropriations for the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) were a part of S. 3181, which was approved by the Senate Appropriations Committee on June 19. The measure provides $41.3 billion for DHS programs, an increase of nearly $2.5 billion above the White House request. Some of the key provisions include:

- $11.2 billion for the Bureau of Customs and Border Protection;
- $9.2 billion for the U.S. Coast Guard;
- $7.4 billion for FEMA;
- $5.3 billion for the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement;
- $4.3 billion for the Transportation Security Administration;
- $4.2 billion in grants for state and local "first responders;"
- $1.4 billion for the U.S. Secret Service;
- $799 million for the Federal Air Marshals program; and
- $775 billion for border security along the U.S.-Mexico border.

On July 10, President Bush signed P.L. 110-261, the "FISA Amendments Act of 2008." The U.S. Senate voted 69-28 to pass the measure the previous day, while the House passed it on June 20 by a vote of 293-129.

The legislation will allow warrantless surveillance of foreign targets who may be communicating with people in this country, under the provisions of Public Law 95-511, the "Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act of 1978." Before any such electronic scrutiny could begin, the secret FISA court would review the executive branch's surveillance procedures.

In 2005, the news media revealed the existence of warrantless surveillance of foreign nationals with ties to terrorist organizations. Some of these individuals brought lawsuits against telecommunications companies who willing participated in this program. Under P.L. 110-261, all existing lawsuits against third parties that assisted the President's warrantless surveillance program would be waived if a federal district court ruled that there was "substantial evidence" they received written assurances that the program was legal and authorized by the President.

Support for P.L. 110-261 was bipartisan, especially with the approach of the fall elections. Many members of Congress were unwilling to have this issue used as an election-year talking point by their opponents. The American Legion has been a staunch supporter of this legislation, urging Congress to strengthen our nation's national security tools for the continuing Global War on Terrorism.

Selective Service System funding for FY 2009 is contained in S. 3260, a bill to fund federal programs related to Financial Services and General Government. The bill was approved by the Senate Appropriations Committee on July 10. The measure appropriates $22 million, an amount equal to FY 2008 appropriations as well as the President's budget request. The American Legion continues to support funding for the Selective Service System in case of national emergency.

On May 12 the Senate Armed Services Committee approved S. 3001, the FY 2009 DOD authorization bill and sent the measure to the Senate floor for passage. The House on May 22 passed a companion measure, H.R. 5658, by a vote of 384-23. Some of the major provisions in these measures include:

- A $26.1 billion authorization for the Defense Health Program in the Senate bill, $26 billion in the House measure;
- A total of $65 million for educational impact aid in the House bill, $45 million in the Senate version;
- Increases in Army personnel for FY 2009 by 7000, and a Marine Corps personnel increase of 5000 in both measures;
- A 3.9 percent across-the-board pay raise for military personnel—half a percentage point above the President's request—in both bills;
- Prohibits increases in premiums, co-pays and pharmacy user fees for TRICARE recipients in both measures; and,
- Provides service members affected by the stop-loss policy with an additional payment of $500 for each month their service was/is extended from October 2001 to the present in the Senate measure.

On July 30, the House DOD Appropriations Subcommittee approved the draft FY 2009 DOD spending measure. It contains $487.7 billion in funding for defense programs, $4 billion less than requested by the President and $28.4 billion above the enacted amount for the current year. Significant provisions include:

- $8.8 billion for missile defense programs;
- Additional funding of $1 billion to training programs;
- Providing full funding for the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter (JSF) program;
- Providing full funding for procurement of 20 F-22 Raptors, with additional $523 million for advanced procurement of 20 more F-22s; and,
- $3.6 billion for the Future Combat System program.

On August 1, the full House of Representatives passed H.R. 6599, the FY 2009 Military Construction-Veterans Affairs (MilCon-VA) funding bill, by a 409-4 vote. The military construction portion of the measure totals $24.8 billion, $400 million more than the President's budget request and $4.2 billion more than funding amounts for FY 2008. A companion measure, S. 3301, was approved by the Senate Appropriations Committee on July 17. The Senate bill would fund military construction accounts at $24.4 billion for FY 2009. Specific spending amounts include:

- $9.1 billion for the 2005 Base Realignment and Closing (BRAC) and Re-stationing process in the House bill, $9.0 billion in the Senate version;
- $5.6 billion in military construction to support the President's program to increase the size of the armed forces in the House measure, $4.8 billion in the Senate bill; and,
- $3.2 billion to further eliminate inadequate military housing in both House and Senate bills.

The American Legion continues to support legislation allowing concurrent receipt of military retired pay and VA disability compensation by military retirees. The current law on concurrent receipt was established in 1944, when P.L. 78-314 allowed retired military personnel to elect to waive an amount of their retirement pay equal to their veterans' disability compensation. The advantage is that military retirement pay is taxable income and veterans' disability compensation is not subject to federal income tax.

There were two significant provisions relating to concurrent receipt contained in P.L. 110-181, the FY 2008 DOD Authorization Act. It authorized full, immediate concurrent receipt for disabled retirees with at least 20 years of service deemed "unemployable" by the VA; and extended eligibility for Combat-Related Special Compensation (CRSC) to all military disability (chapter 61) retirees with less than 20 years of service who suffer from combat- or operations-caused conditions. Payments under these provisions will begin on October 1, 2008 and will be retroactive to January 1, 2005.

The American Legion believes all service-connected disabled military retirees should be eligible to participate in the CRSC option regardless of length in service or VA disability rating. The American Legion also supports the elimination of the "phase in" for all concurrent retirement and disability pay (CRDP) recipients.

Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

The FY 2009 budget process will be looked upon in the future as one of the most challenging in decades. Partisan bickering has slowed the appropriations cycle to a virtual standstill in the House Appropriations Committee, while the Senate panel has bravely attempted to stick to the yearly schedule. On August 1, the House by a vote of 409-4 passed H.R. 6599, the FY 2009 spending bill for VA and military construction programs. A companion measure, S. 3301, was passed by the full Senate Appropriations Committee on July 17. The chart below shows the President's FY 2009 spending request for VA, the House-passed amounts, the Senate Appropriation committee's estimates, and The American Legion's request as presented in testimony in February.

Discretionary Funding Programs	**FY 2009 White House Request**	**FY 2009 House Passed H.R. 6599**	**FY 2009 Senate Cmte. S. 3301**	**FY 2009 American Legion request**
Medical Services	$29.9 bil.	$30.9 bil.	$35.6 bil.	$38.4 bil.
Medical Administration	$4.3 bil.	$4.4 bil.		
Medical Facilities	$4.6 bil.	$5.0 bil.	$5.00 bil.	
Total Medical Care	*$38.8 bil.*	*$40.3 bil.*	*$40.6 bil.*	
Medical Care Recovery Fund	[$2.5 bil.]	[$2.5 bil.]	[$2.5 bil.]	$2.1 bil.
Medical/Prosthetics Research	$442 mil.	$500 mil.	$527 mil.	$476 mil.
Major Construction	$582 mil.	$923 mil.	$1.2 bil.	$1.5 bil.
Minor Construction	$329 mil.	$991 mil.	$729 mil.	$485 mil.
State Veterans' Homes Construction Grants	$85 mil.	$165 mil.	$250 mil.	$275 mil.
State Veterans' Cemeteries Construction Grants	$32 mil.	$45 mil.	$42 mil.	$45 mil.
Natl. Cemetery Administration	$181 mil.	$240 mil.	$230 mil.	$228 mil.
General Operating				

Expenses	$1.7 bil.	$1.8 bil.	$1.8 bil.	$2.8 bil.
Information Technology	$2.4 bil.	$2.5 bil.	$2.5 bil.	$2.3 bil.

On April 24, the U.S. Senate by a vote of 96-1 approved S. 1315, the "Veterans Benefits Enhancement Act of 2007." Introduced by Sen. Daniel Akaka, chairman of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, the measure contains a multitude of improvements to veterans' benefits. The bill now goes to the House for further action.

Some of the provision of S. 1315 would:

- Establish a new program for service-connected disabled veterans;
- Expand eligibility for retroactive benefits from traumatic injury protection coverage under the Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance;
- Increase the maximum amount of Veterans' Mortgage Life Insurance that a service-connected disabled veteran may purchase;
- Allow for the recall of retired judges of the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims;
- Provide individuals with severe burn injuries specially adapted housing benefits; and
- Extend for two years the monthly educational assistance allowance for apprenticeship or other on-the-job training.

In addition to the provisions above, S. 1315 would also institute a new program of benefits for Filipino World War II veterans. The bill would provide a veterans' pension to Filipino veterans residing in either the Philippines or the U.S. As passed, veterans residing in the Philippines would receive a smaller pension than those residing in the U.S.

The American Legion is very supportive of each of these provisions, but is adamantly opposed to how Congress plans to pay for these enhanced benefits under the current PAYGO rules—by repealing *Hartness v. Nicholson*, a decision of the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims (CAVC). In *Hartness*, a veteran appealed a 2004 decision of the Board of Veterans' Appeals that denied housebound (HB) benefits because VA determined that the veteran did not meet either of the two alternative criteria for HB benefits:

- He did not have a single disability rated 100 percent disabling combined with substantial confinement to the home; and
- He did not have entitlement under the alternative basis a 100 percent disability rating with an additional independently ratable 60 percent disability.

The Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims held that a wartime veteran may be awarded housebound benefits if, in addition to being 65 years old, he or she has been rated at least 60 percent disabling or is considered permanently housebound. Section 1513, Title 38, United States Code, currently benefits many wartime veterans from the "Greatest Generation" and other veterans from subsequent conflicts.

The American Legion strongly supports the enhancement provisions of S. 1315, but cannot support this proposed PAYGO funding scheme that overturns the *Hartness* decision. The American Legion believes the sacrifice of these heroes warrants relief. Balancing the books on the backs of the very patriots that protected and defended this nation is unconscionable. The American Legion adamantly opposes the diminishing of earned benefits to one group of veterans in order to fund earned benefits for another group of veterans—hardly the thanks of a grateful nation.

Last year, a commission was formed to examine the VA and DOD disability compensation systems, as well as ways to help returning OEF/OIF veterans. This was the Presidential Commission on Care for America's Returning Wounded Warriors, more simply known as the Dole/Shalala Commission after its co-chairs.

The Dole/Shalala Commission issued its final report in July of last year, making dozens of recommendations to implement sweeping changes in both DOD's disability retirement system and VA's disability compensation system. The White House accepted the final report wholeheartedly. However, The American Legion and other veterans' service organizations (VSOs) were more circumspect in their support of the Dole/Shalala Commission's report.

Consequently, Congress has moved forward with legislation to implement some of the Dole/Shalala Commission report's recommendations, as well as some recommendation made by the Veterans Disability Benefits Commission, which was examining the DOD disability retirement system. On February 28, Rep. Steve Buyer (IN) introduced H.R. 5509, the "Noble Warrior Act." In the Senate, Sen. Richard Burr (NC) introduced S. 2674, the "America's Wounded Warrior Act," on the same day.

Both measures would establish a new DOD disability retirement system for service members deemed unfit for service due to a line-of-duty injury. The new system would pay a lifetime annuity to those disabled veterans. The annuity would be based on the member's rank and years of service. Service members retired on disability after October 7, 2001 would automatically be assigned to the new system, while those already receiving disability retirement payments would have the option of staying in the old system or transferring to the new system.

The legislation would require VA to conduct a study aimed at determining appropriate amounts of compensation under a new, modern disability compensation rating schedule, which would reflect average loss of earning capacity and loss of quality of life due to disability. The new system would be open to all veterans, with recipients of compensation under the old system having their disability ratings grandfathered in unless they submit a claim under the new system. There would also be mandatory periodic reevaluations of a compensation recipient's disability, where appropriate, under the new system.

The American Legion to date has withheld its comments on this legislation. Military service is inherently different from any other form of employment. Examining other disability compensation and insurance programs—as called for in the legislation – for the purpose of drawing comparisons to VA's disability compensation program is inappropriate. Furthermore, The American Legion would strongly oppose any attempt to adjust VA's compensation program so it more closely resembles other compensation programs; such an adjustment would most likely result in a reduction or restriction of current VA disability benefits.

Finally, The American Legion opposes any attempt to limit the chronic disabilities or illnesses for which a veteran is eligible to establish service connection. The American Legion also opposes the use of age in determining the level or amount of compensation, as the amount of compensation should be based on the severity of the condition – regardless of age—as is the current practice.

The American Legion will continue to monitor the progress of H.R. 5509 and S. 2674.

On June 26, the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee approved three measures, sending them to the full Senate for further action. The measures are comprehensive legislation to improve health care and benefits for returning service members and veterans from previous eras. An omnibus health care bill, S. 2969, the "Veterans Health Care Authorization Act of 2008," includes provisions to:

- Enhance incentives for VA medical professionals, such as pay, benefits, scholarship programs, and work schedules, in order to help VA recruit and retain top quality clinicians;
- Expand numerous authorities, including for the provision of both institutional and non-institutional long-term care as well as rehabilitative care for OIF/OEF veterans; and
- Create pilot programs to assist family caregivers, provide outreach and assistance to returning service members in their communities, and help prevent homelessness among veterans.

The second bill, S. 3023, the "Veterans' Benefits Improvements Act of 2008," includes provisions to improve requirements for notices to veterans about their claims for benefits; enhance home loan refinancing options and a temporary increase in the maximum loan guaranty amount for veterans; and increasing the number of judges for the Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims.

Finally, the committee also approved S. 2617, legislation to provide a cost-of-living increase for disability compensation for veterans and dependency and indemnity compensation for survivors. This increase is projected to be 2.8 percent. This measure

was passed by the full Senate on July 30 by unanimous consent. The House passed companion legislation, H.R. 5826, on May 21 by a vote of 417-0.

On June 26, the House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity approved several bills for further action by the full committee. They include:

- H.R. 2721, introduced by Rep. Dennis Cardoza (CA), would require VA to develop, and DOD to distribute to members of the Armed Forces upon their discharge or release from active duty, information in a compact disk read-only memory format that lists and explains the health, education, and other benefits for which veterans are eligible under the laws administered by VA;
- H.R. 2910, the "Veterans Education Tuition Support Act of 2007," which was introduced by Rep. Susan Davis (CA). The bill would amend the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act to protect the student service member by capping interest at six percent during deployments, require institutes of higher learning to refund tuition and fees for unearned credit, and in addition, guarantee our service members a place when they return to school. This bill would also provide a service member 13 months to begin paying their student loans after an activation should they decide not to return to school immediately;
- H.R. 3298, the "21st Century Servicemembers Protection Act." Introduced by Rep. Patrick Murphy (PA), the bill would amend the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act to cover service contracts to allow our men and women in uniform with deployment orders to more easily terminate or suspend their service contracts without fee or penalty
- H.R. 6070, the "Military Spouses Residency Relief Act" was introduced by Rep. John Carter (TX). The bill would amend the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act to allow a military spouse to claim the same state as the service member in regards to state and property taxes, and voter registration; and,
- H.R. 6224, the "Pilot College Work Study Programs for Veterans Act of 2008," introduced by Rep. Stephanie Herseth Sandlin (SD). This bill would direct the VA to conduct a five-year pilot project to expand on existing work-study activities for veterans. Currently, veterans that qualify for work-study would be limited to working on VA-related work. H.R. 6224 would allow those veterans the option of working in academic departments and student services. This change would put them on par with students that qualify for a work-study position under programs not administered by the VA.

On July 10, the House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Health approved several bills, sending them to the full committee for further action, including:

- H.R. 6122, the "Veterans Pain Care Act of 2008." Introduced by Rep. Timothy Walz (MN), this measure would direct VA to develop and implement a comprehensive policy on the management of pain experienced by veterans enrolled for VA health care services; and,
- H.R. 6439, the "Mental Health for Heroes' Families Act of 2008," introduced by Rep. Phil Hare (IL). This measure would repeal the specification that in order for family members of non-service connected veterans to be eligible for counseling services, the counseling must be essential to permit the discharge of the veteran from the hospital.

On July 30, the House by a vote of 421-0 passed H.R. 6445, the "Veterans Health Care Policy Enhancement Act of 2008." Introduced by Rep. Donald Cazayoux (LA), this bill would:

- Prohibit the collection of copayments from veterans who are catastrophically disabled (Category Group 4) for hospital or nursing home care;
- Remove a requirement for written informed consent for HIV testing among veterans, thereby removing existing barriers to the early diagnosis of HIV infection. It would also require VA to follow the same standard of HIV care that is recommended to non-VA patients. This provision was originally contained in

H.R. 6114, a stand-alone measure that passed the House VA Health Subcommittee on July 10;

- Mandate the VA to centralize third party billing functions at consolidated centers, instead of individual VA Medical Center; and,
- Direct VA to develop and implement a comprehensive policy on the management of pain experienced by veterans enrolled for health care services provided by VA.

On July 31, the House of Representatives passed several veterans' bills by voice votes. They include:

- H.R. 674, a bill to repeal legislative language that would terminate VA's Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans;
- H.R. 4255, the "United States Olympic Committee Paralympic Program Act of 2007," was introduced by House VA Committee Chairman Bob Filner (CA). The bill would authorize the VA to make a grant to the United States Olympic Committee to provide and develop activities for service members and veterans with physical disabilities;
- H.R. 6221, introduced by Rep. John Boozman (AR), is the "Improving Veterans' Opportunity in Education and Business Act of 2008." The bill would require the VA to include in each contract the Secretary enters for the acquisition of goods and services a provision that requires the contractee to comply with the contracting goals and preferences for small business concerns owned or controlled by veterans. This provision applies not only to the VA, but also to any agency, entity, or person acting on behalf of the VA. The measure would also create a five-year pilot program to expand work-study programs for veterans attending institutions of higher education. It also includes language from another bill, H.R. 6272, that creates a Military Occupational Specialty Transition (MOST) program, a reiteration of the former Service Members Occupational Conversion and Training Act (SMOCTA) program; and,
- H.R. 6225, also introduced by Rep. Herseth Sandlin, is the "Injunctive Relief for Veterans Act of 2008." The bill would ensure that equitable relief is available to all Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) victims when appropriate.

NATIONAL SECURITY COMMISSION
Fang A. Wong, New York, Chairman
Philip Riley, District of Columbia, Director

The following report covers the activities of the National Security Commission and its staff during the program year ending June 30, 2008. It should be noted that after three years of distinguished service, Clarence E. Hill, Florida, has stepped down from the Chairmanship of the National Security Commission. The new Chairman, effective as of October 18, 2007, is Fang A. Wong, New York.

It should also be noted that the National Staff for the National Security-Foreign Relations Division has changed hands as former Director, G. Michael Schlee and former Deputy Director of National Security, Michael Duggan both retired after having very distinguished careers. The American Legion thanks them for their outstanding service and their accomplishments. Philip Riley is now the Director of the National Security-Foreign Relations Division. Alec Petkoff is now the Deputy Director of National Security.

The Eighty-Ninth Annual National Convention in Reno, Nevada, and the Fall and Spring Meetings of the National Executive Committee approved certain positions expressed in resolutions submitted to those bodies through the Convention Committee on National Security and the National Security Commission, respectively. The approved resolutions are set forth as follows:

National Convention, Reno, Nevada
August 28-30 2007

Resolution No. 29: National Security Principles
Resolution No. 33: The American Legion's Role In Homeland Security

Resolution No. 34: The Citizen Corps
Resolution No. 38: Military Quality Of Life
Resolution No. 43: Retention And Renovation Of Walter Reed Army Medical Center
Resolution No. 44: Increasing The Short And Long Term End Strengths Of The Services
Resolution No. 45: Purple Heart For Traumatic Brain Injuries (TBI's)
Resolution No. 46: Pain Management Research, Treatment And Therapies
Resolution No. 63: Exempting Mailing Charges For Non-Profit Organizations
Resolution No. 73: Procurement Of Sufficient F-22 Aircraft
Resolution No. 80: Cold War Victory Medal
Resolution No. 85: Development And Expansion Of The Hyper-X Aerospace Program
Resolution No. 103: Support For Legislation Or Laws Prohibiting Interference With The Rendering Of Military Funeral Honors
Resolution No. 105: Designation Of Death Benefits Beneficiaries
Resolution No. 123: Illegal Immigrants And Selective Service Registration
Resolution No. 169: Support For The War On Terrorism

National Executive Committee Meetings, Fall 2007

No resolutions were approved at the Fall National Executive Committee Meeting.

National Executive Committee Meetings, Spring 2008

No resolutions were approved at the Spring National Executive Committee Meeting.

National Executive Committee Meetings, Fall 2007

An executive session of the National Security Commission met in the Circle Center Room (Lower Level) of the Radisson Hotel on October 15, 2007 to consider resolutions properly before it and to conduct other business. A total of four resolutions were considered and one resolution, "The American Legion National Fire Fighter of the Year Award," was recommended for adoption. Commission Chairman Clarence Hill and staff discussed the House and Senate adopted versions of the Fiscal Year 2008 Defense Appropriations bills and Defense Authorization bills, which both passed their respective Houses. Congress had passed a Continuing Resolution to fund the Government through November 16th. Also discussed were those key issues which The American Legion supported, some of which were adopted. Both the National Defense Authorization and Appropriations bills will be resolved by Conference Committee. Chairman Hill also discussed speakers for the Washington Conference as well as initial planning for a possible Pre-Convention Trip to Luke Air Force Base near Convention City, Phoenix, Arizona. National Security and Foreign Relations Director, Colonel (Retired) Phil Riley, was introduced to the Commission.

On Tuesday, October 16, 2007, the new Department Commanders were briefed on National Security issues; and the National Security Commission met jointly with the Foreign Relations Commission and viewed videotapes of mutual interest to both Commissions.

As mentioned, the FY2008 National Defense Appropriations Bills and the National Defense Authorization Bills were passed by both Houses of Congress before they left on their week-long Columbus Day recess. The National Defense Appropriations spending bill of $459 billion is the largest annual Defense budget since the Vietnam War. The total cost of the Global War on Terrorism is already over one-half trillion dollars ($507 billion) thus far. The military payraise is set at 3.5 percent beginning on January 1, 2008. An active duty force of over 1.5 million in the Army, Navy and Air Force was authorized and funded which will include an increase of 74,000 more active Army troops over four years and 9,000 more Marines over the next year. More Navy ships were funded as well as more F-22 Raptors, F-35 Joint Strike Fighters and C-17 airlifters.

As mentioned, the Fiscal 2008 Defense Authorization bill, which authorizes over $645 billion in national security programs, was passed by both houses of Congress and

includes some $142 billion in emergency funding for the war. There were also a number of approved policy issues which The American Legion had supported including provisions rejecting DOD-proposed TRICARE co-payment and prescription fee increases for 2008. The Senator Nelson (FL) amendment would eliminate the Widows' Tax (SBP/DIC offset) and accelerate 30-year paid-up Survivor Benefit Plan coverage for military retiree veterans from October 1, 2007 to 2008. Combat-Related Special Compensation provisions for Chapter 61 military disability retirees passed in the House and Senate. The Senator Reid (NV) amendment would provide more immediate concurrent receipt to disabled retirees deemed "unemployable" by the VA and would be retroactive to January 1, 2005; however, there was no accompanying bill in the House. The Chambliss (GA) amendment would reduce the Reserve retirement age by three months for each 90 days served on active duty since 9/11/01. The Wounded Warrior Act was also reinserted into the Senate National Defense Authorization. It addresses the care and treatment of our wounded warriors to include: Ending the inconsistent ratings awarded for the same disabilities by DOD and the VA; more funding for the improvements in diagnoses, treatment and rehabilitation of service members with Traumatic Brain Injuries and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder; extended eligibility for VA healthcare for combat veterans from two to five years after discharge; increasing minimum severance pay to one year's basic-pay for all those separated for disabilities incurred in combat zones, six months for non-combat zone disabilities; eliminate the provision that severance pay be deducted from disabilities occurred in combat zones or combat-related operations; and others. Wounded Warrior provisions were also adopted by the House, so the final package will have to be resolved in Conference. The President is requesting that Congress hold up on this legislation in order to consider the Bush administration's own plan.

The National Security Commission thanks National Commander Marty Conatser and the National Executive Committee for their outstanding support

Washington Conference

The National Security Commission met in general sessions on March 31, and April 2, 2008 during the 48th Annual Washington Conference at the Renaissance Hotel, Washington DC. The following is a summary of those sessions:

Joint Session

The Joint Session of the National Security and Foreign Relations Commission met and were addressed by four speakers; Brigadier General (BG) Michael S. Tucker, Assistant Surgeon General for Warrior Care and Transition, Dr. Edward J. Lacey, Deputy Director Secretary of State's Policy Planning, U.S. State Department, Mr. Brock D. Bierman, FEMA, Director Community Preparedness Division, Citizen Corps, and Brigadier General Gregory J. Zanetti, Deputy Director, Guantanamo Task Force.

BG Tucker gave a thorough and inspiring presentation on the care for wounded warriors at Walter Reed Army Medical Center and how that model was being implemented service wide in the care for wounded warriors.

Dr. Lacey gave an overview of many of the pressing matters facing the State Department and how the current Foreign Relations challenges related to our National Security to include Iraq and Afghanistan stabilization; Iran's negative influence in the Middle East; the nuclear disarmament of North Korea; and free trade with Columbia, Panama, Peru and South Korea.

Mr. Bierman gave an informative presentation about Citizen Corps, community preparedness and the real need for volunteers. He emphasized that The American Legion was vital to the volunteer preparedness movement in that veterans had the experience to lead, especially in a crisis situation.

BG Zanetti closed the Joint Session with a presentation that gave the true and accurate description of what actually goes on at Guantanamo and at the detention centers located there. He emphasized the professionalism of the service members who were stationed there, the high quality of care the detainees receive, and he spoke of the upcoming trials for the detainees. BG Zanetti described the abuse of the staff by the

detainees which is extensive and occurring daily. The staff's courage and professionalism is the news that he believes is missing from the headlines about Guantanamo Bay.

Business Session

The National Security Commission met in business session on Wednesday morning April 2, 2008. After Chairman Wong's opening remarks and introductions he invited Marcia Wheatley from Virginia, who is the Southern Division Chairman of The American Legion Auxiliary's National Security Committee, to address the session. She was followed by the Deputy Director for National Security, Alec Petkoff, who gave an update on the plans for the preconvention trip, the proposed FY 2009 Defense Budget and one registered resolution that discussed the contract decision that DOD was going to make on the purchasing of new aerial refueling tankers. The resolution will be submitted at the Spring National Executive Committee meeting.

Preconvention Trip

This year's preconvention trip will be to Luke Air Force Base, Arizona. The date of the trip will be August 22nd. Luke AFB is home to the 56th Fighter Wing. Some of the events being planned include a visit to the flight line where we will get a closer look at the F-16 fighters that are stationed at Luke AFB, going to the Luke AFB Air Park which displays all the former planes that have ever been stationed at Luke AFB and lunch at the Officer's Club. Discussions on how to handle the heat (Phoenix in late August) are in progress so as to make the trip as pleasant, as it will be interesting, as possible.

FY 2009 Defense Budget

The defense budget request is for $515.4 billion—a $35.9 billion increase over the 2008 level. The request amounts to about 3.4 percent of U.S. gross domestic product. To give some basis for comparison, during the Korean War the percentage of GDP going to defense was about 14 percent, and during Vietnam it was about 9 percent.

In addition to the $515.4 billion request, the Administration has requested $70 billion as an emergency allowance for the Global War on Terror. DOD says "Details will be provided to Congress once the specific requirements of our troops on the ground are better known."

Some of the items in the FY 2009 Defense Request:

- Recruits, trains and equips 65,000 additional active duty soldiers and 27,000 additional Marines over five years;
- Provides $15.5 billion to increase Army active end strength to 532,400, which includes an increase of 7,000 over the Fiscal Year 2008 request. The Army plans to increase active end strength by a total of 65,000 to 547,400. In Fiscal Year 2009, the number of active Army Brigade Combat Teams (BCT) will increase by two BCTs, from 40 to 42, toward a goal of 48 BCTs.
- Provides $5.0 billion, an increase of $.9 billion over the Fiscal Year 2008 enacted level, to increase Marine Corps end strength to 194,000, which includes an increase of 5,000 Marines over the Fiscal Year 2008 request. To achieve three balanced Marine Expeditionary Force units, and to increase time at home station between deployments, the Marine Corps plans to increase end strength by a total of 27,000 to 202,000 by Fiscal Year 2011.
- Air Force end-strength will be set at 316,600, and Navy end-strength will be 325,300.
- Provides pay increases of 3.4 percent for military members.
- Provides requests $183.8 billion in modernization, an $8.3 billion increase or 4.7 percent over the Fiscal Year 2008 budget. This includes procurement, as well as research and development.
- The health care portion does ask for increased and or additional fees for TRICARE and TRICARE FOR LIFE but the feeling from Congress is that those fees will not be included in the final version of the budget. The American Legion will fight against those increases.
- Africa Command to strengthen U.S. security and promote peace and stability in Africa, DoD requests $389 million in Fiscal Year 2009 to establish the

U.S. Africa Command. The new geographical command will focus primarily on building partnership capacities, conducting theater security cooperation, building important counter-terrorism skills and, as appropriate, supporting other U.S. Government agencies in implementing programs that promote regional stability.

CRSC and CRDP

A briefing by Major Barrell on Combat Related Special Compensation and Concurrent Retirement Disability pay was presented to the Commission. Major Barrell showed the differences in the two retirement programs and took many questions on which would be more beneficial to military retirees. Some updates about the CRSC program included that it was now available to ALL military retirees regardless of what type of retirement it was (TERA and Chapter 61 included). It was also brought to light that after one applies for CRSC, DFAS will enroll you into which retirement option pays you more. You still have 30 days after that choice is made by DFAS to switch if one so chooses.

Resolutions with Legislative Intent (RWLI) Briefing

A briefing was given by Mr. Petkoff on the Commission's body of resolutions that will be up for renewal this coming Convention. The National Security Commission has adopted sixty-three resolutions that have legislative intent for the 110th Congress. Fifty-one "resolutions with legislative intent" (RWLI) were adopted at the 88th National Convention in Salt Lake City, Utah, 2006 and sixteen were adopted at the 89th National Convention in Reno, Nevada, 2007. Four of the resolutions that were passed in Reno were updated versions of those passed in Salt Lake which leaves the total amount of RWLI at sixty-three.

Director of the National Security Foreign Relations Division

The Director of the National Security Foreign Relations Division, Philip Riley, addressed the Commission about the overall state of National Security including the stress on the men and equipment of the all volunteer force, energy independence, homeland security, and military retirement benefits.

National Law Enforcement Officer of the Year Award

The Chairman of the Law and Order Committee Terrence Nolan, announced the Regional winners of the 2008 Law Enforcement Officer of the Year award. This prestigious award will be presented for the 12th consecutive year at this 90th National Convention. It recognizes law enforcement officers who have selflessly distinguished themselves over and above their normal duties, primarily through community service and professional achievement. Twenty Departments submitted candidates for the 2008 award. The regional winners for this year were from the Departments of Iowa, Washington, New Hampshire, Maryland and Louisiana. The National winner will be chosen at the upcoming NEC.

National Executive Committee Meetings, Spring 2008

An executive session of the National Security Commission met in the Circle Center Room of the Sheraton Hotel on May 5, 2008 to consider resolutions properly before it and to conduct other business. A total of one resolution was considered and it has been recommended to be received and recorded. Commission Chairman Fang A. Wong gave an update on the status of the Fiscal Year 2008 Defense Supplemental. He also outlined key provisions in the Fiscal Year 2009 National Defense Appropriations bills. Chairman Wong and staff also discussed the resolutions that were in need of renewal at National Convention in Phoenix, AZ. Deputy Director of National Security Alec Petkoff also discussed the pre-convention trip to Luke Air Force Base in Arizona and gave a brief titled, "National Vital Interests".

On Tuesday, May 6, 2008, the National Security Commission met jointly with the Foreign Relations Commission and reviewed videotapes of mutual interest to both Commissions.

Fiscal Year 2008 Defense Supplemental

Congress has still not sent a 2008 Department of Defense (DOD) defense supplemental spending bill to fund the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. After receiving testimony from General Petraeus, Ambassador Crocker, Secretary Gates and Admiral Mullen, Congress is finally ready to take action on the remaining $102.5 billion of the Fiscal Year (FY) 2008 DOD supplemental request. While the house and senate appropriations committees have not yet scheduled mark up sessions, both are expected to begin in early May. Their hope is to get a bill to the President by Memorial Day. The American Legion has urged congress to act quickly and to stop playing politics with the funding our troops need to effectively fight the global war on terrorism.

However, there is still a strong chance that the final bill will include policy provisions on the war that are highly objectionable to the President. In addition, there has been some discussion in the House about splitting the funding bill into two parts: one for Afghanistan and another for Iraq. In anticipation of these possibilities, the President has again indicated he would veto a bill that includes restrictions on how the funds are spent or establishes troop withdrawal schedules.

Timing is becoming critical to the military services. Failure to act quickly (before Memorial Day) could result in an unfortunate replay of last December, when the DOD issued furlough warnings.

So far, congress has approved $16.8 billion of the original supplemental, all for mine resistant ambush protected (MRAP) vehicles. The remainder has been held up pending debate over Iraq policy.

The danger of not passing the supplemental in a timely manner not only brings the possibility of furloughs, which would put a lot of service member dependants out of work and cut quality of life services like day care and education funding, but it also leaves a nation unable to address any new emerging threats to our national vital interests that may arise around the globe.

DOD Fiscal Year 2009 Request

The congress is ready to begin action on the FY 2009 DOD baseline budget and legislative request. The Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC) has scheduled subcommittee markups of the FY 2009 defense authorization bill that began Tuesday, April 29th. The full SASC completed action on the bill on Friday, May 2nd. The House Armed Services Committee (HASC) has not yet set its schedule, but probably will mark up the bill following SASC action in early May. House and Senate appropriators have not yet set any schedules for action on the FY 2009 request and probably will not act until they complete the FY 2008 supplemental. Therefore, it is highly unlikely that much if any progress on the DOD spending bill will occur before Memorial Day.

The FY 2009 budget provides $515.4 billion in discretionary budget authority for the Department of Defense. This represents a $35.9 billion or 7.5 percent increase over the enacted level for FY 2008.

The FY 2009 defense budget request aims to sustain the President's commitment to growing the U.S. ground forces that are needed to prevail in the current conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, sustain a high rate of military readiness, and prepare for a wide range of threats that face the nation now and in the years ahead, and to care for service members and their families. This request increases investments in five areas: prevailing in the Global War On Terror (GWOT); increasing ground combat capabilities; improving force readiness; developing future combat capabilities; completing improvements to wounded warrior treatment and care, and improving quality of life for service members and families.

The global threat posed by violent extremists is the preeminent danger of our time. To ensure freedom and security and advance peace and stability throughout the world, the United States must succeed in Iraq and Afghanistan and work with its allies and partners to prevail in the ongoing struggles against violent extremism.

In addition to the $515.4 billion request, the administration requested $70 billion as an emergency allowance for the GWOT. According to the President, details of the 2009

supplemental are supposed to be provided to Congress once the specific requirements of our troops on the ground are better known.

With all of the ongoing military responsibilities and requirements, America is still spending less than 5 percent of its GDP on defense. In WWII, America spent approximately 35 percent of GDP on defense. America spent 14 percent at the height of the Korean War, nearly 9 percent at the height of the Vietnam War, 6 percent under President Reagan in 1986, and 4.6 percent in 1991, the year of Gulf War I. Thus, the American Legion recommends that 4 percent of GDP be the floor for defense spending in times of peace and at least 5 percent spending in times of war.

Some of our priorities in the proposed $515.4 billion FY 2009 budget are to: increase both the short-term and long term active duty and national guard manpower and readiness levels; oppose the proposed increases in TRICARE health care fees; provide a 3.5% military pay raise; improve the DOD to VA transition to veterans health care; reform the military's physical and medical evaluation board systems; and eliminating the disabled veterans' tax. As a side note, the Senate Armed Services Committee has completed their mark up and have provided for a 3.9% military pay increase.

The FY 2009 budget provides $15.5 billion to increase army active end strength to 532,400, which includes an increase of 7,000 over the FY 2008 request. The Army plans to increase active end strength by a total of 65,000 to 547,400. This number is still short of our recommendation of 770,000 end strength as found in Resolution 44 "Increasing The Short And Long-Term Strength Of The Services", Reno, 2007.

Similarly, increasing the number of Marines in the operating forces is expected to reduce stress on the force. The FY 2009 budget provides $5.0 billion, an increase of $.9 billion over the FY 2008 enacted level, to increase Marine Corps end strength to 194,000, which includes an increase of 5,000 Marines over the FY 2008 request. To achieve three balanced Marine Expeditionary Force units, and to increase time at home station between deployments, the Marine Corps plans to increase end strength by a total of 27,000 to 202,000 by FY 2011. This welcomed increase meets our recommendations from the same resolution in which we urged that the Marine Corps be increased by 27,000.

These increases will not only bolster our nations' readiness, it will also help ease the strain on our already overstretched forces. This is especially true regarding quality-of-life for our service members, as they will have more time in between deployments. Also, this will ease the stress on the warriors and reduce some strain on military families.

Resolution 169 'Support For The War On Terrorism' states that we will fully support the President of the United States, the U.S. Congress and the men, women, and leadership of our armed forces as they are engaged in the GWOT. With this in mind we urge the Congress and the President to pass the DOD defense budget for 2009 and the 2008 supplemental, so that together we can win the war on terrorism.

90th National Convention and Pre-Convention Trip

90th National Convention will be held in Phoenix, Arizona during the period of August 22-28, 2008. The Pre-Convention trip will be to Luke AFB, on Friday, August 22, 2008. It is the home of the 56th Fighter Wing whose mission is to train the world's greatest F-16 fighter pilots and maintainers. Also, this unit is actively deploying mission-ready war fighters to OIF/OEF to ease the stress on U.S. Army and U.S. Marine Corps units. Invitations for the trip will be sent to all commission and council members in early June.

Brief on National Vital Interests

Deputy Director for National Security, Alec Petkoff, gave the Commission a brief on U.S. vital interests. The brief not only covered current engagements in the Global War On Terrorism but also included threats that could arise due to the availability (or unavailability) of resources, natural disasters, and pandemics.

Other region discussions concerning national security threats included challenges to U. S. interests by Russia, North Korea, Pakistan, India, Israel, Columbia and in a number of countries in Africa.

The National Security Commission thanks National Commander Martin F. Conatser and the National Executive Committee for their continuing support.

National Security—Foreign Relations Division

Responsibility for the daily conduct of the extensive work of The American Legion in defense and foreign policy is assigned to the National Security-Foreign Relations Division located in the Washington, D.C. office. The staff of the Division consists of: Philip Riley, Director; Alec Petkoff, Deputy Director; Joseph Grassi, Assistant Director; Tina T. Hines, Executive Secretary to the Director; and Roshawn Hyde, Secretary.

During the year, the combined Division has endeavored to not only fulfill its responsibility to implement the mandates and policies of The American Legion relating to national defense and foreign affairs, but to constantly expand and improve the ways and means of projecting our interest in these two important areas. The duties have consisted of maintaining liaison with the Departments of Defense, State, Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Homeland Security and Coast Guard; the Selective Service System, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Federal Emergency Management Agency, and others. These contacts related to a variety of matters, some of which involved members of the armed forces.

Liaison also is maintained with a host of military and quasi-military organizations with whom common goals are shared. Among these are: Reserve Officers Association; Air Force Association; Military Officers Association of America; Association of the U.S. Army; and the National Guard Association of the United States. Most importantly, the National Security-Foreign Relations Division provides a steady flow of information on defense matters to members of both commissions and the leadership at all levels of our organization.

Writing and delivering speeches; writing letters to Congress, the President and the Department of Defense; preparing reports; preparing and delivering Congressional testimony; coordinating foreign travel; and answering correspondence and telephone inquiries are all part of the duty of the staff. Additionally, promotional material is prepared and distributed to support the national programs in the national security field.

Continual use is made of all American Legion national publications, such as The Dispatch, The American Legion Magazine and The American Legion News Service, the principal means for distribution of factual information and program support in the fields of national defense and foreign affairs. The Internet is rapidly becoming the primary mode of communicating responses both within and outside The American Legion. National Security and Foreign Relations web sites are being developed.

Heroes to Hometowns

The American Legion has been spearheading the Heroes to Hometowns program originally established by the DOD. Edward Diaz of the Veteran's Affairs and Rehabilitation Division heads up the nationwide program helping service members transition from active-duty military service back to civilian life or Reserve status. Jerry Johnson, who falls under the direction of the National Security-Foreign Relations Division, is The American Legion's transition assistance representative working at Walter Reed Army Medical Center (WRAMC).

The American Legion has a Memorandum of Agreement with WRAMC that places Mr. Johnson at the hospital where he is available to assist wounded warriors in their transition. Mr. Johnson's pre-separation counseling includes; Physical Evaluation Board (PEB) and Medical Evaluation Board (MEB) counseling and representation, employment assistance, relocation assistance, education/training, health and life insurance, finance counseling, reserve affiliation, disabled veterans and transition assistance matters to include disability claims filed to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

The cases below (less names because of HIPPA concerns) are in addition to the transition counseling and many other things Mr. Johnson achieves to assist wounded or ill service members and the Warrior Transition Unit at WRAMC.

1. A Lieutenant Colonel was given an improper physical examination by the VA under the new DOD/VA Pilot Program. VA overlooked several medical conditions the soldier had listed. With coordination, we were able to convince the VA to reschedule examination for all remaining issues.

2. A female Major Diagnosed with TBI, PTSD, and Depression, earned her Combat Action Badge and Combat Medical Badge yet under stress developed severe incontinence. The Medical Evaluation Board (MEB) has found that this does not limit her ability to carry out her duties, even though she is now forced to wear depends pads (adult diapers) and still must change several times a day. This case is being developed and will go to the Physical Evaluation Board (PEB).
3. A Sailor stationed at Hampton Roads was denied a continuation on light duty by the MEB even after the doctors had recommended it. They plan to send him to a PEB which has offered 10% for his shoulder injury citing only pain on use, and not taking range of motion into consideration nor a separate diagnosis of severe depression with a Global Assessment of Functioning Score of 30. After coordination, this case will be scheduled for a new PEB in the future.
4. We are also working with a Soldier at Ft. Polk LA to have a proper MEB conducted. The soldier was in three separate IED Blasts and has earned 5 Purple Hearts. The soldier suffers from severe PTSD, TBI, and a severe back injury from an IED. The Board at Ft Polk only wants to rate the soldier for the back injury. We are preparing this case and coordinating on his behalf.

Committee Reports

The following reports, received with grateful appreciation, were prepared under the leadership and guidance of the following Committee and Council Chairmen: Michael E. Harris (VA)—Aerospace; Timothy M. Tetz (AZ)—Homeland Security and Civil Preparedness; Terence E. Nolan (FL)—Law and Order; Charles F. Moreland (FL)—Merchant Marine; Clayborn M. Lofton (IL)—Military Affairs; Douglas C. Haggan (FR)—National and Homeland Security Council; and William B. Goede (MN)—Naval Affairs.

AEROSPACE COMMITTEE
Michael E. Harris, Virginia, Chairman

During the past year, the Aerospace Committee continued its efforts to ensure that the United States does not become a second-rate power in modern air power or advanced aerospace technology. The authority for the Committee's efforts are the resolutions adopted at the 88th and 89th National Conventions. The effort to implement these positions required both administrative and legislative activities.

The Aerospace Committee's current resolutions clearly state The American Legion's full support for a fully funded Air Force and National Aeronautics and Space Administration. The Committee also emphasizes the importance of funding research. Research and development are what keeps the United States second-to-none in the air and in space. To be anything less than number one in these areas is a grave threat to our national security.

HOMELAND SECURITY AND CIVIL PREPAREDNESS COMMITTEE
Timothy M. Tetz, Arizona, Chairman

The Homeland Security and Civil Preparedness Committee supports full funding of the Department of Homeland Security and all associated agencies (to include the intelligence agencies). It also urges Congress to streamline the way in which all the agencies work together. The Committee also supports the rolls of the National Guard and the Coast Guard in homeland security.

Our resolution on *Citizen Corps*, urges Congress to fully fund Citizen Corps of which The America Legion urges its departments and posts to become active members in the Citizen Corps program.

Blood Donor Activities: The American Legion and The American Legion Auxiliary continue to be principal sources of blood donors in the United States. Through our vast network of Posts and Units organized into Department programs, Legionnaires and Auxiliary members continue to supply the blood needs of their own members, hospitalized veterans and through cooperative agreements, to patients in civilian

hospitals. During 2007-2008, a total of 94,395 pints of blood were donated by 35,232 American Legion donors.

National Commander Awards: To stimulate activities on the part of Departments and Posts, annual awards are made by the National Commander. During the period from July 1, 2007 through June 15, 2008, many Departments of The American Legion actively participated in the Blood Donor program. The winning Departments included Ohio, Wisconsin, Georgia, Oregon, Washington, Montana, and Alaska.

Each winning Department will receive a Certificate of Recognition signed by the National Commander and National Adjutant.

LAW AND ORDER COMMITTEE
Terence E. Nolan, Florida, Chairman

The Law and Order Committee has established The American Legion's position on how to best deal with and lower the crime rates in America. Its comprehensive focus includes holding parents responsible for fines imposed on youthful offenders, as appropriate.

Its position on the second amendment is that the Constitution guarantees the right of every law-abiding American citizen the right to keep and bear arms. The wisdom of this position seems to be finding resonance with the Supreme Court of the United States.

The Law and Order Committee continued this year to emphasize crime prevention by promoting the distribution of the Crime Prevention booklet across the nation. Liaison was maintained with the National Crime Prevention Coalition in order to keep the committee up-to-date on the latest developments in the field of crime prevention.

American Legion Departments, Posts and individual citizens have been overwhelmingly responsive to the Legion's Crime Prevention program. Requests for this booklet have come from state and local law enforcement officials; from senior citizen groups; from libraries; and from school children. This program is viable, ongoing and important to our National interest. The Law and Order Committee have continued to promote its goals in this area. Over 1,040 posts had crime resistance programs in 2007-2008.

The Law and Order Committee continues to consider a National Fire Fighter of the Year Award. A resolution was presented at the Spring 2008 NEC. The result was that it was held for study.

Fire Protection/Prevention: The National Executive Committee authorized the American Legion Fire Protection and Prevention programs. An information booklet on this subject was published in the spring of 1986, and was the basis of a slide show production. Over 1,032 Posts had Fire Prevention programs in 2007-2008.

Junior Law Cadet Program: The American Legion, in its efforts to better educate our young people in regard to laws which govern our society, and the agencies which enforce those laws, has developed several programs which feature law enforcement training. Many Departments, in cooperation with state law enforcement agencies, sponsored youth programs designed to acquaint the participants with methods of basic law enforcement.

National Law Enforcement Officer of the Year Program: Based on its published criteria, the Law and Order Committee annually selects Regional winners who contend for the prestigious honor of being selected as the Law Enforcement Officer of the Year. Police Chief Judy A. Bradshaw of Iowa was selected and will be presented with the twelfth awarding of the National Law Enforcement Officer of the Year at the 90th National Convention at Phoenix, Arizona.

MERCHANT MARINE COMMITTEE
Charles F. Moreland, Florida, Chairman

Since its founding, The American Legion has realized the importance of a strong American merchant marine and the indispensable role of this "fifth arm of defense." Today, the ever increasing dependence of the U.S. economy on raw materials from Third World countries and overseas areas demand renewed efforts to build up our merchant fleet.

Retaining American merchant marine independence in supplying our economy and the added demands of military sealift, spurred this Committee's support for expanding the Merchant Marine during the past year. The effort to inform its membership, the general public and the Congress of our views were guided by resolutions which were unanimously adopted by the 82nd National Convention.

Maritime Power: Throughout our history, maritime power has been a key element in the growth and strength of America. Moreover, the new sealift demands of the United States make the Merchant Marine even more imperative in our strategic planning. We must rebuild the merchant marine if we are to maintain free use of the seas in the face of potential challenges presented by regional conflicts.

MILITARY AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
Clayborn M. Lofton, Illinois, Chairman

During the year, the Military Affairs Committee has directed its major efforts toward maintaining a strong and modern United States armed forces that is second to none in the world. Our activities have been guided by the resolutions adopted by the 88th and 89th National Conventions and subsequent National Executive Committee actions. Wide dissemination was given those resolutions to Congressional, government, military and industry leaders to inform them of our mandates for supporting strong and modern military forces to include the Reserve Components. Bound volumes of the resolutions were presented to the President, Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The National Commander designated "Maintaining a Strong National Defense" and "Support for the War on Terrorism" as a legislative priority.

Through the Legislative Division, correspondence with Members of Congress and Congressional staff was initiated and followed through in other areas as follows: War on Terrorism; Military funeral honors; military absentee balloting; military health care; military commissaries and impact aid for military school children; military pay and allowances; and other military quality of life incentives, to include the concurrent receipt issue. Emphasis was also placed on revising the national military strategy so as to better match military resources with continued overseas deployments which are beginning to impact on the morale and well-being of the Armed Forces.

NATIONAL AND HOMELAND SECURITY COUNCIL
Douglas C. Haggan, France, Chairman

The Council continues to focus on our General Security issues to ensure a strong national and homeland defense. The Council is also looking at the issues of Conservation and Energy. Energy Independence will continue to grow as a national security concern.

Selective Service System: The American Legion, over the past year, has continued to support the Selective Service System by strongly advocating the maintenance of the Selective Service Registration Program as a viable preparedness measure.

Paul H. Griffith ROTC Trophy: Criterion for judging the winners of the Paul H. Griffith ROTC Trophy is based on Departments giving the greatest degree of support to ROTC programs to include the number of medals presented and Legion participation in award ceremonies this year. The winners of the Paul H. Griffith ROTC Trophy are the Departments of Alaska, Tennessee, Oregon, Puerto Rico, New York, Rhode Island, Hawaii, South Carolina, Montana, and Minnesota. The American Legion presented over almost 8,000 ROTC Medals to ROTC students in 2007-2008.

NAVAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
William B. Goede, Minnesota, Chairman

Guided by resolutions adopted at the 88th and 89th National Conventions, the Naval Affairs Committee has worked to strengthen the Navy and Marine Corps during the past year. It begins with the premise that sea lanes are the lifelines of America, both in peacetime and war. The United States is no longer hesitant about sending powerful signals to aggressors that it will not stand idly by and watch while they conduct violent takeovers of legitimate governments, particularly when those takeovers are contrary to

the national interests of the United States. This new diplomacy requires a mobile, flexible and capable and deployable United States Navy and Marine Corps.

PUBLIC RELATIONS COMMISSION
Robert L. Morrill, New York, Chairman
Joseph H. March, Maryland, Director

The Public Relations Commission communicates the organizational image, goals, programs and legislative positions of The American Legion to national, regional and specialized media, corporate America, and the public.

The "Four Pillars" branding campaign broadened its outreach this year as a multi-faceted effort to educate the public and internal audiences about how Legionnaires continue to serve today using the precepts provided by our founders after World War I. The campaign included three anchor ads in the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps Times worldwide editions. Media tools for American Legion posts included print ads, a television public service announcement, and window posters. Emblem sales offered 18" x 24" posters suitable for framing that served as a "vision" statement for post home entrances. The "Four Pillars" theme was used in press releases, speeches, media advisories and guest editorials. The mention of the "Four Pillars" of The American Legion was designed to inspire a broader understanding of the far reach of Legionnaires in American life.

Working with the National Security Commission, the Public Relations Commission wrote, produced and distributed the booklet, *Disaster Preparedness and Response for American Legion Posts*. The guide provided suggestions for posts to consider in getting involved in community disaster plans and the Citizen Corps. Media tools to promote participation were included in the document sent to all posts.

The Office of the Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs asked American Legion posts to coordinate "Freedom Walks" in September to commemorate those who died on and after the 9-11 terrorist attacks and to honor American veterans on or near the seventh anniversary this year. National Commander Conatser urged Dept. commanders to promote participation and spread the word in Legion publications.

In support of Res. 169 and National Commander Conatser's ***Operation Outreach*** initiative, PR staff produced a short briefing video and post guide to *Marketing The American Legion Support Services to Military Members and their Families*. Mailed to all department and district commanders, the package provided detailed information on setting up and presenting the briefings to local and state military commands—active duty, National Guard and Reserves.

The Public Relations Commission staff produced two new, digitally-mastered 30-second television spots promoting membership. Titled, *Why I Belong*, and *Active Duty Military*, a DVD containing both along with a suggested marketing guide offered suggestions on getting them placed with stations and cable systems as public service announcements as well as a number of other suggested audiences for consideration. The spots were produced for long term use and contain no dated material.

PR Tools

The tool chest of free public service media materials was expanded this year. They included Four Pillars information campaign materials, DVDs of radio and television spots, a video training package on *How to Conduct a Successful Blue Star Salute*, the *Public Relations Handbook*, news releases, planning and event guides and message points. PR tools were available for downloading from The American Legion website at www.legion.org. and included new suggested speeches for Memorial Day, Flag Day, and Veterans Day. The Veterans Media Data Bank continued to be a resource for news media.

The national web site made significant strides this past year. A compilation of new American Legion videos were placed on the new Legion TV page. An interactive blog site is being designed for use by Legion members. A site map was installed to make it easier to find items on the web. The goal of legion.org is to appeal to Legionnaires, potential members and the general public.

Media Relations

From its presence in the nation's capital, the National Public Relations Commission continued to facilitate major-media coverage of The American Legion's advocacy. National stories with American Legion input included: coverage of the national commander's testimony before the restored joint House and Senate Veterans Affairs Committees, Dole/Shalala disability commission recommendations, timely passage of VA budget including a formal request by Pres. Bush for $3.7 billion in "emergency" appropriations for VA in FY 2008, Resolution 169 and progress of the "surge," a call for swift passage of the Foreign Intelligence and Surveillance Act (FISA), defense of Marine recruiters to stay in Berkeley, Calif., against the city council's wishes. TAL received favorable coverage on our illegal immigration stance and the $500 grant program where the TAL partnered with the Coalition to Salute to America's Heroes to dispense grants to injured OIF/OEF veterans. Additional coverage includes how injured troops and their families are coping and how the American Legion is filling the gap through Heroes to Hometowns and the Family Support Network; Veterans Affairs claims backlog, VA staffing, and passage of a new GI Bill. CBS Sunday Morning produced a full segment on The American Legion's authorship of the original GI Bill and support of the current legislation. Coverage included ABC and CBS Radio, CNN, Fox News, C-SPAN, Congressional Quarterly, Roll Call, MSNBC, Cybercast News Service, *The Washington Post*, *National Journal*, the *Associated Press* and numerous others. In addition, hundreds of local and regional media queries were answered on a wide range of national security, veterans' affairs and American Legion program issues.

Awards

At the 48th Washington Conference, The National Commander's Public Relations Award was presented to CNN Anchor Lou Dobbs. His undiminished reporting on the dangers of illegal immigration coupled with his staunch support for U.S. troops and veterans were hallmarks of his nightly prime time cable news program, *Lou Dobbs Tonight*.

The American Legion Fourth Estate Award was presented at the 90th National Convention in Phoenix, Ariz., to Fox 26, KRIV-TV in Houston for its 48-minute documentary, *The Intrepid—Texas Lifeline*. The emotionally moving video chronicled the rehabilitation of severely wounded servicemembers who sustained traumatic physical and emotional injuries from combat in Iraq and Afghanistan and the tremendous support of family members and healthcare providers.

The Future

The National Public Relations Commission continues to explore and engage the communication potential of emerging technologies. In so doing, The American Legion will continue to be the preeminent voice of and for the American veteran in our nation.

***The American Legion Magazine* Commission**
Dennis J. Henkemeyer, Minnesota, Chairman
Jeff Stoffer, Indiana, Director

The American Legion Magazine projects more than $8.7 million in total advertising revenue to end the 2008 budget year. Lower-than-expected revenues are attributed to a soft advertising industry caused by a general downturn in the economy. Rising fuel prices have increased costs for paper and for distribution of the magazine. Paper has increased by $2 per hundredweight per quarter in 2008. A 2.7-percent increase in mailing costs through the U.S. Postal Service was sustained on May 12, 2008.

A reduction in the number of advertising pages has resulted in reduced manufacturing and distribution costs overall.

The editorial content continues to follow the credo, "The Magazine for a Strong America," with a balance of articles on patriotism, politics, national security, history, troop support, veterans advocacy and general interest. Among the editorial feature packages in 2008 have been "The Signature Wound of the War," a 15-page package on traumatic brain injury among returning troops and veterans from the war on terrorism, and "Landstuhl: Inside the World's War Hospital," on the critical work performed at the U.S. Military Hospital in Landstuhl, Germany, for which The American Legion raised

nearly $350,000 during the past year. Interview subjects have included VA Secretary James B. Peake, Senate Veterans Affairs Committee Chairman Daniel Akaka, and numerous troops at war. The magazine also produced a comprehensive report in its August issue titled "The Battle for a Better GI Bill."

The magazine looks forward to continued editorial and advertising quality and growth as membership in The American Legion evolves with a new generation of veterans from the Global War on Terrorism.

VETERANS AFFAIRS AND REHABILITATION COMMISSION

K. Robert Lewis, Connecticut, Chairman
Peter S. Gaytan, Maryland, Director

The following report covers the activities of the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission and its staff during the program year ending June 30, 2008.

The Eighty-ninth Annual National Convention in Reno, Nevada, and the Fall and Spring Meetings of the National Executive Committee approved certain positions expressed in resolutions submitted to those bodies through the Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation and the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission, respectively. The approved resolutions are set forth as follows:

2007 National Convention, Reno, Nevada

Resolution 111 (MI): Oppose Processing of Original Pension Claims by Department of Veterans Affairs Pension Maintenance Centers

Resolution 140 (MN): Extend VA Mortgage Protection Life Insurance to Service-Connected Veterans Who Are Permanently and Totally Disabled

Resolution 179 (Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation): Increase Beneficiary Travel Pay for Eligible Veterans

National Executive Committee Meeting
October 17-18, 2007

Resolution 28: Rounding Up Department of Veterans Affairs Benefits for 50 Cents or Higher
(Origin: Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission)

Resolution 29: Improvements to Implement a Seamless Transition
(Origin: Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission)

Resolution 30: The American Legion Policy on Traumatic Blast Injuries
(Origin: Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission)

National Executive Committee Meeting
May 7-8, 2008

Resolution 14: Claims Decision Letters
(Origin: Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission)

Resolution 15: VA to Adopt Computerized Tomography (CT) Scanning During Compensation and Pension (C&P) Exams as a Minimum Level of Diagnostic Testing for Respiratory Diseases
(Origin: Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission)

Resolution 16: Code Talkers Eligibility for Arlington National Cemetery
(Origin: Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission)

National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission Meetings

Members of the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission held four meetings during the period August 28, 2007, through May 8, 2008.

The Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission met on August 26, 2007, during the National Convention in Salt Lake City, Utah and a report was subsequently made to the National Executive Committee relative to the Commission's meeting.

A Subcommittee of the Executive Section of the VA&R Commission met at National Headquarters, October 15-16, 2007, for the purpose of considering those matters, which had previously been referred for study, and to discuss a broad range of

other veteran related matters. A report of that meeting was presented to the National Executive Committee on October 17, 2007.

The National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission met for the 85th consecutive year in Washington, DC, on March 31, 2008, in conjunction with the 48th Annual Washington Conference. The agenda included presentations by officials of the Department of Veterans Affairs and three panels on Claims, Seamless Transition and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) and Mental Health to discuss current matters relative to veterans' benefits and health care. The actions taken by the Commission were reported to the National Executive Committee on May 7, 2008, in Indianapolis, Indiana, during the Spring NEC Meetings.

A Subcommittee of the Executive Section of the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission met on May 5-6, 2008, at National Headquarters, Indianapolis, Indiana. Chairman K. Robert Lewis (CT) chaired the Subcommittee meeting and encouraged those present to continue their efforts on behalf of the nation's veterans. The Commission discussed resolutions, the VA 2009 Budget, Heroes to Hometowns Program, "System Worth Saving," VA Voluntary Service and other veteran-related matters. A report of this meeting was presented to the National Executive Committee on May 7, 2008.

Annual National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Conference

The 84th Annual Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation (VA&R) Conference was held at the Renaissance Hotel in Washington, D.C. on March 31, 2008. The agenda included presentations by officials of the Department of Veterans Affairs and three panels on Claims, Seamless Transition and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) and Mental Health to discuss current matters relative to veterans' benefits and health care. The interactive nature of the format allowed for information sharing between panelists and Commission members and amongst panel members themselves. The Missing in America Project (MIAP) continues to identify "cremains" (cremated remains) of veterans that have remained unclaimed and are languishing on the shelves of funeral homes across the country. Local Legionnaires can provide assistance in locating the abandoned cremains of veterans and working with the Patriot Guard riders and Department Service Officers, who can assist in expediting the verification process. The Heroes to Hometowns Program recently partnered with the Department of Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service (VAVS) Program by creating a Heroes to Hometowns Volunteer Coordinator position at VA Medical Center facilities across the country. These coordinators provide additional, in person contact with injured Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) veterans that we were unaware of and give The American Legion Heroes to Hometowns Networks an opportunity to assist these warriors and their families.

Prior to the Conference, for the twenty-seventh year, the Chairman and members of the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation staff met with Department Service Officers for the Annual Department Service Officers Seminar. Topics discussed included current VA programs and staff operations. Guest Speakers provided information on the VA Budget for FY 2009, Mandatory Funding, veteran employment issues, the Appeals Management Center, the Military Severely Injured Center/Heroes to Hometowns, correction of military records and discharge upgrades.

National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Legislative Activities

During the past year the staff of the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission was actively involved with legislative issues affecting the programs and services administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs. Activities included drafting legislation pursuant to the mandates adopted by the National Convention and National Executive Committee and presentation of such testimony at hearings scheduled before various Congressional Committees. Active liaison is maintained with the staff of The American Legion Legislative Commission, officials of the Department of Veterans Affairs, Congressional Committee staff and with elected Congressional officials.

The following is a synopsis of the Congressional hearings held from January 1, 2008 to July 31, 2008, on matters pertaining to the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission.

- On January 17, 2008, Joseph Wilson, Deputy Director of VA&R before the House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Health on Veterans' Health Care Legislation
- On January 24, 2008, Steve Smithson, Deputy Director of VA&R before the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee on the Findings and Recommendations of the Veterans' Disability Benefits Commission with Respect to the Current Disability Compensation System
- On January 29, 2008, Steve Smithson, Deputy Director of VA&R before the House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Disability Assistance & Memorial Affairs on The use of Artificial Intelligence to Improve VA's Claim Processing System
- On February 13, 2008, Peter Gaytan, Director, VA&R before the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee on Fiscal Year 2009 VA's Budget Request
- On February 14, 2008, Steve Smithson, Deputy Director of VA&R before the House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Disability Assistance & Memorial Affairs on Examining the Backlog and the VA's Claims Processing System
- On February 27, 2008, Joseph Wilson, Deputy Director of VA&R before the House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Health on Veterans Affairs Construction Authorization
- On February 28, 2008, Scott Sundsvold, Assistant Director of VA&R before the House Veterans Affairs Subcommittee on Health Treatment for Families: Support those who Support our Veterans
- On March 11, 2008, Joseph Wilson, Deputy Director of VA&R to the House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Health on Substance Abuse/Co Morbid Disorder" Comprehensive Solutions to a Complex Problem
- On April 1, 2008, Joseph Wilson, Deputy Director of VA&R before the House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Health on Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Treatment and Research: Moving Ahead toward Recovery
- On April 10, 2008, Steve Smithson, Deputy Director of VA&R before the House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Disability Assistance & Memorial Affairs on The Veterans Disability Benefits Claims Modernization Act of 2008
- On April 15, 2008, Joseph Wilson, Deputy Director of VA&R before the Hose Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Health on H.R. 2818 to Amend Title 38, USC to provide for the Establishment of Epilepsy Centers of Excellence in the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA); H.R. 5554, Veterans Substance use Disorders Prevention and Treatment Act of 2008; H.R. 5595, make our Veterans Smile Act of 2008; and H.R. 5730, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to display in each Prosthetic and Orthotic Clinic of the Department of Veterans Affairs in Injured and Amputee Veterans Bill of Right
- On May 7, 2008, Steve Smithson, Deputy Director of VA&R before the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee on Numerous Veterans' Legislation
- On May 21, 2008, Joseph Wilson Deputy Director of VA&R before the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee on Numerous Veterans' Legislation
- On May 22, 2008, Jacob Gadd, Assistant Director to VA&R before the House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs on Examining the Effectiveness of VBA Outreach Efforts.
- On June 5, 2008, Joseph Wilson, Deputy Director of VA&R to the House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Health on Numerous Veterans' Legislation.
- On June 12, 2008, Steve Smithson, Deputy Director of VA&R before the House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs on Numerous Veterans' Legislation.

- On June 26, 2008, Joseph Wilson, Deputy Director of VA&R to the House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Health on Various Draft Legislative Proposals.

Informational Services

To further strengthen the Department of Veterans Affairs' health care delivery system, The American Legion has several pamphlets and brochures: *The American Legion Guide To: Post Traumatic Stress Disorder—What Is It? Who Gets It? What Can Be Done?* This brochure is still very much in demand and is widely distributed. *The American Legion Guide: Women Veterans—Identifying Risks, Services, and Prevention.* This handbook is in high demand among our women veterans. *The Sourcebook for Military Personnel and Veterans* is also an extremely helpful publication. Another publication available upon request is: *What To Do Before A Veteran Dies.* The latest popular pamphlet is, *Welcome Home—Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom Veterans—Know Your Benefits.* Also, hot off the press is *When They Come Home—A Post Guide to Establishing A Successful "Heroes To Hometown" Program in your Community.* These handbooks and pamphlets *are* used as handouts at seminars, conferences, and Department Conventions. Supplies of these and other VA&R pamphlets are maintained and distributed upon request.

2008 Report On The National Cemetery Administration

The National Cemetery Administration (NCA) is charged with meeting the interment needs of the nation's veterans and their dependents. In 1862, Congress established 14 U.S. cemeteries for the burial of Union war dead. In 1973, with the transfer of jurisdiction of over 81 U.S. Army cemeteries to the Veterans Administration, the National Cemetery System (NCS) was created which then operated 21 hospital cemeteries. In 1998 the National Cemetery System was renamed the National Cemetery Administration.

The Department of Veterans' Affairs (VA) maintains 126 national cemeteries in 39 states and Puerto Rico, as well as 33 soldiers' lots and monument sites. More than 3 million Americans, including veterans of every war and conflict, from the Revolutionary War to the current Global War on Terrorism, are buried in VA's national cemeteries.

With the opening of the Idaho State Veterans Cemetery in 2005, there is now an operational national or state veterans cemetery in every state of the union as well as Puerto Rico and Guam.

NCA is operating this year under a Continuing Resolution. Its budget, therefore, is similar to its funding for FY 06. The National Cemetery Administration requests $363,000,000 in budget authority and 1,650 FTE for Operations and Maintenance in 2008. Workloads continue to grow at existing cemeteries, and funding for 13 FTE, contract maintenance personnel, and operating supplies is essential to maintain existing service levels, which is NCA's highest priority. NCA also requested $167 million for Major construction costs for FY 2008 and $24.4 million for Minor construction costs. Funding of $3,697,000 and 30 FTE are required to prepare for the activation of interment operations of six new national cemeteries. The 2008 budget estimate reflects a transfer of 34 FTE, and the related personnel funding, to VA's central Information Technology Systems account, which is managed and controlled by the Assistant Secretary for Information Technology, VA's Chief Information Officer.

The Veterans Millennium Health Care and Benefits Act of 1999 requires VA to establish six additional national cemeteries in areas of the United States in which the need for burial space is greatest. Those areas are: Atlanta, Georgia; Detroit, Michigan; Miami, Florida; Sacramento, California; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; and, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Fort Sill National Cemetery near Oklahoma City opened for interments in 2001, the National Cemetery of the Alleghenies near Pittsburgh, and the Great Lakes National Cemetery near Detroit opened in 2005, the Georgia National Cemetery, and the Sacramento Valley VA National Cemetery opened in 2006, the South Florida VA National Cemetery near Miami, opened in 2007. All six cemeteries have begun operations. Phase 1 construction has been completed in all cemeteries.

As directed by the National Cemetery Expansion Act of 2003, Public Law 108-109, action six new national cemeteries have been established to serve veterans in the areas of Bakersfield, California; Birmingham, Alabama; Columbia/Greenville, South Carolina; Jacksonville, Florida; Sarasota, Florida; and Southeastern Pennsylvania. These cemeteries are expected to begin operations in late 2008 and early 2009 and will provide service to about 1 million veterans.

State Cemetery Grants Program

In addition to building, operating, and maintaining national cemeteries, VA also administers the State Cemetery Grants program, which provides grants to states for up to 100 percent of the cost of establishing, expanding, or improving state veterans cemeteries. Increasing the availability of state veterans cemeteries is a means to provide a burial option to those veterans who may not have reasonable access to a national cemetery.

VA has awarded grants totaling more than $258 million to establish, expand or improve 63 veterans cemeteries in 35 states, Guam and Northern Mariana Islands. There are 65 operational cemeteries. In 2006, state veterans cemeteries performed 22,434 interments of veterans and eligible family members. For FY 2008 NCA requested $32 million for the State Cemetery Grants program.

NCA Performance Ratings

In a report released in 2007, VA's national cemeteries received the highest rating ever achieved by a public or private organization in a nationwide customer satisfaction survey. The survey was the 2006 American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI). VA scored a rating of 96 out of a possible 100 points. This is one points higher than the last survey in 2005, when VA's national cemeteries also ranked number one in customer satisfaction. In addition on ACSI's index for "user trust," In 2001, VA achieved a rating of 97 out of a possible 100 points. This indicates that respondents are exceptionally willing to say positive things about VA's national cemeteries.

For FY 2008, NCA reported that 81 percent of the veteran population was within 75 miles of a national veterans cemetery with its strategic goal being 90 percent. It also reported that 96 percent of respondents to its survey rated the quality of service as excellent and 99 percent of respondents rated the cemetery's appearance as excellent.

Headstones and Markers

VA furnishes headstones and markers for the graves of eligible persons in national, state, other public, and private cemeteries. VA also furnishes memorial headstones and markers bearing the inscription "In Memory of" to memorialize eligible veterans whose remains were not recovered or identified, were buried at sea, donated to science, or cremated and scattered. VA furnishes headstones and markers for national cemeteries administered by the Department of the Army and the Department of the Interior, as well as for state veterans cemeteries, and contracts for all columbaria niche inscriptions at Arlington National Cemetery. In 2007 VA processed more than 343,000 applications for headstones and markers for placement in national, state, other public, or private cemeteries. Since 1973 VA has furnished nearly 9.3 million headstones and markers for the graves of veterans and other eligible persons.

Presidential Memorial Certificate

A Presidential Memorial Certificate (PMC) is an engraved paper certificate, bearing the signature of the current President, to honor the memory of honorably discharged deceased veterans. Family members and loved ones may request a certificate, and more than one may be provided. Only proof of eligible service is required. In 1962, President John F. Kennedy began the practice of issuing Presidential Memorial Certificates as a way for the President of the United States, on behalf of all Americans, to express appreciation for the service and sacrifice of honorably discharged deceased veterans. All subsequent Presidents have continued the program. Five million PMCs have been issued since the National Cemetery Administration became responsible for administration of the

program in 1987. In fiscal year 2007 VA provided more than 411,200 PMCs to the loved ones of deceased veterans.

National Shrine Commitment

Maintaining cemeteries as National Shrines is one of NCA's top priorities. This Commitment includes the establishment of standards of appearance for national cemeteries that are equal to the standards of the finest cemeteries in the world and involves raising, realigning and cleaning headstones and markers to renovate gravesites. Delivered to Congress in 2002, the National Shrine Commitment Report identified 928 projects for repairs, alterations and improvements. The rows of pristine, white headstones that are set at the proper height and correct alignment provide the vista that is the hallmark of many VA national cemeteries. In 2007 VA collected data that showed that 76 percent of headstones and/or markers in national cemeteries are at the proper height and alignment; 83 percent of headstones, markers, and niche covers are clean and free of debris or objectionable accumulations; and 90 percent of gravesites in national cemeteries had grades that were level and blended with adjacent grade levels.

Annual Report Of The Medical Consultant

Dr. Ann Marie Gordon joined the Staff as the Senior Medical Consultant on September 18, 2000. She is a practicing physician with experience in internal medicine and occupational and environmental medicine.

The Medical Consultant acts as a source of medical and technical knowledge to the Appeals Representatives at the Appeals and Special Claims Unit at the Board of Veterans' Appeals and the Claims Representatives at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Regional Office, Washington, D.C. These representatives discuss cases during case development and submit inquiries to the Medical Consultant with the VA claims folder for review and evaluation as to the appropriate course of action in presenting the case to the either the Board of Veterans Appeals, the VA Regional Office, or the Director, Compensation and Pension Service. The Medical Consultant after reviewing and evaluating the case may (1) discuss the case with the representative and/or (2) prepare a statement explaining the case including providing medical references and a medical opinion relative to the issues.

The American Legion Service Officers in the field also submit difficult cases for review and evaluation to the Medical Consultant. This is accomplished by requesting that the case be called-in for an administrative review or by submitting copies of appropriate portions of the VA claims folder. The Medical Consultant responds directly to the Service Officers.

The Medical Consultant is an advisor to the Director, National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission on Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical matters, as well as, the attorneys at NVSLP. Each consultation is usually on an informal basis and discussed among several key VA&R staff members.

A laptop personal computer has been purchased for the Medical Consultant's use to enable her to keep in touch with daily operations and to present lectures at various schools of training.

During the past year, the Medical Consultant has discussed medical questions with individual Appeals Representatives and Claims Representatives for about 216 cases. She has reviewed 60 cases and submitted written reports on 36 of these cases. The research and medical opinions provided by the Medical Consultant have resulted in numerous grants and remands for additional development.

Additionally, the Medical Consultant has conducted four medical training sessions for the Appeals and Special Claims Unit staff this year and has also conducted presentations at the Indianapolis Department Service Officer Schools and the Washington DC Service Officer training.

Government Life Insurance Activities

The United States Government, acting through the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA), directly administers four life insurance programs for veterans of the World War I, World War II and Korean War periods, as well as two special on-going programs for

veterans in certain service-connected disabled categories. These programs are administered under the titles of United States Government Life Insurance (USGLI) for World War I era veterans, National Service Life Insurance (NSLI) for World War II era, Korean War era and Service-Disabled veterans (SDVI—Service-Disabled Veterans Insurance), and Veterans Mortgage Life Insurance (VMLI) for totally disabled veterans who are approved grants for specially adapted housing purposes by the DVA. The USGLI and NSLI programs currently have some 1.4 million policies in force as of May 31, 2008, with a combined life insurance coverage of some $ 15.47 billion dollars. Dividend distributions for participating policies in these programs amount to approximately $350 million dollars annually. NSLI processes some 100,000-120,000 claims annually in addition to a very high number of other policy transactions as the program's policies are individual in nature and are composed of diverse plans of insurance. The VMLI program insures some 2317 veterans with approximately $164 million dollars of coverage in force. Currently these programs are operated out of the VA Insurance Center in Philadelphia, PA. Recently, the National Association of Insurance Commissioners approved the use of the 2001 Commissioners Standard Mortality Table as the new mortality standard for life insurance. Since the law allows the VA Secretary to set the mortality table for the VMLI program, VA began using the 2001 table, rather than the previous 1958 table, effective October 1, 2006. This has reduced premiums for the program an average of 37 percent.

In addition to the life insurance programs directly operated by the DVA, the Department also has supervisory authority and responsibility over two other major government life insurance program issues. These are the Servicemember's Group Life Insurance (SGLI) and Veterans Group Life Insurance (VGLI) programs. These programs have provided insurance protection, since 1965 and 1970 respectively, to active duty and reserve military personnel (SGLI), spouses and dependents, and to separated veterans and to retired and separated reservists (VGLI). The SGLI and VGLI programs are administered by the Prudential Insurance Company at a center in Roseland, NJ (the Office of Servicemembers Group Life Insurance—OSGLI), with all administration and other program expenses being paid by the policyholders from a portion of their insurance premiums, save for the extra hazard mortality experience of wartime periods when general tax revenues take over. These insurance issues are solely group Term insurance without dividends, disability benefits, or diverse types of permanent plans with equity values such as the individual policy contracts contained in the DVA's NSLI program. On May 31, 2008 SGLI provided some 5.44 million active duty and reserve personnel, spouses and dependents with more than $ 1.01 trillion dollars of life insurance coverage, while VGLI covered some 431,182 veterans with insurance in excess of $ 54.5 billion dollars. Of these policy accounts the OSGLI center in Livingston, NJ maintains only VGLI, with the various military service departments maintaining the rest. The OSGLI center processes between 2500-3500 death claims annually with minimal other transactions due to the very limited nature of the coverage as group term insurance only. Currently, claims arising from military operations in the Middle East and Central Asia are processed in less than two business days from the time the last required document is received at OSGLI. In 1992 VGLI became lifetime renewable instead of the single five year term previously in effect. The amount of VGLI a veteran can hold cannot be in excess of the amount of SGLI he or she held in service. In 1997 Retired Reservists, instead of being insured under the SGLI program until age 60 or the receipt of their first retired pay check, were merged into the VGLI program to allow them the option of retaining their coverage as long as desired. Reservists leaving reserve service without the amount of time needed for full retirement may now also be covered under VGLI if desired. In addition, veterans are now permitted to convert their SGLI/VGLI insurance, in partial amounts at different times or in whole, to a private plan of insurance with a participating commercial insurance carrier as they leave service, or at any time they are in the VGLI program, without having to wait a stipulated period as was previously the case. Effective April 1, 2001 those entering active duty were automatically covered for a full $250,000 under SGLI as authorized by Public Law 106-419, and members of the Individual Ready Reserve who have volunteered for assignment to a mobilization category were also made eligible for SGLI coverage under that law. . In addition, Public

Law 107-14 authorized other program enhancements to the SGLI program, effective November 1, 2001, which allows up to $100,000 in spousal coverage on a paid premium basis, and provides $10,000 free life insurance coverage for a member's children. These dependent coverages still cannot, at present, be carried over into the VGLI program and cannot be doubled in the case of both parents being in service. However, while the member's SGLI is in force, spousal coverage can be converted to a private plan of insurance with a participating commercial company upon written application in the same manner as a VGLI policy may be so converted. The American Legion insurance unit presented supporting testimony on these legislative changes as they improved greatly the range of financial options available to veterans in these programs, not only at the time of their separation from service, but in later years as their life situation changed as well, and as they permit the SGLI and VGLI programs to more effectively compete with private insurers who have the privilege of excluding applicants as desired and who may, in the case of certain military associations, be co-located on military bases.

New SGLI legislation was enacted in May 2005. Public Law (PL) 109-13, the Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act for Defense, the Global War on Terror, and Tsunami Relief of 2005, was signed into law May 11, 2005 and contained provisions for increases in the Dept. of Defense (DOD) Death Gratuity, for increases in the amount of maximum coverage under the Servicemembers Group Life Insurance (SGLI) program, and for a new SGLI group policy rider for Traumatic Injury Protection. The SGLI Traumatic Injury Protection Rider became effective December 1, 2005 and currently provides over $226 billion dollars in traumatic injury coverage. Effective September 1, 2005 regular SGLI coverage was automatically increased to $400,000 from the previous $250,000, and is the current maximum amount of SGLI coverage permitted. Servicemembers electing lesser amounts must do so in $50,000 increments. Spousal and dependent coverage was not impacted by the legislation. The Act specified certain spousal and beneficiary notification requirements for members changing beneficiary designations or electing lesser amounts of coverage. The Act also provided for the group traumatic injury insurance rider to be attached to the group coverage provided under SGLI, the premium cost of which to the insured was to be $1.00 per month. This injury protection ranges from $25,000 to $100,000 in accordance with a disability schedule which has been published and which is composed of a list of physical traumatic injuries involving significant loss of use of physical or mental abilities caused by such injury. Coverage under this rider began December 1, 2005. A retroactive provision for qualifying injuries (Iraq and Afghanistan service) from October 7, 2001 to the effective date was also provided for. The Secretary of Defense certifies to the SGLI center the individuals qualifying for retroactive payments. Servicemembers must be covered by SGLI to have this rider, and for members insured under SGLI the rider is mandatory. Rider coverage ceases on midnight on the date the member separates from the uniformed service. No retroactive period was contained in the legislation for the $150,000 SGLI increase, but this was addressed through the Dept. of Defense's Death Gratuity benefit instead, as insurance underwriting requirements did not permit new coverage increases to be applied retroactively.

On September 30, 2005 the SGLI enhancement Act of 2005 (PL 109-80) was enacted which made permanent the increase in the maximum allowable SGLI regular coverage from $250,000 to $400,000, and which included various spousal notification requirements for beneficiary changes. This last requirement, for an insured married at the time of making a beneficiary election, that the Secretary of Defense notify the insured's spouse should the insured at any time take action to either reduce the amount of coverage or to name a beneficiary other than the insured's spouse, did not meet with the support of The American Legion. It has historically been the belief of The American Legion that this type of fundamental insurance benefit is a special contract between the service member (or veteran in the case of veteran's coverage) and the federal government, and is a matter personal and sacrosanct to those who serve (or have served) the nation in uniform, and that an insured's beneficiary information should not be released to third parties without the consent of the insured. Such spousal notification, however, does not affect a member's right to elect or change his/her beneficiary designation or amount of SGLI coverage at any time.

Further recent legislative changes in the SGLI program included PL 109-163, enacted January 6, 2006, which authorized the payment of an allowance to service members serving in Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom for an amount equal to the premium of $150,000 of SGLI coverage, affording them $150,000 of free SGLI coverage provided they did not decline such coverage, and PL 109-233 enacted June 15, 2006. PL 109-233 extends the duration of SGLI coverage from one to two years for service members who are totally disabled upon the date of their separation from active duty or reserve status, effective upon the date of enactment for members released before October 1, 2011. For members released on or after October 1, 2011 this period is reduced to eighteen months. Service members who were released within one year of the enactment date were also eligible for this extended coverage period. This legislation also provided the Secretary of Veterans Affairs the sole authority to determine the period of time between the date of a traumatic event and the date a member suffers a qualifying loss for all losses under the Traumatic SGLI (TSGLI) program. The law also removed the previously existing statutory requirement that quadriplegia, paraplegia, or hemiplegia occur within one year of the traumatic injury. For all losses this period has now been extended to two years.

The American Legion's National VA&R insurance unit at the Philadelphia, PA center had initiated and worked with the DVA insurance management staff to provide added protection to those veterans leaving service in a totally disabled and life threatening status, to attempt to ensure these veterans do not lose coverage (as happens periodically) due to misunderstanding certain requirements of the SGLI to VGLI transfer system stemming from inconsistencies in the manner these are explained to them as they out process from various military facilities, or failing to respond in a timely manner to initial insurance invitations and premium billings, etc. Recommended safeguards included such items as automatic coverage and premium deduction start-ups from military retired pay or DVA disability compensation, policy liens for past due premiums, and closer contacts between the SGLI/VGLI administering office and veterans in this category. DVA insurance management completed a staff study through the military service departments, the Defense Manpower Data Center, DPC Austin and OSGLI on the methods such individuals can be identified, and has created an Outreach program to contact by telephone and with additional letters veterans in this class, and advise them of their VGLI options as needed. Currently, separating service members who have been discharged on disability retirement at a rating of 50% to 100% by their branch of service are contacted. Of those contacted by phone, some 83% apply for either the SGLI Disability Extension (free coverage for two years) or VGLI coverages. An on-line SGLI/VGLI manual is available to all military out processing centers and veterans to ensure these have immediate access to correct information concerning the requirements for veterans being separated to convert their in-service SGLI coverage to VGLI coverage, and in February 2004 a detailed Insurance Needs Calculator was added to the VA Insurance website, for veterans to use to assess their life insurance needs and compare VGLI coverage to other insurance options. The Calculator includes VA, Social Security and military benefits in the final assessment. VGLI policyholders also have the ability now to access their policy information through the VA website as well, using passwords and policy information. In 2002-2003 both VGLI and SGLI premiums were reduced; VGLI an overall 40% from 1998 levels, and a 19% reduction for SGLI premiums effective July 1, 2003 with a simultaneous reduction in SGLI spousal rates as well. Effective July 1, 2006, however, a slight increase in SGLI basic premium rates from the previous rate of 6.5 cents per month per $1,000 of coverage to one of 7 cents per month per $1,000 took place due to program costs. Also effective July 1, 2006 premium rates for dependent SGLI coverage were reduced for all age groups by an average of 10%, reflecting a better than forecasted claims experience in the Family SGLI program portion. A further premium rate decrease will take effect on July 1, 2008 for both the SGLI (to $26 monthly for full coverage from $28 monthly) and VGLI programs (for veterans aged 30 to 64). For all programs the Department of Veterans Affairs administers and/or supervises some 7.3 million life insurance policies for military personnel, spouses, dependents and veterans, with a total in-force coverage of over $ 1.31 trillion dollars.

In the SDVI program many disabled veterans annually continue to take advantage of the new supplemental Service-Disabled insurance provided in the legislative changes of 1992, whereby an additional $20,000 of coverage may be purchased by those veterans having a basic Service-Disabled policy and who become totally disabled before age 65. The American Legion VA&R insurance office continues to maintain a special notification system for those veterans who choose The American Legion as their representative and who are applying for Service-Disabled Veterans Insurance (SDVI) coverage to ensure they are informed as early as possible of these additional benefits. This is particularly needful as the current DVA system may, in certain areas such as during the time period while a disability compensation claim is awaiting adjudication in a VA Regional Office, be faulty in communicating information on benefits such as disability premium waivers and supplemental coverage to veterans who may qualify for it and who may very well be in life threatening (and therefore time constrained) conditions. A special activity was initiated in this benefit area in 2004 and continued into 2005 by the VA Compensation and Pension Service to address concerns that many service-connected disabled veterans were not being informed enough on the program. A mailing on SDVI notification was included with the annual cost-of-living increase letters, reaching approximately 2.3 million veterans, resulting in many thousands of new applications being received, and continuing to be received, from both veterans directly and through DSO/VSO offices nationwide. To assist in this project, SDVI applications have also been made available on the VA's Insurance website through an Autoform program whereby applications can be made, saved, printed for mailing or submitted electronically as desired. This new tool became active March 5, 2004.

The DVA Insurance Center continues their on-going effort to provide better service and program enhancements to their veteran policyholders by periodically updating their computer and communication systems, both as part of the overall DVA area networks and through the Internet, and placing ever more records and transaction activities, previously done on paper, into their on-line computer systems. Beginning in Summer 2001, the DVA Insurance Center accelerated a planned program of transforming their insurance operation into a wholly computerized system no longer utilizing paper insurance files, but using imaging technology instead to replace paper files with electronic ones. The impetus for this was to create space in the Philadelphia Regional Office and Insurance Center for one of the three regional Pension Centers which have been organized to assist in the reduction of the national backlog in compensation and pension cases. The new insurance system, known as VICTARS (Veterans Insurance Claims Tracking and Response System) permits on-screen display of all file documents that would previously have been maintained in a paper insurance folder, and gives VA insurance specialists the ability to input and process claims, transactions and responses to inquiries with far greater speed than any earlier system used to date, and to maintain a full history of such in the policyholder's new electronic file. In connection with this new software package, VA employees have been provided with large screen display monitors and updated capacity high speed computers required by the new programming. Currently, over 6 million images are available to insurance specialists via their desktop computers. All previous paper insurance folders (over 2.5 million) have now been retired to a nearby Federal Records Center, but are still available for recall as may be needed on certain cases. This accomplishment has resulted in savings of some $1 million annually. Insurance services are further augmented by automated assistance and call routing facilities added to a toll free number (an expansion of the VA's Insurance Center telephone unit has been completed to handle an increasing work load), by acceptance of faxed correspondence, claims, and transaction requests, through responding to inquiries and transaction requests received at the VA insurance Internet address (http://www.insurance.va.gov/), and by providing comprehensive insurance information through links to the VA's Home Page and VA's insurance Home Page. Additionally, in accordance with the federal initiative to have all or most government disbursements done by Direct Deposit (Electronic Transfer of Funds) the VA Insurance Center has completed actions for the direct deposit of monthly insurance installment awards to beneficiaries and those policyholders receiving monthly annuities. All monthly insurance award/annuity payments are by electronic transfer of funds to these insurance payees unless otherwise

requested by the payee. In this vein, all policy loan, dividend refund and cash surrender payments are also sent to an insured's bank account if VA benefits are or were on direct deposit, or if an insured is paying premiums by automatic deduction from a checking account, unless requested otherwise. New settlement claim forms for death settlements contain blocks for beneficiaries to include bank information should they wish insurance settlement checks transferred to them electronically. As with the VGLI program, NSLI policyholders may now also access their account information through the VA's insurance website with a PIN number, and perform certain transactions such as policy loan applications. For VMLI there is now also an on-line Insurance Needs Calculator, similar to that for VGLI, available as well.

Major insurance initiatives are now pending in Congress for 2008.

S. 1315, a Bill which has passed the Senate and, as of July 1, 2008, is awaiting action by the House, is a proposal to create a new SDVI program for service-connected veterans. This program would provide up to $50,000 Term life insurance to a strictly limited group of veterans. A veteran would have to be in good health except for service-connected disabilities, and would have to apply for this insurance within ten years of discharge from active duty, and within two years of his or her last new service-connected rating. The current SDVI programs would remain as is, but no amount of coverage greater than $50,000 could be held in any combination. For those who may elect this coverage, the amount of insurance in force under the new program would be reduced at age 70 to 20% of the previous face value held, but would then be in a paid-up insurance status. Premium rates for this issue would be based on the 2001 Commissioners Standard Ordinary Basic Table of Mortality, rather than the 1941 Table in use for the present SDVI program. Such veterans recently insured under the current SDVI program, and still being able to meet the SDVI eligibility period and good health requirements, would be allowed a one year period to switch their coverage to this issue if so desired. The American Legion, while generally viewing an expansion of SDVI benefits very favorably, opposed the strict eligibility periods cited as being totally arbitrary and too limiting in fairly providing the long needed enhancement to the present SDVI program. Such eligibility criteria would, by definition, exclude the largest number of service connected veterans, and do so at the time when they are most in need of adequate insurance protection for their beneficiaries. The American Legion also presented testimony that this provision should apply to Gratuitous insurance as well for otherwise qualifying veterans as a matter of equity. The legislation also provides for an increase in the VA's regular Supplemental Service-Disabled insurance program to $30,000 maximum coverage from the $20,000 presently allowed. The American Legion presented testimony here that all or part of a coverage increase for the regular SDVI program should rather apply to the basic SDVI coverage which, unlike Supplemental coverage, has a disability waiver of premiums provision. This would benefit far more veterans in need of insurance protection who are unable to afford the high cost of Supplemental SDVI premiums, and who subsequently must forego such increased protection.

S.1315 additionally provides an increase in Veterans Mortgage Life Insurance (VMLI) to a maximum coverage level of $150,000 ($200,000 after January 1, 2012) from the current maximum of $90,000, and expands VMLI eligibility to active duty members who otherwise meet the programs disability requirements of meeting qualifications for a disability specially adapted housing grant by VA. In the Servicemembers Group Life Insurance (SGLI) area the legislation would permit SGLI coverage for certain members of the Individual Ready Reserve who are subject to immediate call-up, and would expand the Traumatic Injury SGLI (TSGLI) retroactive period of October 1, 2001 to November 30, 2005 to all service members who suffered a qualifying loss during that period, rather than only those so injured in Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom.

Lastly, several further legislative proposals, in Committee as of June 2008, are S.2946 for the inclusion of stillborn children in the SGLI dependent coverage program, and S.2965. S.2965 would require VA and DOD to conduct a study of not longer than six months duration to determine the feasibility of adding severe and acute cases of PTSD to the qualifying schedule of losses under the TSGLI program. The American Legion presented support for this initiative, and commented that such cases should include those

veterans PTSD service-connected in the 50%-70% range, and with a Global Assessment of Functioning score of 50 to 40 or less.

Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Service Units:
DVA Insurance Center at Philadelphia, PA and St. Paul, MN DMC Center

The American Legion Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Commission Staff at Philadelphia consists of a Chief of Insurance Activities/Insurance Representative and one Secretary. An associated office at the St. Paul center has one Supervisor/VA&R Representative and one Secretary.

The Chief of Insurance Activities and the Insurance Representative must have a thorough knowledge of government life insurance laws, regulations, and transaction and adjudication procedures, and be able to analyze them correctly in order to properly represent insured veterans and their beneficiaries. The Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Director and other interested personnel are kept informed on policy matters, changes in DVA administrative procedures and all related areas to include new legislative initiatives. NSLI re-open periods for service-disabled and non-service disabled veterans with increased face value coverages continues to be an American Legion legislative effort. Coordination has also been effected with the DVA Pension Center management in both Philadelphia and St. Paul for the creation of a system whereby the national VA&R staff personnel can process pension inquiries from Department and Veterans Service Officers as they may require.

Daily operations involve a full range of insurance services to include the representation of insured veterans and their beneficiaries, the review of insurance case files and supporting evidence and Claims files as required, the furnishing of status reports and account assistance to insureds, beneficiaries, accredited field representatives and DVA adjudicative and accounts personnel, close liaison with Department Service Officers and other field personnel to ensure prompt and complete service, and the input to, review of, and where necessary the correction of DVA actions and records both on cases involving disability and death claims, and on those involving any of a wide variety of insurance accounting and financial transactions that occur on active and matured accounts. General insurance information and guidance is provided to field service officers across the United States, along with assistance in the preparation of insurance appeals and claims submittals. An insurance guidebook for Veterans Service Officers was composed by the Philadelphia insurance unit to assist DSO/VSO personnel in identifying insurance needs and processing insurance applications and claims for their clients, and this has been distributed, beginning in April 2007, to hundreds of American Legion and affiliated veterans service offices nationwide. Coordination with DVA executive and program management personnel is conducted on both individual cases and broad policy/administrative matters. A telephone fax capability added to the Philadelphia office has greatly expedited claims processing by enabling rapid receipt of documents needed to complete transactions and claims that would otherwise be significantly delayed due to mailing times, particularly in emergency cases. The Philadelphia office has been heavily involved in the large increase in SDVI applications and related appeals cases for 2004 and 2005, occasioned by the mass mailing of SDVI notifications to virtually all service-connected veterans mentioned earlier. Information, staff analysis, and testimony for the recent major legislative insurance benefit increases, described above, was provided to the Director, National VA&R Commission for presentation to Congress on these issues.

The Philadelphia office is provided with newer computer systems for both internal operations and to interface with the DVA networks and the Internet. These are operational and have Internet and VA Benefits Delivery Network access. The St. Paul office provides similar operations, staff representation and nationwide veteran's service in the field of DVA Debt Management operations (The DVA's Debt Management Center is located at the VA St. Paul center), which now comprise its main mission as transfer of all insurance accounts to Philadelphia has been completed, and in casework involving the VA Pension Center also located at the St. Paul facility.

For the period July 1, 2007 to June 30, 2008 the following activities of The American Legion's Philadelphia and St. Paul offices were reported:

Insurance & Debt Management:

Letters Received 8,761
Letters Written 9,502
Disability Insurance Claims 1,871
Death Insurance Claims 2,065
Insurance Folders Reviewed 4,905
In-Force Insurance Policy Accounts Reviewed 5,000
New Insurance Accounts—SDVI 2,910
Telephone Contacts 6,409
Personal Contacts 4,601
Submittal Memorandums & Reports 3,170
DVA Case Responses Processed: Insurance and Debt Management Cases 15,872
*Live Claims, Evidence and Other Submittals Presented 12,399
**Excludes death claims and includes policy transactions such as dividend, loan and premium actions, plan conversions, cash surrenders, refunds, beneficiary changes, disability claims with related medical and legal evidence, Wills, estate documents, check tracers, master record data changes, disability questionnaires processing general inquiries, and debt management case supporting documents.*

Debt Management/St. Paul Pension Center
(DMC = Debt Management Center)

DMC Original Claims: 2,041
DMC Case Audits: 3,531
DMC Debt Waiver Cases: 3,132
Pension Center Inquiries/Transactions: 3,000
Pension Center VSO Responses Processed: 22,948

Claims Service

The National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission provides assistance and representation to all veterans and their survivors in claims and appeals before the Department of Veterans Affairs, as well as, appeals for upgrade of military and naval discharges and the correction of military and naval records through a staff of seventeen Appeals Representatives.

Within the Table of Organization, the Deputy Director for Claims Service is responsible for the activities of the Board of Veterans' Appeals Unit, the Military Review Board Unit, Appeals Management Center and Washington Regional Office staff.

Cases at the Board of Veterans' Appeals Unit are reviewed and written briefs are submitted on the appellant's behalf or a personal hearing is conducted before a Veterans Law Judge of the Board of Veterans' Appeals with the appellant. The Board of Veterans' Appeals Unit consists of an Office Manager, a Senior Medical Consultant, three secretaries, and thirteen Appeals Representatives. The staff has been augmented by accredited American Legion service officers from across the country participating in The American Legion/National Veterans Legal Services Program Veterans Law Internship Program. This intense veterans law training program provides hands-on education for interested service officers.

Two Appeals Representatives and one secretary are assigned to provide claims service to individuals residing under the jurisdiction of the Washington, DC VA Regional Office (WRO). The WRO's jurisdiction is currently limited to only those residing within the city limits of the District of Columbia. In addition to our two representatives at the WRO, an additional appeals representative works exclusively on remands that are processed at the Appeals Management Center located at the WRO.

The Military Review Boards Unit reviews records prepares written briefs and also appears at personal hearings with an applicant before the Discharge Review Board and the Board for the Correction of Military or Naval Records of the various armed services. One Supervisor and two Appeals Representatives are assigned to this unit.

During the first 9 months of FY 08, the Board of Veterans' Appeals rendered a total of 31,663 decisions, which included 5,883 (18.6%) with American Legion representation. These decisions consisted of 1,335 (22.7%) approvals, 2,187 (37.2%) remands, 2,213 (37.6%) denials, and 148 (2.5%) others. The last category includes administrative withdrawals, vacated cases, deaths, and dismissals.

The Special Claims Service of the Unit reviewed and disposed of cases involving requests by Department Service Officers of The American Legion in obtaining Administrative Review by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Central Office, Compensation and Pension Service.

The Board of Veterans' Appeals in conjunction with the VA Central Office has placed increased emphasis in correction of Duty to Notify and Duty to Assist provisions, inclusive of adequacy of VA examinations (Compensation and Pension examinations). As of September 8, 2008 there were 4,168 American Legion represented cases in the Appeals Management Center (AMC) system. These cases have priority in adjudication. The original appeals backlog at the Board is such that the Board is currently adjudicating appeals with docket dates on or before November 2006. Our production emphasis is necessitated to Board and Court remands primarily, with completion of earlier dated original appeals as able.

Board of Veterans Appeals

This report reflects the activities of The American Legion's Board of Appeals and Special Claims Unit (Appeals Unit) for the period July 31, 2007, through July 31, 2008. The Office Manager of the Appeals Unit during this period was Samuel Gilmore.

During the past twelve months, our Appeals Representatives reviewed a total of 5,560 cases. Included in this total were 137 (American Legion represented) personal hearings conducted at the Board of Veterans' Appeals Central Office (CO) in Washington, DC.

During this reporting period, the Board of Veterans' Appeals rendered a total of 43,087 decisions, which 8,316 (19.3%) had American Legion representation. These decisions consisted of 1,897 (22.8%) approvals, 3,085 (37%) remands, 3,116 (37.5.9%) denials, and 218 (2.6%) others. The last category includes administrative withdrawals, vacated cases, deaths, and dismissals. These figures represent a 3.06% increase in appeal approvals, an 8.2% increase in remands and a 9.03% increase in denials over the previous 12 month period.

The Special Claims Service of the Unit reviewed and disposed of 3 cases involving requests by Department Service Officers of The American Legion in obtaining Administrative Review by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Central Office, Compensation and Pension Service.

The Board of Veterans Appeals (Board) in conjunction with the VA Central Office has placed increased emphasis in correction of Duty to Notify and Duty to assist provisions, inclusive of adequacy of VA examinations (Compensation and Pension examinations). As of July 31, 2007, there were 4,337 American Legion represented cases in the Appeals Management Center (AMC) system, inclusive of AMC Resource Centers in Huntington, West Virginia and Seattle, Washington. These cases are given expeditious treatment, in accordance with Code of Federal Regulations. Due to the backlog the Board is currently adjudicating appeals with docket dates on or before December 2006. The American Legion has custody of approximately 1,107 pre-2006 original appeals. Quality remains our first priority. However, in May 2007 the Board of Veterans' Appeals and Special Claims unit adopted a minimum standard of productivity, requiring three (3) completed appeals per day, per representative. This new standard has yielded positive results, increasing productivity by 9.4% over the past year. At the beginning of July 2007, The American Legion Appeals Unit production trend was 3 original appeals to one remand case. That trend has remained consistent with our effort to review the remaining original appeals that pre-date 2006.

Military Review Boards Unit

Title 10, United States Code, sections 1552 and 1554, 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 has represented former service members applying for correction of their service records since World War II.

During the period 1 July 2007 through 30 June 2008 the staff of the Military Review Boards Unit provided advise, assistance, representation and other services to applicants and petitioners seeking consideration of their applications by the Department of Defense review and correction boards. These requests involved such issues as upgrade of character of service, change of narrative reason for discharge, entitlement or amendment of physical disability severance or retirement, issuance or reissuance of military awards or decorations and other corrections to military records.

The following is an itemization of the actions taken by the staff of the Military Review Board Unit in assisting former service members prepares their cases for review by the respective boards.

Staff Case Development Actions	**Volume**
Hearing Preparation	234
Initial Interviews/Guides	361
Telephone/Returned Calls	1503
Email Inquires/Request	798
Status Checks	228
Development Letters	168
DSO/VSO Inquiries	86
Board/Agency/Congressional Contacts	204
Walk-ins/Appointments	66
Application Package Reviews	242
Awards/Decorations/Medals	42
Other Correspondence	99

The following classifies the types of reviews that were presented to the respective service boards.

Military Discharge Review Boards

	Record Reviews	**Hearing Reviews**	**Reconsiderations**
Air Force	12	30	01
Army	33	57	03
Navy	41	25	01
Marine Corps	18	09	00
Coast Guard	00	00	00

Boards For Correction Of Military Records

	Record Reviews	**Hearing Reviews**	**Reconsiderations**
Air Force	14	00	03
Army	91	00	05
Navy	24	00	06
Marine Corps	12	00	04
Coast Guard	00	00	01

This final breakdown provides the total number of cases presented the boards, the number of favorable decisions and the percentage of petitions that were corrected.

Military Discharge Review Boards

	Total Presented	**Total Corrected**	**Percentage**
Air Force	42	09	21
Army	90	49	54
Navy	66	06	09
Marine Corps	25	02	08
Coast Guard	00	00	00

Boards For Correction Of Military Records

	Total Presented	Total Corrected	Percentage
Air Force	14	02	14
Army	91	07	08
Navy	24	02	08
Marine Corps	12	01	08
Coast Guard	00	00	00

The following are their current projected timeframes. All of the boards are meeting or exceeding their mandated requirements.

Air Force Discharge Review Board
Documentary Review 10-12months
Hearing Review—Washington, DC ..... 10-12 months
Hearing Review—Travel Panels ..... 10-12 months
Air Force Board For Correction Of Military Records
Documentary Review ..... 11-12 months
Army Discharge Review Board
Documentary Review ..... 08-10 months
Hearing Review ..... 08-10 months
Hearing Review—Travel Panels ..... 11-12 months
Army Board For Correction Of Military Records
Documentary Review ..... 10-12 months
Navy Discharge Review Board
Documentary Review ..... 10-12 months
Hearing Review—Washington, DC ..... 10-12 months
Does Not Provide Travel Panels

Board For Correction Of Naval Board
Documentary Review ..... 10-12 months
Coast Guard Discharge Review Board
Documentary Review ..... 09-11 months
Hearing Review—Washington, DC ..... 09-11 months
Does Not Provide Travel Panels
Coast Guard Board For Correction Of Military Records
Documentary Review ..... 10-12 months

The Military Review Board Unit also produces supplies and presents training material for our Department Service Officers as well as instructional guides for our applicants and petitioners seeking relief from the boards.

Staff Workload

Part of the overall activity of the various offices of the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission is reflected in the annual volume of incoming and outgoing correspondence. During this period, tens of thousands of letters, E-mails and Faxes were received from claimants, service officers, and VA officials. Correspondence received by the VA Insurance Activities Units in Philadelphia, PA and St. Paul, MN, was in excess of 8,700 and outgoing correspondence exceeded 9,500 pieces, with over 15,800 casework responses to DSOs/VSOs processed for both the Insurance (Philadelphia) and Debt Management (St. Paul) offices. The St. Paul office also handled almost 23,000 pension case responses to DSOs/VSOs.

The combined workload for the Board of Veterans' Appeals Unit, the Military Review Boards Unit, and the VA Insurance Activities Unit exceeded 12,000 cases.

Department Service Officers School

The National Organization continues to authorize the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation (VA&R) Commission to conduct twice yearly training schools for the

Department Service Officers and other accredited representatives of The American Legion. It represents the organization's ongoing commitment to developing a network of highly trained and experience service officers who can carry out the VA&R program at the department level.

The purpose of these sessions is to provide current information about changes in veterans' law and Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) adjudication policies and help accredited American Legion service officers to improve their advocacy skills. The program of instruction includes basic training for new service officers, and advanced training on issues relating to claims processing, disability ratings, personal hearings, development of appeals, and the interpretation and application of precedent decisions by the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims and the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit. Instructors include members of the National Association of Department Service Officers; Mr. Ron Abrams, Esq., Joint Executive Director, National Veterans Legal Services Program (NVLSP); and staff of the VA&R Division. Guest speakers from the Department of Defense, VA and other agencies are also invited to brief participants on relevant and timely issues.

The primary goal of this training program, which began in 1985, is to enhance the skills and effectiveness of accredited American Legion service officers. A secondary goal is to provide the school participants with the latest information on veterans' benefits, which they can, then, share with other service officers in their respective departments.

The Departments' participation in and support for the program remains very high. The first session of the 2008 school was held March 26-28, 2008 at the Renaissance Hotel in Washington, DC. There were more than 100 service officers in attendance. The National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Washington Conference took place the following week. The second session of 2008 was held July 31-August 2, 2008 at the Sheraton City Center Hotel, Indianapolis, Indiana. There were 119 service officers in attendance.

A full day of training for new service officers was held on July 30, 2008. This training replaced the 4-hour breakout session previously conducted on the first day of the DSO School. VA&R staff, senior Department Service Officers and officers of the National Association of Department Service Officers conducted the training. The National VA&R Division provided direct support and assistance as necessary. Thirty-five service officers attended the training.

Department of Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service

The VAVS National Deputy Representative attended the sixty-second meeting of the VAVS National Advisory Committee (NAC) that was held in Orlando, FL during April 9-12, 2008. The Deputy National Representative addressed the conferees outlining a coherent strategy to improve volunteer hours among all VAVS National Advisory Committee (NAC) Member Organizations. The meeting also included several volunteer business sessions and educational workshops, and presentations of NAC Volunteer of the Year Awards and the James H. Parke Scholarship Award. The Parke Memorial Scholarship Award was established in honor of the first Director of VA Voluntary Service, who is also the founding father of the VAVS National Advisory Committee and is awarded annually to an exceptional VAVS student volunteer.

A highlight of the NAC Conference was how the volunteer world is in transition. There are many barriers such as rising gas prices, VA volunteer training requirements, travel distance and how to outreach the younger generation of volunteers. Our volunteer force is aging with the majority of these volunteers from the WWII and Korea generations. Consequently, total number of volunteers and volunteer hours, both Regularly Scheduled (RS) and Occasional (OCC) continue to decline. More concentration and focus on Vietnam, Gulf War and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) is a primary goal this year.

During FY 2007, The American Legion had 7,527 regularly scheduled volunteers contributing 83,451 hours (a decrease of 780 Regularly Scheduled (RS) volunteers and 24,236 hours), with another 58,400 Occasional volunteer hours (a decrease of 14,091 hours), for a total of 909,137 volunteer hours (a decrease of 38,327 hours).

As volunteers and volunteer hours continue to decline now for three years straight, new initiatives have been proposed to attract a new cadre of volunteers and develop new opportunities. The Fiscal Year 2008 goals for The American Legion are the following:

1. Distributing a revised American Legion Department of Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service (VAVS) Handbook,
2. Creating a Volunteering portal on The American Legion National Website,
3. Distributing a VAVS recruitment flyer to all Legion posts,
4. Implementation of Department VAVS Coordinators,
5. Supporting the Heroes to Hometowns VA Volunteer Coordinator Pilot Program,
6. Increase recruitment and marketing efforts of younger OIF/OEF veterans and
7. Improving total volunteers and volunteer hours by five percent.

A volunteering portal was created on the National Website in May 2008. Volunteer program information on the site includes: the history of volunteering, opportunities, locations (VA Poly Trauma Centers, Community Based Outpatient Clinics, Fisher Houses, State Veterans Homes, Vet Centers, Youth Volunteering, VA Special Events, Gifts and Donation Procedures and How to Register as a Volunteer Now.

The National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission continues recruitment and implementation of Department VAVS Chairmen, who are responsible for successful operation of the VAVS program at the state level. The Department VAVS Chairmen will:

1. Become familiar with the VAVS Orientation Packet,
2. Secure list of all VAVS Representatives and Deputy Representatives currently on file with National Headquarters,
3. Develop relationships with VAVS Chiefs at all VA Medical Centers within their Department/State,
4. Ensure new Representatives and Deputy Representatives receive their facility orientation within thirty days of their certification,
5. Assist in developing recruitment goals for each facility and a plan to assist the Representatives and Deputy Representatives in goal achievement,
6. Make sure all Department leadership understands the importance of having the VAVS Program on all meeting agendas and assist with reports of progress, education and recruitment,
7. Assist in the training, motivation and recognition for all VAVS volunteers and
8. Create a Department Annual Report explaining volunteer program best practices and challenges.

The Heroes to Hometowns VA Volunteer Coordinator Pilot Program is currently at 10 VA Medical Center sites. These sites include: Boston, Dayton, Providence, St. Louis, Washington, D.C., Louisville, Phoenix, Richmond, San Diego and West Haven. The Heroes to Hometowns Volunteer Coordinator creates a Community Resource Directory of local community resources and coordinates OIF/OEF transitioning soldiers' needs with identified community resources. VA cannot solicit donations or support from the community, whereas this volunteer can and would bridge the gap from VA and Federal resources, to local community assistance.

In July 2008, The American Legion magazine wrote a National Commanders Message on Volunteering. The story cited a personal volunteer story, highlighted organizational statistics and tied in the importance of volunteering.

Furthermore, the American Legion Dispatch featured a story on the Department of Veterans Affairs Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) Welcome Home Celebrations. The Welcome Home events are mandated in each VA Medical Center nationwide annually and offer information on VA enrollment and health care, health screenings, readjustment services, VA claims and benefits assistance, employment services, educational support and community resources. This is an excellent opportunity to recruit younger OEF/OIF volunteers while assisting them with claims, benefits and military discharge review requests.

With the addition of the VAVS Portal on the National Website, recruitment flyer to all Legion Posts, implementation of Department VAVS Chairmen, support of VA Welcome Home Celebrations, the Commission looks forward to improving total volunteers and hours this fiscal year.

National Field Service

The National Field Service unit division has undergone a drastic staff change in 2007-2008. Former Deputy Director for Health Care Shannon Middleton resigned from her position to work for the Department of Veterans Affairs, Center for Women Veterans. Joseph Wilson, Assistant Director for Health Policy, became the Deputy Director for Health Care. Chad Martin, Field Service Representative, became the Assistant Director for Health Policy. J. Daniel Pownall, Field Service Representative, resigned from his position to work for a United States Marine contractor. Andrew Tramontana and Edward Diaz were hired in February 2008 as Field Service Representatives. Chad Martin, Assistant Director for Health Policy, resigned to work for the Department of Veterans Affairs, Tampa VA Medical Center's Prosthetics Division. Denise Williams, Field Service Representative, became Assistant Director for Health Policy. Edward Diaz became Assistant Director of Department of Defense Outreach and the Heroes to Hometowns Program Coordinator. The National Field Service unit now includes Andrew Tramontana and two new hires; Robert Madden and Dwayne Thompson.

From January 2008 to June 2008, the Field Service Unit and Assistant Director for Health Policy conducted site visits throughout the VA Medical Center system with the System Worth Saving Taskforce members to collect data for the 2008 System Worth Saving Report. This year's report will focus on services provided by VA Nursing Home Care Units/Community Living Centers. Field Service visited approximately 49 Nursing Home Care Units to monitor progress of maintenance and compliance of facilities and policy respectively. Such policy, which helps establish adequate standards includes, the Veterans Millennium Healthcare and Benefits Act of 1999 which: Improves access to long-term care for severely disabled Veterans; ensures alternatives to nursing home care are expanded; authorizes to pay reasonable emergency care costs for veterans obtaining their principal healthcare from the VA; improves specialized mental health care services for veterans; authorize VA to offer health care to TRICARE-eligible retirees and Purple Heart recipients who otherwise do not qualify for VA healthcare; allows the VA greater flexibility in how it generates new income and how it can spend it to enhance veterans' care; allows expansion of VA's authority to create and award grants to assist homeless Veterans.

Data collected from site visits compares data for FY2003 when OIF began, and FY2006. The release date of this publication is August 2008. With the influx of younger OEF/OIF veterans, as well as the aging Vietnam Era, Korean War, and World War II Veterans, the demand for an increased variation of Nursing Home Care is ubiquitous, such that VA has implemented the Cultural Transformation program to ensure each resident receives the inimitable care required.

Upon their arrival to Walter Reed and Bethesda Medical facilities, injured OEF/OIF servicemembers are showered with attention from welcome home interest groups to media representatives. However, the American Legion's concern is heightened subsequent to their stay at the aforementioned venues. Questions that arise include; is each service member receiving adequate, effective, practical, and timely care to ensure a full rehabilitation; who is responsible for communicating between the Department of Defense and Department of Veterans Affairs to ensure the new veterans don't slip through the cracks; how has the transition affected the veteran's family members; are all being accommodated.

In 2008, The American Legion also adopted, as part of, but not limited to its annual site visits, the follow-up on veterans subsequent to their transition from active military to veteran status. In addition, Task Force Members and Field Service staff participated in roundtables with various divisions, to discuss such matters as, accessibility, enrollment, fiscal, staffing, affiliations, plant, specialty care, and overall challenges. We also obtain data to ascertain the quantity of veterans versus personnel and funding to ensure care and treatment is competent and adequate.

Timely access to mental health services at VA medical centers continue to be a challenge as many OEF/OIF veterans are being diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Current technology in theater is preserving more lives, which has also increased the awareness to the number of veterans who suffer from Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) and are requiring various forms of care, to include mental health and eventually Nursing Home Care. This increase has also prompted VA Medical Centers to request more funding for mental health services.

Service members throughout the entire Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) regions have been activated to active duty status and will eventually return to their respective areas to resume their lives in the community. The American Legion wants to ensure past and present veterans who are injured during active service are the full beneficiaries of continuum of care.

Field Service Unit continues to assist veterans who were severely wounded or soldiers experiencing readjustment issues related to their combat service in Iraq and Afghanistan. In addition, assistance is also offered to their families to mitigate any burdens placed on them due to their current situations. This assistance includes providing information on VA or DoD programs and maintaining contact to remain aware of progress in their cases. Each representative will continue to monitor the issues he/she was assigned.

The Deputy Director for Health Care has provided testimony on numerous issues, to include: access to VA health care for rural veterans, adequate funding for the entire Veterans Health Administration (VHA), major and minor construction for an aging VA, and various legislative bills addressing access to care for all veterans. The Deputy Director has also provided briefings on health care for the DSO school and participates in monthly conferences to discuss Severe Mental Illness (SMI), Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), amongst this nation's veteran communities.

Finally, the Deputy Director continues to be a member of the VA Advisory Committee on Environmental Hazards and is responsible for addressing various health care issues.

Accredited Representatives

In completing VA Form 21-22, "Power of Attorney", the claimant appoints The American Legion as accredited representative in a claim for benefits administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs. It is the duty of the organization to provide assistance, advice, and counsel to veterans, survivors and dependents so as to ensure their rights are protected and they receive all benefits to which they may be entitled under the law. The American Legion, as a Congressionally chartered organization, conducts this service program through the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission. Accredited Representatives of The American Legion provide formal representation in claims before VA regional offices or the Board of Veterans Appeals. Their respective Departments have recommended these representatives for accreditation because of their knowledge, experience, and expertise in the field of federal benefit programs, especially those provided through the Department of Veterans Affairs.

To become an Accredited Representative of The American Legion, a formal application (VA Form 2-21) must be submitted to the Director of the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission, 1608 K Street, NW, Washington, DC 20006, with an accompanying endorsement signed by the Department Commander or Department Adjutant. The Director, as the National Certifying Officer, or the Deputy Director for Claims Service, as Assistant National Certifying Officer, will review and forward the request to the General Counsel of VA for action. This form is never sent directly to the General Counsel, as accreditation will not be granted unless the request has been certified by the organization. Upon approval of the application, the individual is recognized by VA as an Accredited Representative of The American Legion and will receive official notification of this action from VA. The accreditation will remain in effect until such time as the Director, National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission receive a written request from the Department Commander or Department Adjutant to cancel the individual's accreditation due to death, retirement, or resignation.

The Director will then notify the General Counsel that the accreditation should be canceled.

New accreditations and cancellations are reported monthly on VA's General List of Accredited Representatives—VA Information Bulletin IB 2-51. During the reporting period 213 requests for accreditation and 58 requests for cancellation were received from the Departments and submitted to VA for necessary action. As of June 30, 2008, there were 1,877 Accredited Representatives of The American Legion with 169 pending accreditation. Any questions concerning the proper procedure or regulations pertaining to accreditation of individuals or their activities should be submitted to the Director of the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission in the Washington office.

Personnel and Organization

The following changes occurred in the Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Division at the Washington office from July 1, 2007 through June 30, 2008.

New hires for the Field Service Unit included Robert Madden, and Dwayne Thompson. Ted Diaz was promoted to Assistant Director for DoD Outreach and heads up The American Legion Heroes To Hometowns Program. Also David Michael was hired as the newest member of the Military Discharge Review Board. Last year, VA&R created a new position at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center. This position has been transferred to the National Security and Foreign Relations Division.

New hires at the BVA Unit included:
Robert Wertmann, Appeals Representative
Edna Douglas, Appeals Representative
James Woodson, Appeals Representative
Harvey Taylor, Appeals Representative

The most current table of organization of the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission as of June 30, 2007, is as follows:

Director 1
  Administrative Assistant 1
Deputy Director for Health Care 1
Assistant Director for Health Care 1
  Field Representatives 3
  Secretary 1
Deputy Director for Claims Services 1
  Administrative Assistant 1
Supervisor, Review and Correction Boards 1
  Review Board Representative 2
  Secretary 1
Office Manager, Board of Vets. Appeals Unit 1
  Appeals Representatives 12
  Secretaries 2
  Medical Consultant 1
Assistant Director for Program Management 1
  Secretary 1
Assistant Director for Policy and Research 1
Assistant Director for DoD Outreach 1
Regional Office Manager 1
  Appeals Representatives 2
  Secretary 1
Total Personnel—Washington office 38
Insurance Field Office: Philadelphia, PA
Chief of Insurance Activities 1
Secretary/Transcriber 1
Debt Management Center, St. Paul, MN
  Supervisor 1

Secretary/Transcriber 1
VA&R TOTAL **42**

Staff Field Assignments

The staff of the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission, including the director, deputy director and assistant directors attended various Legion functions around the country, such as the National Convention, Department Conventions, Department Seminars and Service Officers Schools, the Conferences and fact-finding trips. The Field Service staff visited 49 hospitals along with The System Worth Saving Task Force. Select VA&R staff attended the Annual Mid-Winter Conference in Washington, DC.

Certificates Of Appreciation

Under authority of May 1958 NEC Resolution, we have continued the program of awarding a Certificate of Appreciation to officials of the Department of Veterans Affairs, upon their retirement or resignation, For Services Rendered and Cooperation Extended in Connection with The American Legion's Rehabilitation Program. Under criteria established in line with the enabling resolution, nominations for the award are submitted by Department or National officials of The American Legion twice a year. The nominations are considered by a committee of the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission at meetings preceding the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Conference, and the National Convention. The Committee recommends to the Commission the names of those considered deserving of the Certificate.

Five Certificates of Appreciation have been awarded during the period July 1, 2007, through June 30, 2008, for an overall total of 1,317 since the program was initiated

Citations For Meritorious Service

This Citation, authorized by the National Executive Committee in May 1956, seeks to recognize the long and faithful service of Post Service Officers and others. Nominations for the Citation are submitted by Department officials to the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Director at any time; the Director, acting for the Chairman and members of the Commission, issues the award.

Fifty-Nine Citations For Meritorious Service And Loyal Cooperation In The American Legion's Veterans Affairs And Rehabilitation Program Were Presented During The Period July 1, 2007 To June 30, 2008. Since This Type Of Recognition And Appreciation Began, 5,047 Citations For Meritorious Service Have Been Presented.

DoD Outreach: The Heroes to Hometowns Program

The Assistant Director of DOD Outreach has maintained a working relationship with representatives from the Office of the Secretary of Defense's Military Community and Family Policy office, the newly formed Wounded Warrior Resource Center, the National Guard Family Bureau, the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Veterans Affairs State Directors and The American Legion Departments to promote the Heroes to Hometowns program and rally support for severely injured service members returning from Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom.

In August 2006, the Military Severely Injured Center was closed. A new agency was formed in accordance with the FY-08 Defense Authorization Act, Sec.1616, establishing the Wounded Warrior Resource Center (WWRC). The Secretary of Defense established the Wounded Warrior Resource Center to provide wounded warriors, their families, and their primary caregivers with a single point of contact for assistance for reporting deficiencies, such as Military Facilities, Health Care Services, Benefits Information, and any other difficulties encountered while supporting wounded warriors. The Wounded Warrior Resource Center will be operational October of this year. The Assistant Director of DOD Outreach met with the Director of Morale, Welfare, and Recreation Policy (MWRP), to establish the guidelines and duties for the Heroes to Hometowns Program Coordinator within the Arlington/Court House office. The American Legion representative at the WWRC maintains a presence at the Court House facility 2-3 times per week, processing assistance requests forwarded through the Military OneSource, and plays a vital role in the development of the WWRC National Resource Directory. The

Wounded Warrior Resource Center works in conjunction with Military OneSource, also located in the Court House facility, and has offices throughout the nation.

The Assistant Director of DOD Outreach is responsible for linking injured service members with local legionnaires in their hometowns. In order to raise awareness for the program at the state-level, an American Legion representative from each department is charged with coordinating The American Legion's department support with the State Veterans Affairs office and the National Guard Family State Office.

Departments from around the country have met several relief agencies, private philanthropists, and various charitable foundations, building large networks nationally, and their local areas. DOD sponsored Heroes to Hometowns meetings throughout the United States.

Several Job Fairs have hosted around the nation, hosted by the respective Departmental Heroes to Hometowns committee members. These Job Fairs have played an intreccal part in the Heroes to Hometowns outreach program, reaching out to thousands of veterans. Job Fair sites included Ft. Dix, New Jersey; FT Lewis, Washington; Walter Reed Regional Army Medical Center; Orlando, FL; and Ft Leavenworth, KS. The Assistant Director of DoD Outreach took place in conjunction with a Hiring Heroes jobs fair.

Milestones

October 2007

- Attended American Legion Outreach event in St. Louis, MO, November 2007
- Participated in the Coalition to Salute American's Heroes "Road to Recovery" Event for wounded warriors and their families

December 2007

- Began development of the VA Voluntary Services/Heroes to Hometowns Pilot Program, to train, and coordinate H2H assistance efforts throughout the nation.

January 2008

- Participated in the Membership Outreach with the Department of Texas.

February 2008

- Participated in the Joint Membership and Outreach training at the Department of Texas Mid-Winter Conference.
- Developed the VA Voluntary Services/Heroes to Hometowns Flyer.

March 2008

- The Assistant Director of DOD Outreach attended the Washington DC Mid-Winter Conference, and reported the Heroes to Hometowns Update.
- Kicked off the Heroes to Hometowns Social Network on the Office of the Secretary of Defenses' Military HomefrontConnections website.
- Assisted with and tracked development of the Military OneSource National Resource Directory.

April 2008

- Attended the Paralympics Division of the United States Olympic Committee, "Amazing Awaits" Leadership Conference.
- Hosted the Heroes to Hometowns Job Fair at Walter Reed Army Medical Center. Also participating in this event was the government recruiting firm of Avue Tech, a Tech Access firm that also conducts training in IT related fields. Of special mention, Avue Tech found 5 Wounded Warriors positions within the Federal Government.

May 2008

- Developed the Traumatic Brain Injury Program Proposal.
- Began development of the VA Voluntary Services/Heroes to Hometowns Training Module.
- Developed the plan for The American Legion National Convention Heroes to Hometowns Panel and Convention Hall table.

June 2008

- Assistant Director of DoD Outreach, and Heroes to Hometowns Program Coordinator Scott Sundsvold resigned his position. Position is filled by Edward A. (Ted) Diaz.
- Moved office from Family Resource Center in Rosslyn, to the Court House office location of the Wounded Warrior Resource Center. Worked with Wounded Warrior Resource Center to develop new handouts for the Military OneSource and Wounded Warrior Resource Center.

July 2008

- Hosted Finish line celebration for the Freedom Run Across America. Former Marine, Tom Knoll ran across America, raising money and awareness for America's Wounded Warriors.

August 2008

- Attended 2008 American Legion Membership Conference, delivering report of progress and success of Heroes to Hometowns programs across the country.

AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY

National President Jan Pulvermacher-Ryan, Madison, Wisconsin

It's been my privilege to travel this year as the national president and to have the terrific opportunity to see firsthand the incredible work being done by members of the American Legion Auxiliary in our almost 10,000 communities nationwide. The work done by our volunteers in their communities, in veterans hospitals and homes, and children's hospitals and homes is very impressive.

I was uniquely privileged to travel to the Far East and Europe where the national commander and I were honored to lay wreaths at memorials and cemeteries to pay tribute to our fallen service members from previous wars. I was truly amazed at the reverence and respect shown to our heroes by the people of these foreign countries as we participated in these ceremonies. We were always among military honor guards, village officials, even bands on some occasions, as we paid homage to those who previously protected our freedoms and the freedom of those nations.

We celebrated Pearl Harbor Day in Hawaii and D-Day in Normandy and enjoyed the hospitality of the French people in Sainte Mere Eglise and dedicated a World War II museum in honor of our military.

We had the opportunity to spend some time with members of both The American Legion and the Auxiliary from the Department of France and to be hosted at several of their fine Legion posts. We were charmed by their friendship and dedication to our organizations.

We were able to visit both our military hospitals in Ramstein and Landstuhl and to see a storage area full of comfort items sent by our members to help the recovery process of our wounded and hundreds of coupons sent to augment the family resources. Additionally our members welcomed the troops home, sent hundreds of pocket flags and continued to help the military families while the service member is deployed. The need is great and our members are there to help in a myriad of ways.

Children have been a major focus of this year's activities starting with our special endowment fund "Educating Children of Warriors," to our understanding the need to include our Junior members in our many programs and projects, to our Girls State programs offered to high school Juniors to attend our premier program teaching of all levels of government and then the ultimate Girls Nation program in Washington, D.C. How proud we are of all these young women as they embrace the opportunity to learn more about lobbying, how to write a bill and pass legislation and to run for office. Unquestionably it's a challenging opportunity that helps to equip them for their future.

We are also very proud of our Americanism Youth Conference at Freedoms Foundation at Valley Forge. Helping children of our nation understand the Constitution and the Bill of Rights by using the heroes from the past such as George Washington, Thomas Jefferson and others brings history to life in a dramatic but fun way to help them better understand the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

We were privileged that the four recipients of our Public Spirit award this year at our Awareness Assembly luncheon were all Auxiliary members contributing to making a better life for our military. I doubt there was a dry eye in the audience as these members related their true life stories of their four organizations and how they help every day to bring comfort and caring to our service members.

Our many hospital volunteers bring that same comfort and caring to our hospitalized veterans and those in nursing homes. They bring a bit of home with them as they make their visits and talk to these individuals. Day in, day out, like postmen making their rounds, our volunteers serve in these institutions to make each day a bit better for those who gave so much in service to our country.

This was an eventful year with our first ever strategic planning, "A New Day is Dawning," event at Awareness where our members were able to participate in a full day's activities to help them understand the process as well as be informed about the three initiatives developed by the retreat group last September. The NEC approved the plan and so we will move forward this coming year to start to implement those initiatives with both volunteers and staff working together to forge ahead.

We continue to support the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival, the Auxiliary Emergency Fund and the Spirit of Youth Fund for scholarships. At unit levels, much is done and accomplished to support the mission of the American Legion Auxiliary.

We moved our office farther north on Meridian Street and now are about 95 percent settled in the new building. We invite you to visit when you are in Indianapolis. It is truly beautiful and you will be pleased to see many beautiful articles from our Cavalcade of Memories displayed throughout the offices. We now have meeting space for some of our smaller meetings, so we don't have to rent expensive hotel space. We will be able to invite community organizations to utilize the space as well. So please stop by and visit when you are in the area; you will be warmly welcomed by staff.

This year, we were granted approval of our application to become a 501c3 organization which permits us to seek corporate grants. The NEC approved our recommendation for board members for the Foundation and they have elected their officers and have held one meeting to date. You will be receiving information on this entity as time goes on. They are really just in the primary stages of development but aggressively pursuing their agenda of getting off the ground and on their feet, raring to go.

Our organization worked under the theme "Forward Thinking—A Ripple Today, a Wave Tomorrow" knowing that some of the work that was started during this administrative year would not be finished, but that it would be ongoing under the new leadership. Our work doesn't start and stop with the national president who is serving, but rather it continues to evolve and becomes a better year—each year. Our goal of service is to improve each year, to provide inspiration so that others will want to join and to celebrate our successes. So we need to strengthen our organization each year, follow our motto of "Service, not Self" and move forward each year into a brighter future for the American Legion Auxiliary.

National Vice President
Desireé Stoy, Perrysville, Ohio

By invitation and direction of the National President, Jan Pulvermacher-Ryan, the National Vice President (NVP) had the opportunity to represent our organization at special events and be an active part of several initiatives.

In the fall, the NVP participated in the strategic planning retreat. This retreat was the catalyst for our strategic planning efforts in this administrative year. As our efforts to enhance our current strategic plan developed, the NVP's role included being a member of the Oversight Committee, spearheading the Design Team charged with developing the large group meeting that would take place in Washington, D.C., prior to the Auxiliary's Awareness Assembly. This event was instrumental in educating our members regarding the proposed strategic plan.

Attending both the National Commander's Testimony in D.C. and the homecoming in Illinois were historical events and a great prelude to an unforgettable few days in

Wisconsin celebrating the National President's Homecoming. From Stoughton to Old World Wisconsin, all enjoyed great fun and fellowship.

Another assignment included chairing an Ad Hoc Personnel Committee. This committee was established to review and update the processes and documents regarding our human resources at National Headquarters. A thorough analysis allowed the committee to recommend changes to job descriptions and titles, improve FLSA adherence and establish a flexible aligned methodology for future organizational growth. A proposed constitution and bylaws change to establish a permanent HR standing committee also was part of the fruits of our labor.

This NVP and her guest also had the opportunity to represent the organization at two national events. The first was the awards program at the Naval Academy in Annapolis, Md., where the NVP presented the American Legion Auxiliary Women's Varsity Swimming MVP Award to Midshipman First Class Kristen Ann Lowd.

The second event was the Memorial Day festivities in Washington, D.C., which included a reception held at the White House in the State Dining Room with other guests from Veterans Service Organizations, military personnel advocates for veterans issues and federal employees. The event was an elegant buffet breakfast followed by a photo opportunity with President George W. Bush. Guests of the president were transported to Arlington National Cemetery where special seating was provided in the amphitheater for his Memorial Day address.

In conclusion, serving as NVP under the direction of our national president has indeed been a pleasure and her efforts to move us *forward* provided the right leadership at the right time.

National Chaplain
Jeri Brooks Greenwell, Bethel, Maine

Chaplains across America are to be commended for their commitment toward ensuring that "what may seem like a ripple today…can become the wave of tomorrow."

The continuation of the weekly Chaplains Email Message conveyed those in need of prayer, recognition of upcoming holidays of varying faiths and messages shared by others. Overwhelming support of the inclusion of the Reflections Page previously contained in the *National News*, was returned to *HomeFront* magazine; reinforcing the core value of our organization being for God and country.

Many new and exciting changes were made to the Chaplain's Corner of the National website including inspirational stories, quotes and/or special prayers highlighting each department chaplain, resources, as well as an inspirational calendar and appropriate background music. New this year for members participating in conferences and convention, locations and times of worship of varying faiths have been provided in registration materials.

Seventeen members attended the National Chaplains Conference and reflected upon the multitude of ways that each could profoundly affect and change the lives of others while embracing and accepting our diversity. Participants brainstormed ways to make ourselves accessible to our members as a source of support and toward coordinating our efforts with The American Legion Family thus making our chaplaincy role more meaningful and effective.

Eighteen department chaplains contributed toward the National President's project for Educating Children of Warriors.

Members have been proactive in supporting and assisting our military and their families, extending comfort to members during difficult as well as joyous times, encouraging respect for the beliefs of others and supporting open expression of faith and religious traditions in both public and private venues without judicial interference.

Reports were received from all departments with the exception of the Philippines. From the 8,352 units reporting, our organization was saddened by the loss of 10,205 members, including 15 junior members; 91 Gold Star Mothers; and two Past National Presidents, Maxine Bigelow (Oregon) and Norma Brown (Idaho). Each was remembered with memorial and/or funeral services and by Draping the Charter. Memorial contributions totaled $270,461.93.

Several units reported holding joint ventures with The American Legion Family in observation of national holidays, flag disposal ceremonies, POW/MIA programs,

honoring military personnel and at various religious gatherings to name a few. Three hundred forty-seven units promoted activities toward the diversity of different faiths and 44 departments provided opportunities for religious expression during conferences and/or conventions and 18,754 Grace Cards were distributed. Thirty-six departments held a Four Chaplains program and the chapel received contributions of $28,126.43.

History was made this year as the American Legion Auxiliary was afforded the honor of opening the U.S. House of Representatives session in prayer. What an awesome experience!

Each department year-end report received reflected how, collectively, each small ripple of service generated the force of a mighty wave—and though the ripple itself may have disappeared, its affects upon others continues. And so it must!

National Historian
Virginia Nelsen, Valentine, Nebraska

Each historian was asked to chronicle the events and achievements of her department. Thirty-six histories were submitted for judging and I'm very proud that all 50 states filed a final report.

Thirty of these ladies reported about the national president's visit in their department. She was privileged to attend both Junior Conferences and Girls State. Most interesting was how Georgia turned everything hot pink in her honor. In Illinois, she helped celebrate President Lincoln's 199th birthday. In Maryland, she helped Junior members fold a flag at Fort McHenry—the birthplace of the National Anthem.

A really challenging program is the Veterans History Project. One hundred sixty-two intrepid units made it a priority and succeeded.

A friendlier challenge asked members to make a "veteran connection" and record it. Members from across America collected the history of 830 veterans, and 62 histories were submitted to the Library of Congress.

A new endeavor this year was to support and publicize The American Legion's Oratorical Contest. Five hundred and sixty-nine units responded, and 201 of those units used this activity to connect students with the United States Constitution and thereby our country's history. Kansas noted that this promotion helped established a base to energize and build membership.

Projects that stand out: a membership tree of life in Maine for Juniors that branches out into the American Legion Family; the Veteran A Page Prayer Book in Mississippi; the Veterans Remembrance Cookbook in Wisconsin; wreaths thrown from a Navy vessel to honor Pearl Harbor veterans in Florida; the POW/MIA ceremony held on the Battleship Massachusetts; and that awesome Veterans Tree in Wisconsin. Each of these and many other projects connected all involved to veterans and the history of this country.

Historians wrote about how their department commemorated patriotic holidays, respected, remembered and assisted veterans. They shared again and again the dedication to those currently serving in the Armed Forces. It can truly be said that the Auxiliary watched over and assisted those in the military, their families and learned the importance of history in the fight for freedom.

National Secretary
Pamela Gilley, Indianapolis, Indiana

FORWARD: With National President Jan Pulvermacher-Ryan setting the theme, the ALA National Headquarters boldly moved forward to be positioned to support your present and future needs as you accomplish our mission.

Staff was privileged to support and participate with volunteers from all levels of the organization in updating the national strategic plan, streamlining the mission statement and developing a vision statement. Our new mission statement has found its way onto our letterhead and soon will begin appearing on many other documents.

FORWARD: The future of the ALA means considering the future needs of those we serve and positioning ourselves to meet them. Sometimes this requires that we set aside personal desires that may prohibit us from remaining relevant to our veterans and their families. Time and the ever-changing world often require us to give up things that we

find comforting for those that may seem challenging or overwhelming. While the fundamentals may remain the same, the specific needs of veterans and their families change with each generation and require us to remain diligent in upgrading our skills, abilities and resources to meet their needs.

FORWARD: Keeping these things in mind, the National Executive Committee in August 2007 voted to relocate the National Headquarters office. Our new office comfortably houses 32 employees serving our members in Indianapolis. Large conference space provides the ability to conduct meetings right from our Headquarters and to partner with other organizations within the Indianapolis community. We look forward to welcoming you when you have the chance to visit.

Your National staff is a wonderful group of professionals who are each committed to helping you be successful in your ALA service. Several have prior military experience. Others are spouses, siblings or parents of current military members. They truly understand what it means to be part of a veteran's family, to survive deployment of a loved one, to wait anxiously for that infrequent and brief communication, to struggle alone when the car breaks down or the kids are sick. I don't think you'll find a better group of folks to support you anywhere. They understand clearly that they are not here to do your job, but to do theirs better so that you can accomplish yours!

Staff in our Washington, D.C., office continues to make great inroads into raising the awareness of the ALA among our legislators and potential partners. Whether it is the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Department of Homeland Security, the Department of the Army, the White House or the movers and shakers on Capitol Hill – they all know much more about our army of nearly 900,000 women who are serving and making a difference for our veterans and their families. Several future partnerships also are being developed that will continue to position the ALA as a leader among those we serve. Along with the National Legislative Chairman, they're keeping you updated on issues through the biweekly electronic legislative newsletter, *Spirit of America*.

FORWARD: Securing resources is vital to our future. Your leaders had the foresight to establish and launch the American Legion Auxiliary Foundation Inc. This 501c3 supporting agency will provide a valuable tool to move us forward with corporate, foundation and individual donors. It offers all a wonderful way to leave a lasting legacy through their perpetual gifts to support the ongoing mission work of the Auxiliary.

As we complete our 89th year, I'm proud to be a part of the ALA's past, her present and her forward momentum. We're serving today and preparing ourselves for tomorrow's needs. Those we serve are counting on us, and we will be there for them!

Americanism Committee
Kris Nelson, Baxter, Minnesota

The Americanism mission statement encourages members to inspire patriotism and citizenship throughout the country. Unit 15 of Glendo, Wyo., embraced this challenge by participating in *"SOAHR"* (Searching Our American History Through Reading). Unit members taught how multitudes of people, places and events shaped the United States and made it "home of the free and the brave." Students were taught U.S. history, heritage and flag etiquette. Meanwhile, Unit 468 of Escondido, Calif.'s promotion of the essay contest resulted in 280 essays being submitted. Unit 382 of Dodgeville, Wisc., annually meets with the school superintendent to promote the essay contest; this year, the result was 222 entrants.

Units throughout the country reported donating 56,786 flags to schools and businesses within their communities. There were 64,471 pocket flags mailed to active military. Healing Fields were dedicated in Washington, D.C., Connecticut and Kentucky.

To encourage citizens to embrace the freedom to vote, Unit 109 in North Carolina set up a voter registration booth to assist first-time voters within the community to register. In California, Auxiliary members worked the polls, provided transportation, made phone calls reminding citizens to vote and provided lunches to workers at voting polls.

Fifty-eight students were selected to attend the Americanism Youth Conference at Freedoms Foundation. In her essay, Paige Duracher of Louisiana stated, "I personally

owe my everlasting gratitude to all soldiers who fight to preserve our freedom in this country, and I know that in the future, we as Americans will always fight to defend it."

Thirty-nine departments submitted Girl Scout Achievement Award entries. Jordan Krenz of Georgia wrote, "I am a certified book worm. My idea for my Girl Scout Gold Award was to implement a literacy program for children." The initial goal of 500 books resulted in more than 5,000.

Our members lived our Americanism values and mentored youth and community members through their example.

Auxiliary Emergency Fund Committee
Vickie Koutz, Boonville, Indiana

Creative thinking from the chairmen of the Auxiliary Emergency Fund Committee helped raise the money we needed to support our program.

- bakeless bake sales
- fun calendars
- drawings
- collections at meetings
- penny banks
- decorated basket contests
- special luncheons
- silent auctions
- memorials for deceased members
- pocket change
- special teas
- raffles
- estate jewelry sale
- style shows
- black tie event
- birthday years
- steak dinners
- sweetheart dances
- casino nights
- silly tax forms on plants, lamps, brushes, mops, door handles

These were just some of the ideas they came up with to raise funds.

Up until the very end of our Auxiliary year, I felt we were fairly lucky there hadn't been many natural disasters, but by May and June, some of our departments were hit hard: California and Florida with their fires; Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri and Wisconsin were hit with tornadoes and floods. These were just the states I heard about.

This year, there were 934 units that reported, with 834 total units donating money to the fund. Ninety-three individuals and 407 units donated $25 or more. Eight individuals and 194 units donated $100 or more.

The Central Division donated the most amount of money with $31,512.08.

The total number of grants made to our members was 82, with the total from all departments being $103,668.88.

The Auxiliary Emergency Fund is a unique program of the American Legion Auxiliary, with the fact that all money donated comes from our members, and that money in turn goes back only to our members.

A special thank-you goes out to all of the individuals and units who opened your hearts and wallets to help our members in need.

Children & Youth Committee
Carlene Ashworth, Pasadena, Texas

Promoting awareness of the opportunities available to aid and assist all children is the goal of this committee. It is our purpose to recognize our kids for the good things they do and give them a promise of a good future by filling their needs on an emotional, physical and educational level.

Reports were received from 44 departments and 4,071 units that successfully provided this necessary aid and assistance.

The Youth Hero Award recognizes young people under age 18 for their heroic deeds. This year, 79 youth have been presented with the YHA medallion and certificate for their heroism. Many more deserving youth are out in our communities who have yet to be recognized. Other youth do great things but do not qualify for the YHA. This committee created the Good Deed Award certificate to recognize them for being good citizens with high morals and integrity. To date, seven of these certificates have been sent to deserving youth.

1,158 units promoted National Children & Youth month with special activities and 1,121 units supported CMN hospitals in a big way, reporting contributions of $105,858 either direct or through their department.

Health and safety of our children is a great concern and 723 units held organized activities. In addition, 1,368 units promoted awareness of Halloween safety by distributing brochures and sponsoring Halloween activities.

Members volunteered 736,527 hours and spent $115,249 on other activities such as Missing Children Awareness, 246 units; National Family Week, 382 units; Family Support Network, 480 units; and Operation: Military Kids (OMK), 275 units. OMK supports the children of National Guard and Army Reserve soldiers and members participate by hosting activities such as filling Hero Packs, sponsoring Mobile Tech Labs and sponsoring booths during OMK Awareness Days.

Unit members are concerned and protective of our children and work hard to see all children are taken care of. 1,156 units sponsored or promoted other activities such as special holiday parties, care of hospitalized children, provided school supplies, clothing, food and other types of care. Direct cash aid in the amount of $489,350 and goods valued at $699,517 were given to care for 146,145 children.

Special Olympics, Josh & Friends, Spinoza Bears, Adoption and Foster Care, Songs of Love, numerous camps for special needs children, and children from low-income families, school supplies, holiday events and other activities were provided for 251,669 children, and units spent $1,466.830. In addition, contributions on the local, county, department and national level for children's programs and activities totaled $808,975.

Units also contributed $210,310 to The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation.

Special Children & Youth projects were sponsored by 17 departments and raised $116,567, serving 5,369 children. To help promote the C&Y program, departments and districts sponsored 70 Children & Youth conferences and seminars for $17,995.

Community Service Committee
Priscilla Imburgia, Pittsford, New York

Our members showed they have every aspect of community service covered in their efforts. Asked to emphasize "Welcoming home the troops," units responded with $126,760 and 42,000 hours given to welcoming/honoring our men and women in service. Individual units, or in cooperation with other units, and community members greeted returning troops, built memorials in their honor and held remembrance ceremonies. Unit 121, Waco, Texas, remembered those returned who gave the ultimate sacrifice with a ceremony that President Bush attended. Unit 3, Alexandria, La., participated in a welcome home at the VA that included a full meal, face painting, music and other activities for the whole family.

$84,000 and 10,088 hours were reported for youth appreciation programs recognizing outstanding youth. A staggering $206,000 was spent on "Make a Difference Day" programs, such as mittens and quilts for a rescue mission, tote bags and comfort items to shelters, children's Halloween party. Banner Unit 109, N.C., took fruit trays and cookies to veterans at the VA, in private and nursing homes, and to fire, police and town offices in three towns.

Community beautification projects, homeless shelters, food banks, blood donations, domestic violence centers, libraries, senior citizen centers, nursing homes and Habitat for Humanity all shared in the generosity of our units.

Many units contribute to or operate medical equipment loan closets, participate in Special Olympics, holiday food baskets and Ronald McDonald Houses.

Projects such as safe, all-night graduation parties and promoting organ donation and creating community information guides received attention. Unit 27 in Florida cleverly participated in Adopt A Highway by selecting the road in front of their post home.

Forty-four departments reported their units' success in moving their communities with forward thinking. Those many ripples from coast to coast created a wave value of $2,905,187.81 while volunteering 1,948,772 hours.

Constitution & Bylaws Committee
Lorenda Lawrence, Belle Chasse, Louisiana

What a big step forward this year with the national Plan of Work prepared early and mailed to departments by the end of June. This allowed for early training as departments start working to accomplish their mission.

Attending the Presidents & Secretaries conference and interacting with leaders from across the country was marvelous. Every minute was planned and used to educate and inform attendees about the programs of this organization. Every national chairman was involved in a moving roundtable discussion. Representatives, department presidents and secretaries were seated at tables and the chairmen rotated from table to table every seven minutes. Questions or problems were laid on the table. Interest in Constitution, By-laws and Standing rules was encouraging. The importance of working with department leaders and the distribution of materials to these leaders will move our organization to new levels. Educating members within our organization will help them recruit and maintain members.

This committee contacted all department Constitution & By-laws chairmen asking that they contribute to the National President's "Educating Children of Warriors" project. This resulted in collecting more than $500 for the campaign.

I received email and snail mail from many departments and units with many interesting questions and comments. New Hampshire set five goals using the national Plan of Work as its tool this year. Many departments updated their records to make sure all units had their Constitution and By-laws on file.

Like a mother taking care of a family, Constitution & By-laws is there to show the way with rules to follow. A governing force that needs review and changes are sometimes necessary.

Education Committee
Coral M. Grout, Winchendon, Massachusetts

This year's program built upon past successes while creating a foundation for the future. Units nationally embraced Give 10 to Education. Many started with 10 but quickly expanded into hundreds. Robert O' Shea Unit 106 (South Dakota) provided a $5 gift certificate to every elementary student to use at a book fair. Red Lion Unit 543 (Pennsylvania) donated 250 dictionaries for third-graders. Mississippi Unit 160 Juniors donated composition books, pencils, pens and notebooks totaling more than 300 items for a Children's Home.

Many units combined Americanism activities with education. Brattvet-Green Unit 66 (South Dakota) donated 60 flags to third-graders and Groton Unit 44 (South Dakota) donated 44 flags to kindergarten students. Both units taught patriotism and flag etiquette.

Hundreds of students benefited from scholarships. In fact, units and departments distributed $1,203,911.81, not including donations, to the National President's project or the awards given by the national organization. Iowa gave 83 scholarships with Indiana a close second at 53. Texas distributed $102,103.40 in scholarships, while Minnesota closely followed with $95,023.52.

1,336 units participated in literacy programs involving 47,276 students. Florida, Illinois and Pennsylvania were involved with more than 100 schools. Units spent $111,636.87 on literacy with Florida spending the most.

1,321 units participated in Veterans in the Classroom, involving 235,480 students at a cost of $40,864.58. Georgia led this category with 214 schools. Ohio spent the most at more than $10,000 for 8,323 students in 194 schools.

1,608 units assisted with reading in the schools, impacting 65,756 students with expenditures of $190,479.83. Units such as New London, N.H. Unit 40 and Russell West

Unit 95 volunteered 1,038 and 1,158 hours, respectively, in schools. Miranda Jones, a Junior from Michigan, volunteered more than 200 hours in a school.

Girls State Committee
Terry Porter, Grand Junction, Colorado

"We are the future builders…and we come from Girls State…we are up and coming, progressive, kind and strong…" Now that's Forward Thinking! Our young women are that ripple today who will make a huge wave tomorrow.

Those ripples begin with thousands of dedicated and committed Auxiliary volunteers who work tirelessly in their communities on this premier program. Many thanks because it wouldn't happen without you!

The annual Girls State Directors' Conference was held Nov. 2-4, 2007, with 33 departments represented. New marketing tools, DVD, poster and website were unveiled. There are now two nationwide opportunities for the delegates to earn college credit for Girls State. Legal and financial issues were addressed to help departments be prepared for coming changes in IRS regulations and to understand 501(c)(3) and 501(c)(19) incorporations. A presentation was made on starting e-units. Divisional breakout sessions allowed sharing and learning from each other about different aspects of their programs.

Two committee members worked on a special project to contact former Girls Nation presidents and vice presidents and update our information about them. Departments were asked to help.

Forty-six departments reported that 5,043 units sponsored 16,456 girls from 7,594 schools. Sessions varied from 16 to 861 delegates and fees from $100-350. The average is 382 girls and $203. Programs are always *Thinking Forward* to make changes and improve their programs.

Girls Nation was held July 19-26. Ninety-six "Senators" from every state but Hawaii and Vermont debated bills, elected President Barb Walkowiak from Nebraska and Vice President Erin St. Peter from Maine. They enjoyed Arlington, The Pentagon, memorials, the president and press secretary at the White House and much more.

While many department Girls State programs continue to function very well, there is a real need for increased efforts from units to work the program in their communities. Much work is needed in the American Legion Auxiliary to maintain this program as a vibrant, outstanding opportunity for students from every high school. This is a premier program of the American Legion Auxiliary for which we all can be very proud to work and support.

Junior Activities Committee
Krisann Owens, North Bend, Oregon

The American Legion Junior Auxiliary has enjoyed a successful year of participation in their units and have become actively engaged in the programs and traditions of the American Legion Auxiliary.

I'm excited to report that 32 departments and more than 500 Juniors participated in the Junior Patch Program totaling more than 1,700 patches earned this year alone. Special patches for the National President's Scholarship Fund garnered 93 patches for Juniors ranging in age from 2-17 and raising more than $6,000 for the fund. This was an average of $65.13 per Junior.

Community service was a big program this year with our Junior members as more than 1,900 Juniors volunteered more than 40,000 hours within their local communities. Projects ranged from downtown beautification projects, making hats and mittens for a local homeless shelter, holding Cancer Awareness Events, cleaning the yards and homes of elderly citizens, collecting pet food for local animal shelters and food drives for food cupboards.

VA&R found more than 1,500 Juniors contributing more than 12,000 hours volunteering at VA Medical Centers serving cookies and coffee, creating bulletin board designs and tray favors, "Thank You For Your Service" postcards for hospitalized veterans in Iraq, holding tea parties and sending thousands of cards of thank-yous to our troops serving in Iraq and Afghanistan. Promoting Poppies is another hot item for our Junior members with more than 500 Juniors giving more than 5,000 hours of service.

Americanism? Well, our Junior members "just do it." They teach the Pledge of Allegiance, help raise and lower the flag at local schools, teach flag etiquette and participate in the POW/MIA Ceremony. Our Juniors show everyone, especially their peers, that it's cool to be patriotic.

Junior members are proud of the service they give to this country in the name of the American Legion Auxiliary.

Leadership Committee
Peggy Thomas, Richmond, Virginia

Effective leadership begins by developing a plan, setting realistic goals and then inspiring others to help achieve them. Working with the idea that leadership is the bridge to an endless number of possibilities, department leadership chairmen made an all-out effort to educate, motivate, develop new activities and enhance leadership skills. Forty reports were received and each department reported an outstanding performance.

Department chairmen proved that workshops could be both informative, educational and a great deal of fun. They used new and innovative ways to get their message of leadership across to the members attending. Some used skits, puzzles, quizzes or other unique ways to involve their audiences.

Michigan decided to re-create the Leadership Program to make it work for its department. It spent a great deal of time planning and preparing what to present in its workshops. The department wanted to give the attendees something worthwhile to carry back to its units. It was presented in such a way as to encourage them to develop their own style.

Florida decided to rename its workshops Auxiliary Basic Concepts, or "ABC Schools," in order to improve attendance.

New York has a strong certification program with 39 certified leadership instructors and all used to good advantage.

North Carolina did a wonderful job in supplying its members with educational materials. It did a great job in publicizing its upcoming workshops.

Leadership courses for both Junior and Senior members were promoted through the department, district and unit levels. Members were made aware of resources available to them.

The mentoring program continues to be an invaluable tool. All reporting departments stated that they had used mentoring in their unit. They found that past officers were both willing and capable of carrying out the mentoring program.

Legislative Committee
Diane Duscheck, Whitefish Bay, Wisconsin

A heartfelt cause was found by many members, encouraging them to roll up their sleeves and become involved where making a ripple today with each legislative contact can translate to a wave of legislative action tomorrow. Reports from 4,276 units representing 41 departments emphasized the importance placed on legislative issues.

Election years are especially exciting! Town hall meetings were held in 147 units, and 55 units talked about the issues at legislative rallies. Viewpoints of national, state and local candidates were scrutinized at Meet the Candidate nights in 134 units. Members actively promoted candidates and supported the Get-out-the-Vote campaign.

The American Legion's publication, *The Dispatch*, was a source of information and legislative reporting in 107 units. This year, informed Auxiliary members also had the benefit of receiving the Auxiliary's new legislative eNewsletter, *Spirit of America*, emailed directly to them at no charge. The *Spirit of America* is in its infancy, having launched its first issue in November 2007. In July, only nine months into production, the 14th eNewsletter had a readership of more than 4,000 subscribers. Another vital reference was the Auxiliary's Legislative Advocacy Guide, also available online, to provide information on making legislative contacts.

An informed membership made 33,115 legislative contacts through letters, phone calls, emails and personal visits. Among highlighted issues were the GI Bill, Women Veterans Healthcare issues, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, Traumatic Brain Injury, flag

desecration, illegal immigrants, homeless veterans and patriotic education. Elected officials returned 11,019 replies on these vitally important issues.

To record important events and honor community leaders, units submitted 59 activities to the Congressional Record. A speech in praise of Poppy week, a New York Auxiliary member's accomplishment in providing mental health counseling to veterans and the noteworthy achievements recognizing an outstanding Ohio community leader were recorded.

Membership Committee
Mary Davis, Lacey, Washington

The winning football team is one that not only makes yardage and goals but experiences the success of working together, of being a team. Our theme, T.E.A.M. Spirit, together everyone achieves membership with spirit, provided the incentive that together we can achieve our membership goal.

New plays were put into place at the initial membership meeting. Goals were based on the highest of the last two years' actual paid memberships. The first national renewal notices were set for a later date to reflect the guidance in our unit handbooks and to help units realize the need for personal contact as a way of keeping members and getting them active in their units. The Spirit Award was up for grabs as an incentive to encourage competition between departments. The playing field was even and the game was on.

This membership season started with the awareness of department membership chairmen that it would be necessary to help units reconnect with their members in order to get those early renewals. One such Texas unit, with almost 400 members, heard the message and got busy planning to do just that. Pasadena Unit 521 prepared an inviting letter, packaged it with a renewal notice, enclosed a self addressed envelope and had a whopping 50 percent renewals by the time National Convention had heard the final rap of the gavel. Other units also successfully tried personal unit contact.

There were four target dates this year. Nineteen departments made the first goal of 65 percent, 24 departments made the second goal; then came a bit of a fumble when no one made the third and fourth target dates. But not to be defeated, departments kept working to achieve goal and by this report, three departments had made more than 100 percent of goal. These included departments of District of Columbia, Delaware and Arizona. An all-time membership high, also, has been achieved by Delaware and Arizona.

Unit Development & Revitalization was a subcommittee under membership this year. Departments continued to successfully work the program. The Spirit Award, a membership achievement traveling award, inspired departments to continue their membership drives. Congratulations to the final winners: departments of Florida, Arizona, North Carolina, New Mexico and District of Columbia.

E-units were a hot topic this year. With two successful e-units, California 472 and Colorado 195, ready to help and inspire other departments, together we are moving toward new and innovative ways to approach the future.

National Security Committee
Nancy Brown-Park, Novato, California

Across the country, units and departments rallied around America's heroes and their families to fulfill the mission of the National Security program.

The coupon program received national exposure this year on TV and radio. As a result, units reported 7,517 volunteers spent 205,108 hours clipping and sending $21,223,048 to military commissaries both home and abroad.

More than 75,000 hours were spent packing and shipping boxes to OIF/OEF troops. In Okalahoma, a unit planned a unique birthday party to collect donations for a Marine and his comrades serving in the AnBar Province. The special event resulted in 53 boxes sent to several units in Iraq and other hot spots.

Toasty Toes, neck coolers, knit caps and comfort quilts were a favorite project of more than 1,000 units. 4,089 volunteers spent close to 70,000 hours and spent $113,000 sewing and knitting. In the Department of Ohio, 127 volunteers made 391 neck coolers, 346 knit caps and 563 comfort quilts.

Units honored the POW/MIA program at their meeting and town events. Unit members spent 23,000 hours volunteering for blood drives across the country.

Members danced, sang, served cookies and held welcome-home parties to support and raise money for America's service members and their families. In California, 48 units sponsored their local USO where 168 volunteers donated 6,927 hours.

National preparedness brought together members and their communities to become CERT certified and trainers. Units visited schools and taught Junior members about Ready Kids. To help their neighbors in a disaster, members prepared themselves and their families so they can help others. The department of Arizona invited the fire department to its fall conference that presented a preparedness session to 272 members. Each member left with a CD to share with units' members who couldn't attend. They also have post homes that are "Ready ALA" and can be used as temporary shelters.

The success of the National Security program can be attributed to all the forward-thinking volunteers across the country. Thank you for your hard work this year for our heroes, their families and America's security.

Poppy Committee
Kathy Dungan, Wesson, Mississippi

Educating the public and our membership about the poppy, promoting the poppy story, and supporting our veterans with poppy proceeds were our goals this year. Units and Departments promoted the red crepe paper poppy and contributed to the welfare of our veterans and their families.

Thirty-seven departments sent reports. Approximately 4,900,000 poppies were ordered by 4,306 units. Poppy proceeds totaled approximately $2,200,000. A total of 4,166 certificates of appreciation were given. Below is a partial list of accomplishments:

Arizona, assisted by their Miss Poppy, made cornhusk dolls decorated with poppies and used them as a fundraiser.

Connecticut sponsored a poetry program in which 193 students wrote a poem about the poppy and honoring veterans.

Georgia held a team competition to collect the most donations using an Auxiliary Junior and a Legionnaire. The winning team was Miss Poppy and her grandfather, a combination of "the energy of youth and the dignity of maturity!"

Hawaii participated in a WWI memorial at the site of their namesake.

Wisconsin, Idaho, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, Washington, West Virginia and Iowa presented certificates of appreciation to businesses and individuals for their contributions, while some sent poppies to elected officials.

Illinois, South Dakota and Minnesota created poppy hats, corsages, tray favors, centerpieces and poppy candle rings.

Wyoming, Nebraska, Michigan Montana, North Dakota, North Carolina, and Missouri held poppy poster contests.

Kentucky, Mississippi, Puerto Rico, Virginia, and Louisiana sponsored Miss Poppy contests.

Ohio won the poppy corsage contest at the Awareness Assembly with the funds raised going to the Creative Arts Festival. Runner-ups were Indiana and Alabama.

Oklahoma made poppy arrangements for nine local churches.

California used the saying: "a ripple of Poppy distribution ideas…will bring a wave of donations in the future." Departments and units used their creative talents to turn that ripple into a huge wave of success this year.

Public Relations Committee
Janet Jefford, Manchester, Connecticut

What began as a ripple of communication reaching out to members and the public has become a wave of positive information flowing to promote the image of the American Legion Auxiliary.

Internal communications were improved as more units and departments turned to the Internet, emails, and ebulletins to keep in touch with members. Fifteen departments and 254 units reported having websites. The Department of Kansas launched a new website that is user-friendly and interactive. Future features include a members only interactive

portal, email communications for officers and chairmen, an online store and donation area.

On the national level, 2007-2008 saw the launch of our new publication, *HomeFront*. *National News* got a new look as it became an insert in *HomeFront* featuring "best practice" articles and inspiring stories.

External communication tools reported included more than 19,000 published articles, 12,000 print advertisements, 1,775 letters to the editor and 6,200 aired Public Service Announcements. Many units have increased the number of published photographs by submitting digital photos along with electronically sent articles.

One unit in Florida used an aerial banner to advertise a welcome home veterans program. Another put up a Cavalcade of Memories display in its public library to draw attention to the Auxiliary.

Units and departments were asked to feature our Juniors in this year's PR program and responded by sending more than 1,800 press releases featuring Junior activities and reporting 900 published articles about Junior programs. The Robert E. Coulter Jr. Unit 1941 in La Grange, Ill., taped its Americanism program and Americanism essay contest winners and then aired it on the local television station.

As shown by the 36 department reports received, public relations and the Auxiliary's public image are bound together leading to increased membership and increased public support of our programs.

Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Committee
Rita Navarrete, Albuquerque, New Mexico

Dedicated volunteers across the nation continue to serve our veterans and their families. The 2007-2008 Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation program continued to focus on recruitment of new volunteers at the 152 VA medical facilities. The American Legion Auxiliary, along with other service organizations, is experiencing a drop in the number of volunteers and hours. The table below compares data based on the system reports maintained by the Veterans Administration Voluntary Service in Washington, D.C.:

Volunteer Class	FY 08 thru 3rd Quarter	FY 07 thru 3rd Quarter	Difference
Regular	265,521	276,320	-10,799
Occasional	39237	43,439	-4,202
Totals	**304,758**	**319,759**	**-15,001**
			5%

Recruitment efforts must continue to meet ongoing demands and stop the decline in service hours. This year, 2,772 units participated at VA medical centers with $3,160,417 in donations. Departments of Arizona, Ohio and Wisconsin increased their volunteer count by at least 10 or more new VAVS volunteers. Departments of Georgia and Pennsylvania have the largest increase per member capita in active regular scheduled volunteers and volunteer hours.

Thirty-five departments report growth of recruiting volunteers in both Field and Home Services with 2,053 Field Service Volunteers and 1,520 Home Service Volunteers recruited. Field Service donations were $985,435, and $890,550 was donated under Home Service. Volunteers gave their time and resources to meet the needs of our veterans and of those still serving. Thousands of hours were spent in sewing lap robes, chemo pads, wheelchair bags, bibs and tablecloths for dining areas to name a few. Twenty-five departments reached out to members in their communities for donations that totaled more than $65,000.

The Department of Arizona reports youth with the Glendale Union Health Occupation volunteered 19,929 hours which were credited to the Carl T. Hayden VA Medical Center in Phoenix. Sponsoring student programs at local VA medical centers provides opportunity not only for students but for increasing service hours.

This year, 43 departments donated to the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival. As of this writing, $80,993.21 has been contributed. Our organization is incredibly proud to support rehabilitation efforts of veterans through the annual sponsorship of the festival.

Report of Independent Auditors

Crowe Chizek and Company LLC
Member Horwath International

Members of the National Finance Commission
The American Legion National Headquarters
Indianapolis, Indiana

We have audited the accompanying consolidated statements of financial position of The American Legion National Headquarters (Legion) as of December 31, 2007 and 2006 and the related consolidated statements of activities and cash flows for the years then ended. These consolidated financial statements are the responsibility of the Legion's management. Our responsibility is to express an opinion on these consolidated financial statements based on our audits. We did not audit the 2007 financial statements of Haynes & Partners Communications, Inc., a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Legion, which statements reflect total assets of $1,927,251 and total revenues of $7,657,726 for the year then ended. Those statements were audited by other auditors whose report has been furnished to us, and our opinion, insofar as it relates to the 2007 amounts included for Haynes & Partners Communications, Inc., is based solely on the report of the other auditors.

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 financial statements are free of material misstatement. An audit includes examining, on a test basis, evidence supporting the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. An audit also includes assessing the accounting principles used and significant estimates made by management, as well as evaluating the overall financial statement presentation. We believe that our audits and the report of other auditors provide a reasonable basis for our opinion.

In our opinion, based on our audits and the report of the other auditors, the consolidated financial statements referred to above present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of The American Legion National Headquarters as of December 31, 2007 and 2006, and the changes in its net assets and its cash flows for the years then ended in conformity with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America.

As disclosed in Note 15, during 2007 the Legion adopted new accounting guidance for postretirement benefit obligations.

Our audits were made for the purpose of forming an opinion on the consolidated financial statements taken as a whole. The supplementary information listed in the table of contents is presented for purposes of additional analysis and is not a required part of the consolidated financial statements. The consolidating information is presented for purposes of additional analysis of the consolidated financial statements rather than to present the financial position, results of operations, and cash flows of the individual entities. Such information has been subjected to the auditing procedures applied in the audits of the consolidated financial statements and, in our opinion, based on our audits and the report of the other auditors, is fairly stated in all material respects in relation to the consolidated financial statements taken as a whole.

Crowe Chizek and Company LLC

Crowe Chizek and Company LLC

Indianapolis, Indiana
April 14, 2008

The American Legion National Headquarters
Consolidated Statements of Financial Position December 31, 2007 and 2006

	2007	2006
ASSETS		
Cash and cash equivalents	$ 2,907,164	$ 2,194,217
Accounts receivable		
Emblem Division	52,579	68,333
Publications Division	1,652,269	1,423,414
Other	1,187,630	1,734,093
Prepaid expenses and deposits	637,725	703,643
Deferred membership expense	8,429,801	8,054,464
Inventories		
Emblem Division	1,917,131	1,904,223
Publications Division	439,716	599,288
Investment in affiliate (CFA)	49,407	46,938
Beneficial interest in trust	377,000	382,000
Prepaid pension expense	6,157,129	16,598,154
	23,807,551	33,708,767
Investments		
Segregated for restricted and reserved funds	24,982,939	23,503,303
Segregated for Washington, D.C. building	2,525,403	2,311,976
Overseas Graves Decoration Fund	966,878	934,935
Paid-Up-For-Life Membership Fund	36,146,083	35,938,716
Other	36,393,833	32,463,188
Special account - Endowment Fund	2,129,779	2,074,751
General account - Endowment Fund	6,094,055	5,880,916
	109,238,970	103,107,785
Property and equipment		
Washington, D.C. real estate		
Land	80,000	80,000
Building	4,484,147	4,484,147
Construction in progress	117,791	-
Indianapolis real estate		
Land	389,264	389,264
Building	3,611,779	3,611,779
Construction in progress	8,650	-
Furniture, fixtures and equipment		
National Headquarters, Indianapolis, Indiana	4,903,328	4,746,636
Washington, D.C.	863,826	860,533
Haynes and Partners Communications, Inc.	1,122,251	1,036,280
	15,581,036	15,208,639
Accumulated depreciation	(8,981,260)	(8,497,895)
	6,599,776	6,710,744
	$ 139,646,297	$ 143,527,296

	2007	2006
LIABILITIES		
Accounts payable	$ 1,415,590	$ 1,888,718
Scholarships payable	1,001,603	958,760
Deposits on emblem merchandise sales	122,175	104,731
Deferred advertising income	157,555	125,225
Deferred dues income	29,968,820	20,939,414
Deferred income - direct membership solicitation	1,191,152	2,012,732
Accrued vacation benefits	632,078	620,676
Other liabilities	591,715	525,188
Notes payable	2,446,765	2,614,781
Deferred dues income - Paid-Up-For-Life memberships	20,744,774	14,396,317
Life memberships due to state and local posts	23,872,855	24,357,149
	82,145,082	68,543,691
NET ASSETS		
Unrestricted - general	965,466	20,401,519
Unrestricted - designated		
Citizens Flag Alliance	49,407	46,938
Computer reserve	500,000	500,000
Convention reserve	100,000	100,000
Convention stabilization	325,085	280,980
Employee insurance stabilization	100,000	100,000
Paid-Up-For-Life Membership Fund	-	697,601
Real estate reserve	3,474,013	3,115,407
Reserve fund	2,196,123	2,170,264
Restricted fund	22,770,865	21,313,681
Youth programs (Life Insurance Plan)	2,600,656	3,180,744
Veterans' rehabilitation/child welfare (special account)	2,000,000	2,000,000
Sons of the American Legion	510,122	542,152
Tedrow fund	998,051	962,975
American Legion Endowment Fund	(156,195)	(190,282)
	36,433,593	55,221,979
Temporarily restricted		
Buick scholarship	736,450	710,552
Overseas Graves Decoration Fund	971,910	936,505
Samsung scholarship	2,553,839	2,390,847
American Legacy Fund	2,148,971	1,564,493
National Emergency Fund	2,311,796	1,979,189
Others	554,534	632,499
	9,277,500	8,214,085
Permanently restricted		
Samsung scholarship	5,000,000	5,000,000
American Legion Endowment Fund	6,790,122	6,547,541
	11,790,122	11,547,541
Total net assets	57,501,215	74,983,605
	$ 139,646,297	$ 143,527,296

(Continued)

See accompanying notes to consolidated financial statements.

The American Legion National Headquarters
Consolidated Statement of Activities Year Ended December 31, 2007

	Unrestricted General	Unrestricted Designated	Unrestricted Total	Temporarily Restricted	Permanently Restricted	Grand Total
Revenue, gains and other support						
National member dues	$ 19,774,094	$ 3,184,272	$ 22,958,366	$ -	$ -	$ 22,958,366
Direct membership solicitations	3,988,910	-	3,988,910	-	-	3,988,910
Member service fees income	1,051,583	305,836	1,357,419	-	-	1,357,419
Affinity income	464,930	-	464,930	-	-	464,930
Sales of emblem items	10,997,615	-	10,997,615	-	-	10,997,615
Advertising	11,035,239	-	11,035,239	-	-	11,035,239
Contributions	659,586	-	659,586	1,065,892	93,287	1,818,765
Label and printing fees	1,524,051	-	1,524,051	-	-	1,524,051
Sales - HPC	448,755	-	448,755	-	-	448,755
Interest and dividends, net of trustee fees of $315,364	683,852	1,483,189	2,167,041	905,151	-	3,072,192
Net realized gains (losses)	13,876	(184,423)	(170,547)	249	(36,025)	(206,323)
Other	1,941,124	297,150	2,238,274	120	-	2,238,394
	52,583,615	5,086,024	57,669,639	1,971,412	57,262	59,698,313
Net assets released from restriction	819,788	308,732	1,128,520	(1,128,520)	-	-
Net assets released from designation	5,178,250	(5,178,250)	-	-	-	-
Total revenues, gains and other support	58,581,653	216,506	58,798,159	842,892	57,262	59,698,313
Expenses						
Salaries	12,192,268	-	12,192,268	-	-	12,192,268
Employee benefits	3,593,958	-	3,593,958	-	-	3,593,958
Cost of sales - Legion	8,486,117	-	8,486,117	-	-	8,486,117
Cost of sales - HPC	143,437	-	143,437	-	-	143,437
Direct publication	12,638,154	-	12,638,154	-	-	12,638,154
Executive and staff travel	769,636	-	769,636	-	-	769,636
Commission and committee	1,614,898	-	1,614,898	-	-	1,614,898
Printing and postage	3,090,640	-	3,090,640	-	-	3,090,640
Scholarships, grants and awards	1,401,626	-	1,401,626	-	-	1,401,626
Office and other operating	11,722,588	-	11,722,588	-	-	11,722,588
Occupancy and usage	2,210,753	-	2,210,753	-	-	2,210,753
Special projects and programs	3,643,882	-	3,643,882	-	-	3,643,882
	61,507,957	-	61,507,957	-	-	61,507,957
Change in net assets from operations	(2,926,304)	216,506	(2,709,798)	842,892	57,262	(1,809,644)
Net unrealized gains - investments	95,977	767,444	863,421	220,523	185,319	1,269,263
Net unrealized loss - PUFL	(5,895,696)	(697,600)	(6,593,296)	-	-	(6,593,296)
Amortization of pension loss	(512,654)	-	(512,654)	-	-	(512,654)
Effect of adoption of FASB Statement No. 158	(9,836,059)	-	(9,836,059)	-	-	(9,836,059)
Change in net assets	(19,074,736)	286,350	(18,788,386)	1,063,415	242,581	(17,482,390)
Net assets, beginning of year	20,401,519	34,820,460	55,221,979	8,214,085	11,547,541	74,983,605
Transfer of funds	(361,317)	361,317	-	-	-	-
Net assets, end of year	$ 965,466	$ 35,468,127	$ 36,433,593	$ 9,277,500	$ 11,790,122	$ 57,501,215

See accompanying notes to consolidated financial statements.

The American Legion National Headquarters
Consolidated Statement of Activities Year Ended December 31, 2006

	Unrestricted General	Unrestricted Designated	Unrestricted Total	Temporarily Restricted	Permanently Restricted	Grand Total
Revenue, gains and other support						
National member dues	$ 19,674,156	$ 2,107,854	$ 21,782,010	$ -	$ -	$ 21,782,010
Direct membership solicitations	4,512,009	-	4,512,009	-	-	4,512,009
Member service fees income	1,212,994	402,531	1,615,525	-	-	1,615,525
Affinity income	427,628	-	427,628	-	-	427,628
Sales of emblem items	11,098,300	-	11,098,300	-	-	11,098,300
Advertising	9,655,322	-	9,655,322	-	-	9,655,322
Contributions	1,054,780	-	1,054,780	1,045,241	84,519	2,184,540
Label and printing fees	1,645,489	-	1,645,489	-	-	1,645,489
Sales - HPC	302,516	-	302,516	-	-	302,516
Interest and dividends, net of trustee fees of $274,026	682,582	1,419,172	2,101,754	837,529	-	2,939,283
Net realized gains (losses)	(143,151)	(339,307)	(482,458)	(759)	(44,368)	(527,585)
Other	1,203,702	895,000	2,098,702	-	-	2,098,702
	51,326,327	4,485,250	55,811,577	1,882,011	40,151	57,733,739
Net assets released from restriction	651,232	293,599	944,831	(944,831)	-	-
Net assets released from designation	5,250,273	(5,250,273)	-	-	-	-
Total revenues, gains and other support	57,227,832	(471,424)	56,756,408	937,180	40,151	57,733,739
Expenses						
Salaries	11,739,820	-	11,739,820	-	-	11,739,820
Employee benefits	2,979,361	-	2,979,361	-	-	2,979,361
Cost of sales - Legion	8,383,689	-	8,383,689	-	-	8,383,689
Cost of sales - HPC	45,165	-	45,165	-	-	45,165
Direct publication	11,714,999	-	11,714,999	-	-	11,714,999
Executive and staff travel	799,325	-	799,325	-	-	799,325
Commission and committee	1,492,729	-	1,492,729	-	-	1,492,729
Printing and postage	3,007,256	-	3,007,256	-	-	3,007,256
Scholarships, grants and awards	1,386,448	-	1,386,448	-	-	1,386,448
Office and other operating	10,772,621	-	10,772,621	-	-	10,772,621
Occupancy and usage	2,109,024	-	2,109,024	-	-	2,109,024
Special projects and programs	3,447,692	-	3,447,692	-	-	3,447,692
	57,878,129	-	57,878,129	-	-	57,878,129
Change in net assets from operations	(650,297)	(471,424)	(1,121,721)	937,180	40,151	(144,390)
Net unrealized gains (losses) - investments	47,642	373,949	421,591	(36,728)	(16,649)	368,214
Net unrealized gain - PUFL	1,066,923	-	1,066,923	-	-	1,066,923
Amortization of pension loss	(437,336)	-	(437,336)	-	-	(437,336)
Change in net assets	26,932	(97,475)	(70,543)	900,452	23,502	853,411
Net assets, beginning of year	21,589,719	33,702,803	55,292,522	7,313,633	11,524,039	74,130,194
Transfer of funds	(1,215,132)	1,215,132	-	-	-	-
Net assets, end of year	$ 20,401,519	$ 34,820,460	$ 55,221,979	$ 8,214,085	$ 11,547,541	$ 74,983,605

See accompanying notes to consolidated financial statements.

The American Legion National Headquarters
Consolidated Statements of Cash Flows Years Ended December 31, 2007 and 2006

	2007	2006
Cash flows from operating activities		
Change in net assets	$ (17,482,390)	$ 853,411
Adjustments to reconcile change in net assets to net cash from operating activities		
Depreciation expense	736,914	749,570
Loss on sale of fixed assets	4,137	4,168
Realized loss on sale of investments	206,323	527,585
Unrealized gain on investments	(1,269,263)	(368,214)
(Gain) loss on Paid-Up-For-Life annuity	6,593,296	(1,066,923)
Effect of adoption of FASB Statement No. 158	9,836,059	-
Amortization of pension loss	512,654	437,336
Contributions restricted for long-term purposes	(93,287)	(84,519)
Accounts receivable	333,362	(1,101,827)
Prepaid expenses and deposits	158,230	18,692
Deferred membership expense	(375,337)	(724,123)
Inventories	146,664	65,356
Beneficial interest in trust	5,000	23,500
Accounts and scholarships payable	(430,285)	(204,840)
Deferred income	7,528,467	2,346,890
Other accrued liabilities	77,929	(289,523)
Net cash from operating activities	6,488,473	1,186,539
Cash flows from investing activities		
Purchase of property and equipment	(630,083)	(452,544)
Purchase of investments	(66,539,671)	(44,895,949)
Sales and maturities of investments	61,471,426	44,512,780
Investment in affiliate (CFA)	(2,469)	1,074
Net cash from investing activities	(5,700,797)	(834,639)
Cash flows from financing activities		
Contributions restricted for long-term purposes	93,287	84,519
Payments on loan	(168,016)	(159,361)
Net cash from financing activities	(74,729)	(74,842)
Net increase (decrease) in cash and cash equivalents	712,947	277,058
Cash and cash equivalents, beginning of year	2,194,217	1,917,159
Cash and cash equivalents, end of year	$ 2,907,164	$ 2,194,217
Supplemental cash flows information		
Income taxes paid, net of refunds received	$ 120,462	$ 161,198
Interest paid	134,541	143,195

See accompanying notes to consolidated financial statements.

The American Legion National Headquarters
Notes to Consolidated Financial Statements December 31, 2007 and 2006

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 U.S. Congress on Sept. 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 45 percent of the Legion's income is derived from membership dues (including amounts allocated for magazine subscriptions). An additional 15 percent is generated through advertising for *The American Legion Magazine*. Another significant source of income is Emblem Sales, which includes the sale of apparel, jewelry and other items bearing the American Legion emblem. Income is expended by the Legion on several different programs, including *The American Legion Magazine*, Emblem Sales, veterans assistance and rehabilitation, youth programs and others. The Legion's youth programs include American Legion baseball, the National Oratorical Contest and Boys Nation.

Principles of Consolidation: The consolidated financial statements include the accounts of The American Legion National Headquarters and its wholly owned subsidiaries, Haynes and Partners Communications, Inc. (HPC); the American Legion Endowment Fund Corporation (ALEF); and the National Emergency Fund (NEF) (collectively, the Legion). All material interorganizational accounts and transactions have been eliminated in consolidation. Haynes and Partners Communications, Inc., an Indiana corporation, is a full-service, direct marketing and advertising agency whose services include innovative marketing and creative automated mailing. The majority of its sales are to the Legion. The remaining sales are made primarily within the State of Indiana. The American Legion Endowment Fund Corp., a tax-exempt Indiana corporation, was created to provide permanent funding for the rehabilitation of U.S. 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 standards generally accepted in the United States of America.

Financial Statement Presentation: The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Statement of Financial Accounting Standards (SFAS) No. 117, Financial Statements of Not-For-Profit Organizations. SFAS No. 117 requires, among other things, that the financial statements report the changes in and total of each of the net asset classes, based upon donor restrictions, as applicable. Net assets are to be classified as unrestricted, temporarily restricted and permanently restricted.

The following classes of net assets are maintained:

Unrestricted Net Assets – The unrestricted net asset class includes general assets and liabilities of the Legion, as well as assets and liabilities designated by the National Executive Committee, the governing body of the Legion. The unrestricted net assets of the Legion may be used at the discretion of management to support the Legion's purposes and operations.

Temporarily Restricted Net Assets – The temporarily restricted net asset class includes assets of the Legion related to gifts with explicit donor-imposed restrictions that have not been met as to specified purpose, or to later periods of time or after specified dates. Unconditional promises to give that are due in future periods and are not permanently restricted are classified as temporarily restricted net assets.

Permanently Restricted Net Assets – The permanently restricted net asset class includes assets of the Legion for which the donor has stipulated that the contribution be maintained in perpetuity. Donor-imposed restrictions limiting the use of the assets or its economic benefit neither expire with the passage of time nor can be removed by satisfying a specific purpose.

Use of Estimates in Preparation of Financial Statements: The preparation of financial statements in conformity with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America 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.

Cash and Cash Equivalents: Cash and cash equivalents consist of bank deposits in accounts that are federally insured up to $100,000 per financial institution. Additionally, for purposes of the consolidated statement of cash flows, the Legion considers all highly liquid investments purchased with an original maturity of three months or less to be cash equivalents.

Inventory: Inventory consists of Emblem items held for sale, magazine paper and publication rights, and is stated at the lower of cost or market. Inventory items are valued at average cost. Supplies not intended for sale are expensed when purchased.

Investments: Investments held by Haynes and Partners Communications, Inc. (HPC), a wholly owned subsidiary of the Legion, are classified as held-to-maturity securities and are carried at amortized cost. Realized gains or losses are determined based on the amortized cost of the specific security sold. Interest and dividend income, adjusted by amortization of purchase premium or discount, is included in earnings. Securities with declines in fair value below amortized cost that are other than temporary are written down to fair value by a charge to earnings.

All other Legion investments are carried at fair value. Realized and unrealized gains and losses are reflected in the consolidated statements of activities. Premiums or discounts on investments are generally recognized at the time of disposal or maturity.

Property and Equipment: Expenditures for property and equipment and items that substantially increase the useful lives of existing assets and are greater than $300 are capitalized at cost. The Legion provides for depreciation on the straight-line method at rates designated to depreciate the costs of assets over their estimated useful lives.

Depreciation on buildings is computed on the straight-line method using a 30-year life. All other capital assets are depreciated over lives ranging from three to seven years.

Collections: The Legion owns many collectible military-related items and historical documents that 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 or are in the process of being appraised for insurance purposes.

Support and Revenue: The Legion reports gifts of cash and other assets as restricted support if they are received with donor stipulations that limit the use of the donated assets. When a donor restriction expires – that is, when a stipulated time restriction ends or purpose restriction is accomplished – temporarily restricted net assets are reclassified to unrestricted net assets and reported in the statement of activities as net assets released from restrictions.

Dues Income and Expense: Dues are recognized as income over the applicable membership period, which is on a calendar-year basis.

In addition to other methods of obtaining new members, the Legion uses direct mail and other direct marketing approaches. The income generated from direct membership solicitation is recognized over the applicable membership period (calendar year). The direct-response expenses incurred in obtaining new members are deferred and written off 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. ALEF and NEF are exempt from federal income taxes under Section 501(c)(3) of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code. None of these organizations is considered to be a private foundation. The Legion is subject to income tax on unrelated business income. The Legion paid and incurred expense of $0 and $0 in income taxes in 2007 and 2006.

HPC records income-tax expense based on the amount of taxes due on its tax return plus deferred taxes computed based on the expected future tax consequences of temporary differences between the carrying amounts and tax bases of assets and liabilities, using enacted tax rates. Federal and state income tax expense is recorded for HPC, a for-profit corporation, as incurred, and is disclosed in Note 14.

Fair Value of Financial Instruments: The carrying amount of all financial instruments of the Legion approximate their fair values, with the exception of held-to-maturity investments as disclosed in Note 5.

Expense Allocation: Expenses have been classified as program services, management and general, member development and fundraising based on actual direct expenditures. Additionally, some expenses are allocated among departments based upon estimates of the

The American Legion National Headquarters
Notes to Consolidated Financial Statements December 31, 2007 and 2006

amount of time spent by Legion employees performing services for these departments.

Reclassifications: Certain prior year amounts have been reclassified to conform with the current year presentation. These reclassifications had no effect on net income or net assets.

NOTE 2 – COLLECTIONS

The Legion owns many collectible military-related items and historical documents that were not recorded as they were acquired. It is often impracticable to determine a value for collections and accordingly, the Legion has concluded that they need not be capitalized. These items have been appraised, or are in the process of being appraised for insurance purposes, and are as follows:

	Appraisal Date	Replacement Value
World War I Posters	2/10/2005	$ 461,769
World War II Posters	03/11/2005	472,919
Military Unit Histories	03/18/2005	112,410
Fine Art Collection	10/14/2005	695,600
Firearms and Uniforms Collection	3/24/2006	99,950
Original GI Bill	not complete	-
Other Collections	not complete	-

NOTE 3 – INVESTMENT IN AFFILIATE

The Legion, in conjunction with approximately 120 other organizations, has created a nonprofit corporation known as The Citizens Flag Alliance, Inc. (CFA), for the purpose of aiding in the campaign to secure a constitutional amendment empowering Congress and the states to enact legislation to protect the flag of the United States of America from physical desecration.

CFA recognized a decrease in net assets of $2,469 and $1,074 in 2007 and 2006, respectively. Accordingly, the Legion's investment in CFA has been decreased by these amounts and corresponding charges have been reflected in unrestricted designated net assets for 2007 and 2006.

NOTE 4 – BENEFICIAL INTEREST IN CHARITABLE LEAD TRUST

ALEF has been named a beneficiary of a charitable lead trust. Under the charitable trust, ALEF is to receive quarterly distributions in the amount of $9,919 until December 2020, or until the funds of the trust are exhausted. Based on the terms of the trust and a 5.0-percent discount rate in 2007 and a 5.6-percent discount rate in 2006, the present value of future benefits expected to be received by ALEF was estimated to be $377,000 and $382,000 at Dec. 31, 2007 and 2006, respectively.

NOTE 5 – INVESTMENTS

The carrying amount, unrealized gains and losses, and fair value of agency and municipal bonds held-to-maturity held by HPC at Dec. 31 are as follows:

2007	Carrying Amount	Unrealized Gains	Unrealized Losses	Fair Value
Due within 1 year	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
Due 1-5 years	-	-	-	-
Due more than 10 years	290,000	-	-	290,000
Total	$ 290,000	$ -	$ -	$ 290,000

2006	Carrying Amount	Unrealized Gains	Unrealized Losses	Fair Value
Due within 1 year	$ 451,197	$ -	$ 1,760	$ 449,437
Due 1-5 years	448,142	-	7,986	440,156
Due more than 10 years	300,000	-	-	300,000
Total	$ 1,199,339	$ -	$ 9,746	$ 1,189,593

The carrying amount plus accrued interest for these investments was $291,513 and $1,214,221 at Dec. 31, 2007 and 2006, respectively.

The market and cost values for all other investments held by the Legion at Dec. 31, 2007 and 2006 are as follows:

	2007		2006	
	Cost	Market	Cost	Market
Money market accounts	$31,437,549	$31,437,549	$19,497,293	$19,497,293
U.S. government obligations	54,441,050	54,468,083	62,443,938	60,943,089
State and municipal bonds	669,300	679,509	139,352	144,057
Corporate and foreign bonds	11,867,715	11,657,987	11,360,868	11,121,690
Common and preferred stocks	8,586,178	9,923,360	6,910,473	8,061,809
Mutual funds	-	-	1,073,204	1,177,004
Accrued interest	780,969	780,969	948,622	948,622
	$107,782,761	$108,947,457	$102,373,750	$101,893,564

NOTE 6 – LONG-TERM DEBT

In 2003, the Legion refinanced its long-term debt on its facility for Emblem Sales, information technology, member benefits and HPC. This debt is payable in monthly installments of $25,213, including interest, beginning July 30, 2003, with a stated rate of 5.3 percent and final payment due Aug. 1, 2018. The outstanding balance on long-term debt is $2,446,765 and $2,614,781 for 2007 and 2006.

The future maturities of the long-term debt are as follows:

2008	$ 176,320
2009	185,939
2010	196,036
2011	206,682
2012	217,907
Thereafter	1,463,881
Total	$ 2,446,765

Interest expense was $134,541 and $143,195 for the years ended Dec. 31, 2007 and 2006, respectively.

NOTE 7 – LEASES

The Legion has several non-cancelable operating leases, primarily for facilities, computer equipment and copiers that expire at various dates through the year 2011. HPC leases equipment under operating leases that expire at various dates through 2011. Rent expense under these leases for the years ended Dec. 31, 2007 and 2006, was $506,321 and $398,913, respectively.

Minimum lease commitments are as follows:

2008	$ 501,137
2009	465,089
2010	438,633
2011	173,200
	$ 1,578,059

In addition, the Legion has a lease with the State of Indiana for rental of the National Headquarters building in Indianapolis through June 30, 2010. The lease can be renewed at the option of the Legion for eight additional four-year periods. 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 2007 and 2006 was approximately $608,000 and $520,000, respectively. Insurance coverage is included in the Legion's general insurance policy.

NOTE 8 – 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 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, a 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 9 – RESTRICTED AND RESERVE DESIGNATED FUNDS

The restricted fund is designated for use by the Legion's National Finance Commission and National Executive Committee. 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 percent of the prior year's defined net income from operations to the restricted fund. The Legion made no transfers to the restricted fund in 2007 and 2006.

The reserve fund is also designated for use by the National Finance Commission and the National Executive Committee. However, earnings of the reserve fund may be used for the general operations of the Legion. The principal can be expended only by action of the Legion at its national convention, or by a two-thirds affirmative vote of the National Executive Committee in two successive meetings not less than 60 days apart.

NOTE 10 – LIFE INSURANCE PLAN

In October 1992, the National Executive Committee approved a resolution to terminate the Legion's Life Insurance Trust. Upon dissolution in April 1993, funds remaining in the trust totaling $4,285,984 were transferred to a segregated bank trust account (named The American Legion Life Insurance Plan) under control of the Legion for use in youth programs.

The Legion's National Executive Committee has directed that monies within The American Legion Life Insurance Plan be used to fund oratorical contests, Boys Nation, American Legion Baseball, and other youth programs of the Legion. At December 31, 2007, $1,062,001 in funds had been approved for use in designated programs during 2008.

NOTE 11 – PERMANENTLY RESTRICTED NET ASSETS

The Legion received $5,000,000 from The Samsung Group in 1996. The principal is to be permanently endowed and the income used to fund undergraduate scholarships for descendants of Korean War veterans and other wars in which U.S. servicemembers participated. Such scholarships are administered by the Legion.

Contributions to The American Legion Endowment Fund are recorded as increases in permanently restricted net assets, the income from which is to be used to support the Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation and Children & Youth activities of the Legion.

NOTE 12 – NET ASSETS RELEASED FROM DESIGNATION

Net assets were released from designations by satisfying the designations previously established.

	2007	2006
Purpose designations accomplished		
Paid-Up-For-Life memberships	$ 3,419,347	$ 2,332,230
Youth programs (Life Insurance Plan)	1,089,623	1,089,623
Sons of The American Legion	50,000	599,520
Citizens Flag Alliance, Inc.	47,531	661,074
Other	571,749	567,826
	$ 5,178,250	$ 5,250,273

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.

	2007	2006
Purpose restrictions accomplished		
Overseas Graves Decoration	$24,540	$24,412
Scholarships and grants (including relief aid)	703,402	564,836
Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation and Children & Youth programs	400,578	355,583
	$ 1,128,520	$944,831

NOTE 14 – INCOME TAXES

The provision for income taxes consists of the following:

	2007	2006
Income-tax expense		
Currently payable		
Federal	$78,452	$158,843
State	21,106	44,588
Deferred		
Federal	15,000	(1,300)
State	(5,700)	(1,800)
	$108,858	$200,331

The components of the net deferred tax (liability) asset are as follows:

	2007	2006
Asset		
Net operating loss carry-forward	$16,900	$15,300
Liability		
Other	(62,700)	(51,800)
	$(45,800)	$(36,500)

The deferred tax asset and liability are included in other prepaid expenses and deposits and other liabilities, respectively, in the statement of financial position.

The tax provision is higher than the statutory provision due to the effect of non-deductible expenses.

NOTE 15 – EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

The Legion has a defined-benefit pension plan covering substantially all of its employees as well as those of certain affiliated and subordinated groups. The plan was established in 1944 by vote of the Legion's national convention. Contributions to the plan are made by the Legion and other participating groups on the basis of annual actuarial valuations.

In September 2006, the FASB issued SFAS No. 158, Employers' Accounting for Defined Benefit Pension and Other Postretirement Plans – an amendment of FASB Statements No. 87, 88, 106 and 132(R). This statement requires an employer to recognize the overfunded or underfunded status of a defined benefit postretirement plan as an asset or liability in its statement of financial position and to recognize changes in the funded status in the year in which the changes occur through comprehensive income. Defined benefit plan assets and obligations are to be measured as of the date of the employer's fiscal year-end. An employer without publicly traded equity securities was required to adopt this standard for fiscal years ending after June 15, 2007. Accordingly, the Legion adopted this standard at year end 2007.

The plan's assets consist of investments in equity and debt securities. The asset investment policy is a lower-risk strategy. The following table sets forth the Legion's target allocation for 2007 and percentage of plan assets at Dec. 31, 2007, and 2006.

	2007	2006
Asset Category and Target Allocation		
Equity Securities (30 - 40%)	34%	33%
Debt Securities (50 - 70%)	64%	65%
Other (0 - 10%)	2%	2%

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.

	2007	2006
Weighted-average assumptions		
Discount rate	5.91%	5.58%
Expected return on plan assets	8.00%	8.00%
Rate of compensation increase	2.00%	2.00%

The American Legion National Headquarters
Notes to Consolidated Financial Statements December 31, 2007 and 2006

NOTE 15 – EMPLOYEE BENEFITS *(Continued)*

The following table sets forth the Legion's portion of the plan's funded status and amounts recognized in the Legion's consolidated statement of financial position at Dec. 31, 2007 and 2006.

	2007	2006
Benefit obligation	$(45,271,515)	$(44,143,935)
Fair value of plan assets	51,428,644	48,541,349
Funded status	$ 6,157,129	$ 4,397,414
Service cost	$ 1,443,498	
Interest cost	2,407,151	
Actual return on assets	(4,232,273)	
Amortization of prior service costs	422,978	
Amortization of (gain) loss	512,654	
Difference between expected and actual return on assets	418,657	
Benefit cost	$ 972,665	
Net loss	$1,457,054	
Prior service cost	8,379,005	
Effect of adoption of FASB Statement No. 158	$9,836,059	
Prepaid benefit cost recognized in the statement of financial position	$15,993,480	$16,598,154
Accumulated benefit obligation	43,280,204	42,153,214
Vested benefit obligation	42,612,410	
Benefit cost	$ 972,665	$ 379,962
Employer contribution	396,039	260,274
Benefits paid	1,741,017	1,855,425
Measurement date	12/31/2007	12/31/2006

Estimated future benefit payments:

2008	$2,462,000
2009	2,681,387
2010	2,895,488
2011	2,970,409
2012	3,085,431
Years 2013-2017	16,811,534

HPC maintains a defined-contribution plan under Section 401(k) of the Internal Revenue Code. Elective deferrals are available to employees 21 years of age who have completed one year of eligible service. HPC may make discretionary contributions to this plan. HPC's discretionary contributions to the plan in 2007 and 2006 were $19,537 and $53,673, respectively.

NOTE 16 – FUNCTIONAL EXPENSES

The following represents a functional breakdown of The American Legion National Headquarters' expenses by program and supporting services.

	2007	2006
Program services		
Veterans programs and services	$ 33,428,555	$ 31,934,970
Americanism and Children & Youth activities	3,105,968	2,783,695
Flag education and legislation	47,531	661,075
	36,582,054	35,379,740
Supporting services		
Management and general	15,651,318	13,765,917
Member development	9,189,187	8,653,729
Fundraising	85,398	78,743
	24,925,903	22,498,389
	$ 61,507,957	$ 57,878,129

Member development includes direct response advertising expense of $6,778,822 and $6,104,646 for the years ended Dec. 31, 2007 and 2006.

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 Legion's 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 position of the Legion.

The American Legion National Headquarters Reconciliation of Internal Financial Statements to Audited Financial Statements Years Ended December 31, 2007 and 2006

	2007	2006
Change in net assets – unaudited internal financial statements	$ (1,926,304)	$ (650,297)
Reduction in investment in HPC – dividend distribution	(1,000,000)	-
Change in net assets from operations – unrestricted general	(2,926,304)	(650,297)
Change in net assets before net unrealized gains not included in internal financials		
Unrestricted designated	216,506	(471,424)
Temporarily restricted	842,892	937,180
Permanently restricted	57,262	40,151
	(1,809,644)	(144,390)
Net unrealized gains (losses) – investments		
General	95,977	47,642
Unrestricted designated	767,444	373,949
Temporarily restricted	220,523	(36,728)
Permanently restricted	185,319	(16,649)
	1,269,263	368,214
Net unrealized gain (loss) – PUFL	(6,593,296)	1,066,923
Amortization of pension loss	(512,654)	(437,336)
Effect of adoption of FASB Statement No. 158	(9,836,059)	-
Change in net assets – audited financial statements	$ (17,482,390)	$ 853,411

The American Legion National Headquarters
Consolidating Statement of Financial Position December 31, 2007

	American Legion National Headquarters	American Legion Endowment Fund	National Emergency Fund	Haynes and Partners Communications, Inc.	Eliminations	Total
ASSETS						
Cash and cash equivalents	$ 2,104,556	$ 31,197	$ 8,297	$ 763,114	$ -	$ 2,907,164
Accounts receivable						
Emblems	52,579	-	-	-	-	52,579
Publications	1,652,269	-	-	-	-	1,652,269
Related party	-	-	609	411,857	(412,466)	-
Other	1,168,031	-	-	64,081	(44,482)	1,187,630
Prepaid expenses and deposits	526,851	1,896	-	108,978	-	637,725
Deferred membership expense	8,429,801	-	-	-	-	8,429,801
Due from American Legion Endowment Fund	2,000,000	-	-	-	(2,000,000)	-
Inventories						
Emblem division	1,917,131	-	-	-	-	1,917,131
Publication division	439,716	-	-	-	-	439,716
Investment in affiliate (CFA)	49,407	-	-	-	-	49,407
Beneficial interest in trust	-	377,000	-	-	-	377,000
Prepaid pension expense	6,157,129	-	-	-	-	6,157,129
	24,497,470	410,093	8,906	1,348,030	(2,456,948)	23,807,551
Investments						
Segregated for restricted and reserved funds	24,982,939	-	-	-	-	24,982,939
Segregated for Washington, D.C. building	2,525,403	-	-	-	-	2,525,403
Overseas Graves Decoration Fund	966,878	-	-	-	-	966,878
Paid-Up-For-Life Membership Fund	36,146,083	-	-	-	-	36,146,083
Other	33,799,430	-	2,302,890	291,513	-	36,393,833
Special account - Endowment Fund	-	2,129,779	-	-	-	2,129,779
General account - Endowment Fund	-	6,094,055	-	-	-	6,094,055
Investment in HPC	1,501,572	-	-	-	(1,501,572)	-
	99,922,305	8,223,834	2,302,890	291,513	(1,501,572)	109,238,970
Property and equipment						
Indianapolis real estate						
Land	389,264	-	-	-	-	389,264
Building	3,611,779	-	-	-	-	3,611,779
Construction in progress	8,650	-	-	-	-	8,650
Washington, D.C. real estate						
Land	80,000	-	-	-	-	80,000
Building	4,484,147	-	-	-	-	4,484,147
Construction in progress	117,791	-	-	-	-	117,791
Furniture, fixtures and equipment						
National Headquarters, Indianapolis	4,903,328	-	-	-	-	4,903,328
Washington, D.C.	863,826	-	-	-	-	863,826
Haynes and Partners Communications, Inc.	-	-	-	1,122,251	-	1,122,251
Accumulated depreciation	(8,146,717)	-	-	(834,543)	-	(8,981,260)
	6,312,068	-	-	287,708	-	6,599,776
Total assets	$ 130,731,843	$ 8,633,927	$ 2,311,796	$ 1,927,251	$ (3,958,520)	$ 139,646,297

The American Legion National Headquarters
Consolidating Statement of Financial Position December 31, 2007

	American Legion National Headquarters	American Legion Endowment Fund	National Emergency Fund	Haynes and Partners Communications, Inc.	Eliminations	Total
LIABILITIES						
Accounts payable	$ 1,582,480	$ -	$ -	$ 245,576	$ (412,466)	$ 1,415,590
Scholarships payable	1,001,603	-	-	-	-	1,001,603
Accounts payable - Legion	-	2,000,000	-	44,482	(2,044,482)	-
Deposits on emblem merchandise sales	122,175	-	-	-	-	122,175
Deferred advertising income	157,555	-	-	-	-	157,555
Deferred dues income	29,968,820	-	-	-	-	29,968,820
Deferred income - direct membership solicitation	1,191,152	-	-	-	-	1,191,152
Accrued vacation benefits	632,078	-	-	-	-	632,078
Other liabilities	456,094	-	-	135,621	-	591,715
Notes payable	2,446,765	-	-	-	-	2,446,765
Deferred dues income - Paid-Up-For-Life Memberships	20,744,774	-	-	-	-	20,744,774
Life memberships due to state and local posts	23,872,855	-	-	-	-	23,872,855
	82,176,351	2,000,000	-	425,679	(2,456,948)	82,145,082
NET ASSETS						
Unrestricted - general	965,466	-	-	-	-	965,466
Unrestricted - designated						
Citizens Flag Alliance	49,407	-	-	-	-	49,407
Computer reserve	500,000	-	-	-	-	500,000
Convention reserve	100,000	-	-	-	-	100,000
Convention stabilization	325,085	-	-	-	-	325,085
Employee insurance stabilization	100,000	-	-	-	-	100,000
Real estate reserve	3,474,013	-	-	-	-	3,474,013
Reserve fund	2,196,123	-	-	-	-	2,196,123
Restricted fund	22,770,865	-	-	-	-	22,770,865
Youth program (Life Insurance Plan)	2,600,656	-	-	-	-	2,600,656
Veterans' rehabilitation / child welfare	2,000,000	-	-	-	-	2,000,000
Sons of the American Legion	510,122	-	-	-	-	510,122
Tedrow fund	998,051	-	-	-	-	998,051
Endowment Fund	-	(156,195)	-	-	-	(156,195)
	36,589,788	(156,195)	-	-	-	36,433,593
Temporarily restricted						
Buick scholarship	736,450	-	-	-	-	736,450
Overseas Graves Decoration Fund	971,910	-	-	-	-	971,910
Samsung scholarship	2,553,839	-	-	-	-	2,553,839
American Legacy Fund	2,148,971	-	-	-	-	2,148,971
National Emergency Fund	-	-	2,311,796	-	-	2,311,796
Others	554,534	-	-	-	-	554,534
	6,965,704	-	2,311,796	-	-	9,277,500
Permanently restricted						
Samsung scholarship	5,000,000	-	-	-	-	5,000,000
Endowment Fund	-	6,790,122	-	-	-	6,790,122
	5,000,000	6,790,122	-	-	-	11,790,122
Shareholders' equity						
Common stock	-	-	-	1,000	(1,000)	-
Additional paid-in capital	-	-	-	397,577	(397,577)	-
Retained earnings	-	-	-	1,102,995	(1,102,995)	-
Total net assets	48,555,492	6,633,927	2,311,796	1,501,572	(1,501,572)	57,501,215
	$ 130,731,843	$ 8,633,927	$ 2,311,796	$ 1,927,251	$ (3,958,520)	$ 139,646,297

The American Legion National Headquarters
Consolidating Statement of Financial Position December 31, 2006

	American Legion National Headquarters	American Legion Endowment Fund	National Emergency Fund	Haynes and Partners Communications, Inc.	Eliminations	Total
ASSETS						
Cash and cash equivalents	$ 1,455,778	$ 18,453	$ 16,588	$ 703,398	$ -	$ 2,194,217
Accounts receivable						
Emblems	68,333	-	-	-	-	68,333
Publications	1,423,414	-	-	-	-	1,423,414
Related party	-	-	495	502,548	(503,043)	-
Other	1,733,851	-	-	49,778	(49,536)	1,734,093
Prepaid expenses and deposits	623,890	1,959	-	77,794	-	703,643
Deferred membership expense	8,054,464	-	-	-	-	8,054,464
Due from American Legion Endowment Fund	2,000,000	-	-	-	(2,000,000)	-
Inventories						
Emblem division	1,904,223	-	-	-	-	1,904,223
Publication division	599,288	-	-	-	-	599,288
Investment in affiliate (CFA)	46,938	-	-	-	-	46,938
Prepaid pension expense	16,598,154	-	-	-	-	16,598,154
Beneficial interest in trust	-	382,000	-	-	-	382,000
	34,508,333	402,412	17,083	1,333,518	(2,552,579)	33,708,767
Investments						
Segregated for restricted and reserved funds	23,503,303	-	-	-	-	23,503,303
Segregated for Washington, D.C. building	2,311,976	-	-	-	-	2,311,976
Overseas Graves Decoration Fund	934,935	-	-	-	-	934,935
Paid-Up-For-Life Membership Fund	35,938,716	-	-	-	-	35,938,716
Other	29,286,861	-	1,962,106	1,214,221	-	32,463,188
Special account - Endowment Fund	-	2,074,751	-	-	-	2,074,751
General account - Endowment Fund	-	5,880,916	-	-	-	5,880,916
Investment in HPC	2,304,493	-	-	-	(2,304,493)	-
	94,280,284	7,955,667	1,962,106	1,214,221	(2,304,493)	103,107,785
Property and equipment						
Indianapolis real estate						
Land	389,264	-	-	-	-	389,264
Building	3,611,779	-	-	-	-	3,611,779
Washington, D.C. real estate						
Land	80,000	-	-	-	-	80,000
Building	4,484,147	-	-	-	-	4,484,147
Furniture, fixtures and equipment						
National Headquarters, Indianapolis	4,746,636	-	-	-	-	4,746,636
Washington, D.C.	860,533	-	-	-	-	860,533
Haynes and Partners Communications, Inc.	-	-	-	1,036,280	-	1,036,280
Accumulated depreciation	(7,735,731)	-	-	(762,164)	-	(8,497,895)
	6,436,628	-	-	274,116	-	6,710,744
Total assets	$ 135,225,245	$ 8,358,079	$ 1,979,189	$ 2,821,855	$ (4,857,072)	$ 143,527,296

The American Legion National Headquarters
Consolidating Statement of Financial Position December 31, 2006

	American Legion National Headquarters	American Legion Endowment Fund	National Emergency Fund	Haynes and Partners Communications, Inc.	Eliminations	Total
LIABILITIES						
Accounts payable	$ 2,082,727	$ 820	$ -	$ 308,214	$ (503,043)	$ 1,888,718
Scholarships payable	958,760	-	-	-	-	958,760
Accounts payable - Legion	-	2,000,000	-	49,536	(2,049,536)	-
Deposits on emblem merchandise sales	104,731	-	-	-	-	104,731
Deferred advertising income	125,225	-	-	-	-	125,225
Deferred dues income	20,939,414	-	-	-	-	20,939,414
Deferred income - direct membership solicitation	2,012,732	-	-	-	-	2,012,732
Accrued vacation benefits	620,676	-	-	-	-	620,676
Other liabilities	365,576	-	-	159,612	-	525,188
Notes payable	2,614,781	-	-	-	-	2,614,781
Deferred dues income - Paid-Up-For-Life Memberships	14,396,317	-	-	-	-	14,396,317
Life memberships due to state and local posts	24,357,149	-	-	-	-	24,357,149
	68,578,088	2,000,820	-	517,362	(2,552,579)	68,543,691
NET ASSETS						
Unrestricted - general	20,401,519	-	-	-	-	20,401,519
Unrestricted - designated						
Citizens Flag Alliance	46,938	-	-	-	-	46,938
Computer reserve	500,000	-	-	-	-	500,000
Convention reserve	100,000	-	-	-	-	100,000
Convention stabilization	280,980	-	-	-	-	280,980
Employee insurance stabilization	100,000	-	-	-	-	100,000
Paid-Up-For-Life Membership Fund	697,601	-	-	-	-	697,601
Real estate reserve	3,115,407	-	-	-	-	3,115,407
Reserve fund	2,170,264	-	-	-	-	2,170,264
Restricted fund	21,313,681	-	-	-	-	21,313,681
Youth program (Life Insurance Plan)	3,180,744	-	-	-	-	3,180,744
Veterans' rehabilitation / child welfare	2,000,000	-	-	-	-	2,000,000
Sons of the American Legion	542,152	-	-	-	-	542,152
Tedrow fund	962,975	-	-	-	-	962,975
Endowment Fund	-	(190,282)	-	-	-	(190,282)
	55,412,261	(190,282)	-	-	-	55,221,979
Temporarily restricted						
Buick scholarship	710,552	-	-	-	-	710,552
Overseas Graves Decoration Fund	936,505	-	-	-	-	936,505
Samsung scholarship	2,390,847	-	-	-	-	2,390,847
American Legacy Fund	1,564,493	-	-	-	-	1,564,493
National Emergency Fund	-	-	1,979,189	-	-	1,979,189
Others	632,499	-	-	-	-	632,499
	6,234,896	-	1,979,189	-	-	8,214,085
Permanently restricted						
Samsung scholarship	5,000,000	-	-	-	-	5,000,000
Endowment Fund	-	6,547,541	-	-	-	6,547,541
	5,000,000	6,547,541	-	-	-	11,547,541
Shareholders' equity						
Common stock	-	-	-	1,000	(1,000)	-
Additional paid-in capital	-	-	-	397,577	(397,577)	-
Retained earnings	-	-	-	1,905,916	(1,905,916)	-
Total net assets	66,647,157	6,357,259	1,979,189	2,304,493	(2,304,493)	74,983,605
	$ 135,225,245	$ 8,358,079	$ 1,979,189	$ 2,821,855	$ (4,857,072)	$ 143,527,296

The American Legion National Headquarters
Consolidating Statement of Activities Year Ended December 31, 2007

	American Legion National Headquarters	American Legion Endowment Fund	National Emergency Fund	Haynes and Partners Communications, Inc.	Eliminations	Total
Revenue, gains and other support						
National member dues	$ 22,958,366	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ 22,958,366
Direct membership solicitation	3,988,910	-	-	-	-	3,988,910
Member service fees income	1,357,419	-	-	-	-	1,357,419
Affinity income	464,930	-	-	-	-	464,930
Sales of emblem items	10,997,615	-	-	-	-	10,997,615
Advertising	11,035,239	-	-	-	-	11,035,239
Contributions	1,318,934	93,287	406,544	-	-	1,818,765
Label and printing fees	1,733,736	-	-	-	(209,685)	1,524,051
Sales - HPC	-	-	-	7,626,593	(7,177,838)	448,755
Interest and dividends, net of fees	3,547,396	404,039	89,624	31,133	(1,000,000)	3,072,192
Net realized gains	(175,370)	(30,842)	(111)	-	-	(206,323)
Other	2,433,974	-	-	-	(195,580)	2,238,394
American Legion Endowment - Fund income	399,735	-	-	-	(399,735)	-
Change in investment in subsidiary:						
Net income	197,079	-	-	-	(197,079)	-
Dividend distribution	(1,000,000)	-	-	-	1,000,000	-
	59,257,963	466,484	496,057	7,657,726	(8,179,917)	59,698,313
Expenses						
Salaries	12,192,268	-	-	-	-	12,192,268
Employee benefits	3,593,958	-	-	-	-	3,593,958
Cost of sales	8,571,189	-	-	-	(85,072)	8,486,117
Cost of sales - HPC	-	-	-	6,001,312	(5,857,875)	143,437
Direct publications	12,638,154	-	-	-	-	12,638,154
Executive and staff travel	769,636	-	-	-	-	769,636
Commission and committee	1,614,898	-	-	-	-	1,614,898
Printing and postage	3,090,640	-	-	-	-	3,090,640
Scholarships, grants and awards	1,401,626	-	-	-	-	1,401,626
Office and other operating	11,946,582	29,945	-	1,190,637	(1,444,576)	11,722,588
Occupancy and usage	2,137,635	-	-	268,698	(195,580)	2,210,753
Special projects and programs	3,480,432	399,735	163,450	-	(399,735)	3,643,882
	61,437,018	429,680	163,450	7,460,647	(7,982,838)	61,507,957
Change in net assets from operations	(2,179,055)	36,804	332,607	197,079	(197,079)	(1,809,644)
Net unrealized gains - investment	1,029,399	239,864	-	-	-	1,269,263
Dividend distribution	-	-	-	(1,000,000)	1,000,000	-
Net unrealized loss - PUFL	(6,593,296)	-	-	-	-	(6,593,296)
Amortization of pension loss	(512,654)	-	-	-	-	(512,654)
Effect of adoption of FASB Statement No. 158	(9,836,059)	-	-	-	-	(9,836,059)
Change in net assets	(18,091,665)	276,668	332,607	(802,921)	802,921	(17,482,390)
Net assets, beginning of year	66,647,157	6,357,259	1,979,189	2,304,493	(2,304,493)	74,983,605
Net assets, end of year	$ 48,555,492	$ 6,633,927	$ 2,311,796	$ 1,501,572	$ (1,501,572)	$ 57,501,215

The American Legion National Headquarters
Consolidating Statement of Activities Year Ended December 31, 2006

	American Legion National Headquarters	American Legion Endowment Fund	National Emergency Fund	Haynes and Partners Communications, Inc.	Eliminations	Total
Revenue, gains and other support						
National member dues	$ 21,782,010	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	21,782,010
Direct membership solicitation	4,512,009	-	-	-	-	4,512,009
Member service fees income	1,615,525	-	-	-	-	1,615,525
Affinity income	427,628	-	-	-	-	427,628
Sales of emblem items	11,098,300	-	-	-	-	11,098,300
Advertising	9,655,322	-	-	-	-	9,655,322
Contributions	1,528,831	84,519	571,190	-	-	2,184,540
Label and printing fees	1,840,370	-	-	-	(194,881)	1,645,489
Sales - HPC	-	-	-	7,828,079	(7,525,563)	302,516
Investment income, net of fees	2,440,522	384,761	66,893	47,107	-	2,939,283
Net realized gains	(476,443)	(51,142)	-	-	-	(527,585)
Other	2,288,630	-	-	-	(189,928)	2,098,702
American Legion Endowment - Fund income	380,375	-	-	-	(380,375)	-
Net income in subsidiary	302,197	-	-	-	(302,197)	-
	57,395,276	418,138	638,083	7,875,186	(8,592,944)	57,733,739
Expenses						
Salaries	11,739,820	-	-	-	-	11,739,820
Employee benefits	2,979,361	-	-	-	-	2,979,361
Cost of sales	8,463,041	-	-	-	(79,352)	8,383,689
Cost of sales - HPC	-	-	-	6,211,540	(6,166,375)	45,165
Direct publications	11,714,999	-	-	-	-	11,714,999
Executive and staff travel	799,325	-	-	-	-	799,325
Commission and committee	1,492,729	-	-	-	-	1,492,729
Printing and postage	3,007,256	-	-	-	-	3,007,256
Scholarships, grants and awards	1,386,448	-	-	-	-	1,386,448
Office and other operating	11,094,889	32,960	-	1,119,489	(1,474,717)	10,772,621
Occupancy and usage	2,056,992	-	-	241,960	(189,928)	2,109,024
Special projects and programs	3,264,042	380,375	183,650	-	(380,375)	3,447,692
	57,998,902	413,335	183,650	7,572,989	(8,290,747)	57,878,129
Change in net assets from operations	(603,626)	4,803	454,433	302,197	(302,197)	(144,390)
Net unrealized gains (losses) - investment	384,542	(16,296)	(32)	-	-	368,214
Net unrealized gain - PUFL	1,066,923	-	-	-	-	1,066,923
Amortization of pension loss	(437,336)	-	-	-	-	(437,336)
Change in net assets	410,503	(11,493)	454,401	302,197	(302,197)	853,411
Net assets, beginning of year	66,236,654	6,368,752	1,524,788	2,002,296	(2,002,296)	74,130,194
Net assets, end of year	$ 66,647,157	$ 6,357,259	$ 1,979,189	$ 2,304,493	$ (2,304,493)	$ 74,983,605