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PROCEEDINGS OF THE 91ST 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 91ST ANNUAL NATIONAL CONVENTION OF THE AMERICAN LEGION, HELD IN LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY FROM AUGUST 21–27, 2009, AND A REPORT ON THE ORGANIZATION'S ACTIVITIES FOR THE YEAR PRECEDING THE CONVENTION, PURSUANT TO 36 U.S.C. 49

MARCH 10, 2010.—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 5, 2010.

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 91st annual National Convention held in Louisville, Kentucky from August 21–27, 2009 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 of what took place at the Ninety-First Annual National Convention in Louisville, Kentucky, August 25-27, 2009.

The final report of the National Organization for the period ending December 31, 2008, and Balance Sheet as of December 31, 2008, and Surplus Analysis, January 1, 2008, to December 31, 2008, are included in the Summary.

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

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

Daniel S. Wheeler
National Adjutant

Note: At various times, the National Vice Commanders, as follows, presided over the Convention sessions, when called upon by presiding officer, in accordance with the Uniform Code of Procedure as shown in the verbatim proceedings: James A. LaCoursiere, Jr., Connecticut; Michael J. Landkamer, Nebraska; James W. Davis, West Virginia; Harley W. Ray, Oregon; Dellano 'Shorty' T. Simmons, Texas.

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*, Colorado; Roy L. Kirkham*, Louisiana; Robert M. Johnson, Colorado; Maryland; Robert G. Bournival, New Hampshire; Donavon R. Mason, South Dakota

Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Rev. Norris A. Keirn, Indiana
Historian: Donald F. Simons, Texas
Treasurer: George A. Buskirk, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

86th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Nashville, 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, Jr., 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, Jr., 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, Jr., 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, Jr., 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, Indiana
Treasurer: George A. Buskirk, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

91st NATIONAL CONVENTION
Louisville, Kentucky, August 25-27, 2009
Commander: David K. Rehbein, Iowa
Vice Commanders: James A. LaCoursiere, Jr., Connecticut
Michael J. Landkamer, Nebraska
James W. Davis, West Virginia
Harley W. Ray, Oregon
Dellan 'Shorty' T. Simmons, Texas
National Adjutant: Daniel S. Wheeler, Virginia
Chaplain: Rev. Lawrence 'Larry' Vollink, Michigan
Historian: Charles J. Zelinsky, Illinois
Treasurer: George A. Buskirk, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

PROCEEDINGS

of the

91st Annual Convention

of

The American Legion

Tuesday, August 25, 2009

...At 8:30 a.m. the Delegates assembled for the 91st Annual National Convention, and the following proceedings were conducted.

Call to Order
David K. Rehbein, Iowa, National Commander

The 91st National Convention of The American Legion will come to order.

Ladies and gentlemen, please rise as the National Champion Color Guard from Post 49, Tilton, New Hampshire, presents the Colors, and remain standing for the singing of the National Anthem by Miss America 2009, Katie Stam of Seymour, Indiana.

...At this time the National Champion Color Guard, Post 49, from Tilton, New Hampshire, presented the Colors, following which the National Anthem was sung by Ms. Katie Stam of Seymour, Indiana.

For the invocation, I call on National Chaplain Reverend Lawrence Vollink of Mount Clemens, Michigan. Legionnaires, please uncover.

Invocation
Rev. Lawrence 'Larry' Vollink, Michigan, National Chaplain

Let us pray. Oh, Lord, God, we thank You for our rest and the breathing of another day, knowing that this day is overflowing with Your blessings of love and faith and hope, we know they are beyond our expectations.

Lord, we ask for Your goodness to shine through the day's activities of this great convention, for the speakers, for the gratitudes given to those deserving honor and appreciation, and for your wisdom given to the people who are even behind the scenes, the cameras and all the technology, bless them too.

We ask that patriotism will once again be shown with enthusiasm this day.

Lord, we would ask that you would watch over all of the members of the armed forces this day and always. Protect them and give them Your wisdom in all things. For sacrifices made in behalf of our country, we honor them with our lives and service in The American Legion. For this we pray. Amen.

Pledge of Allegiance

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: I call on National Sergeant-at-Arms Randy Freel, to 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 REHBEIN: At this time we pause to remember those who are listed as prisoners of war or missing in action from wars in which we have been engaged.

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

I now call on the 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 was placed on the Empty Chair.

Please cover.

Preamble to The American Legion Constitution
David K. Rehbein, Iowa, National Commander

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: Legionnaires please join me in reaffirming our commitment to the principles and the ideals on which our great American Legion was founded, by reciting the Preamble to the Constitution of The American Legion.

...At this time, the Delegation recited the Preamble to The American Legion Constitution.

Please be seated.

Convention Opening

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: Ladies and gentlemen, at this time I want to introduce a special friend of The American Legion, and a proud member of the Sons of The American Legion.

Over the past few years he has voluntarily committed to being the spokesman for The American Legion Legacy Scholarship Fund, and has produced an educational DVD about The American Legion at his own expense, donating proceeds to the Legacy Scholarship Fund.

Standing with us today in honor of all who serve, he is sharing music from a brand new CD created especially for The American Legion, and once again, is donating 50 percent of all profits to the Legacy Scholarship Fund.

Please welcome the USO and U.S. Army's 2008 recipient of the Bob Hope "Spirit of Hope" Award for outstanding service to our nation. Million selling country music hit maker, Michael Peterson. *(Applause)*

...At this time the musical selection of "Pin Drop" was sung by Michael Peterson.

MR. MICHAEL PETERSON: We stand and applaud those who serve today. Let's give a round of applause to them and recognition. *(Applause)*

Well, good morning. On this historic day we gather, among other things, to sign a covenant, a Community Covenant. And as I was considering this morning what I might say, it occurred to me that the word "community," if you break it into three parts, really stands for what in essence is the mission not just to The American Legion, but of our great nation, and that is to come in unity to celebrate and embrace diversity, but to come in unity: One nation, under God, indivisible, coming in unity, with liberty and justice for all. And that is not just something, my friends that we do. It is indeed who we are.

...At this time the music selection "It's Who We Are" was sung by Mr. Peterson.

MR. MICHAEL PETERSON: Thank you for being the message and not just talking it. God bless The American Legion. *(Applause)* Thank you.

ANNOUNCER: It's not just what we do, it's who we are. In virtually every community across the nation you will find members of The American Legion, veterans all, united not only in our membership, but also in our purpose to serve. Just as we have a bond with our comrades and buddies before and after service in uniform, we have a special bond with the communities in which we live. Through our programs and initiatives we have be become and shall remain a critical resource in those communities.

We have pledged, and we are bound to support and defend our flag, and the principles of democracy and to practice and promote patriotism. We must be the standard by which all citizens honor the heritage and principles that make our country the greatest nation on earth. We are the examples by which our children must assume the responsibilities of citizenship. Through participation in our programs, the leaders of tomorrow can better understand the principles of our government, and the basic skills needed to prepare them for adulthood.

In every community in which we live, our fellow veterans who have served their country from World War II through today, these are our comrades who have earned and deserved the respect and care from their fellow citizens. It is our job to make sure that we do not fail our comrades and their families.

From our presence on Capitol Hill, to the volunteers at a local VA clinic, we are on the front line of support for America's veterans. And we are keenly aware of the need for a strong national defense to make sure that our country is defended from all enemies, foreign and domestic.

As veterans, we know what it takes to defend this country, through resolve, commitment and vigilance, we will make sure that this great nation remains free, and we know without doubt that the most critical element in our national defense is the men and women who wear the uniforms of the United States military. These are the people who have assumed the mantle of responsibility for America's freedom from those of us who have borne that responsibility before them.

Throughout the history of this great organization, we have dedicated ourselves to serving our comrades in uniform, and our fellow veterans and their families. And we have engaged America's citizens at every level, from the White House in Washington, to the white houses on Main Street, USA. This is our calling. This is the reason for our being.

Today, we will sign a covenant between the leaders of our armed forces, The American Legion, and our communities, reaffirming our support for our troops and their families. We will pledge to work within our communities to help bring America's citizens

and soldiers together in mutual support. Most of you will agree that this is nothing new for us.

We have many programs and practices in place that accomplish that objective already. Programs like our Heroes to Hometowns Initiative in which we work directly with the Department of Defense to identify and help returning service members as they come home from war. Our Family Support Network and Temporary Financial Assistance programs are designed to help the children and families of our comrades get through difficult times.

Recent projects such as Operation Landstuhl and Comfort Warriors have provided injured troops with assistance as they recover from their injuries. The American Legion Legacy Scholarship and other youth programs and initiatives provide assistance for our children to help with their education and to become more productive and educated citizens.

And in every community where you find an American Legion post, you will find a band of brothers and sisters ready to welcome, send off, and support our heroes.

So the covenant we witness today doesn't ask us to take on any new missions. It simply challenges us to renew our commitment and energy at every post in every community in America. Our country, our citizens, our flag and our comrades need us now more than ever. We cannot rest. We cannot let down our guard.

Our service to America will never be finished. As we served her so well until now, we shall continue to do so until our final breath.

You know, the American service member thinks about three things when they're overseas deployed. They think about their mission; they think about their family and they think about whether or not the American public are behind them.

Community Covenant is all about making sure that that last concern is not there. That we demonstrate in a very, very visible way that the American public is in fact behind them. And to a large degree it's about that second one too. To make sure that they understand that their family members are being looked after as well. That gives them the ability to focus on their primary mission, which is their mission. (Applause)

Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome to our stage once again, Miss America, 2009, Katie Stam. (Applause)

Greetings: Katie Stam
Miss America 2009

Good morning and welcome. I would like to take a quick moment to say a very special thank you to The American Legion for their gracious invitation to be a part of this wonderful and memorable occasion.

I would also like to thank our other distinguished guests who will be joining me up on stage in just a moment, for their presence has truly made this a very special occasion.

For the last seven months I've been traveling about 20,000 miles each month on behalf of nonprofit organizations, corporations, hospitalized children, volunteers, the list could go on and on. But perhaps the greatest and most rewarding work that I have been able to do is working with our military, our military families, and our veterans.

The Miss America organization has worked in collaboration with our armed forces since its start in 1921, just two years after The American Legion was created. And this year as we celebrate our 89th year, we also celebrate our former Miss America's who

have made great strides for those who continue to serve our country with great pride, valor, and love.

Jean Bartel, Miss America 1943 credited as the individual who sold the most Series E war bonds, nearly two and a half million dollars worth. Heather French-Henry, Miss America 2000, fought for the rights of veterans, establishing homeless shelters, raising the awareness and raising funds to support the work of VA hospitals across the country in honor of her father who was a Vietnam veteran. And not excluding the dozens of former Miss America's who traveled with the great and legendary Bob Hope on his numerous USO tours overseas. Today we can honor those in the past, celebrate those of the present, and instill hope for those in the future with the signing of this covenant.

As Miss America, I am proud to represent the citizens in every community across this wonderful country. I've seen firsthand the dedication and commitment made by our troops and their families, with numerous visits to hospitals across the country; traveling overseas to visit our troops, and helping rebuild the lives of our troops back at home by rebuilding their homes.

I've also seen firsthand the commitment that you in The American Legion have made throughout your history to those men and woman and the communities in which they live.

It's such a wonderful gesture today that this Community Covenant be signed to reaffirm and recommit yourselves to the relationship between the communities, the military, and veteran citizens who live in those communities, and The American Legion who serves them both with honor and distinction.

Therefore, I am deeply honored to represent the communities across America in signing this covenant. I invite the leaders of the Department of Defense and The American Legion to join with me in this important commitment. Thank you all very much. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: Here to sign the armed forces Community Covenant is the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Michael Mullen. (Applause)

Armed Forces Community Covenant Signing

ADMIRAL MULLEN: Well, good morning. I too would like to express my gratitude to The American Legion for your endless support of our men and women in uniform, and those who have served, and their families. I'm proud and privileged today to represent the over two million men and women who do so with the best family support that I have seen in the over 40 years that I have been privileged to wear the uniform.

And as we start this convention, and there is great anticipation and electricity in the air, I would ask each and every one of us to be mindful of those who are serving actively today around the world, and in particular those who are literally in harm's way and willing to sacrifice their lives for those ideals that are so important to each and every one of us in our country, for without them we would not be the country that we are.

I and the other members of the Joint Chiefs recognize how critical this relationship, this covenant that we're about to sign between our people and their families and the communities can be to morale, and in fact in our eighth year of war, clearly is to building the resilience that we need to continue to build in order to sustain our efforts for the future.

Today our armed forces are the strongest I have ever seen, and in great part that is because of the strength of our community support across a host of programs that many of you know. I would ask, however, that in this time of war, that we are able to focus on bridging the gaps, closing the seams between the Department of Defense, the Veterans Administration and communities throughout the land to focus on those who are wounded, their families and the families of the fallen, whose lives have changed forever, but whose dreams have not changed at all. They still very much want an education; they want to raise their children; they want to own a home, and they would like their kids to go to school. And the only way that I think we can achieve that vision, is through community based relationships. So, inside this covenant, that now is such an important part of who we are; who we need to be, to make sure those who sacrificed so much are taken care of for the rest of their lives.

So I thank you for being an anchor in this effort that you are such a representative of since your founding, and you in being that anchor will be able to take care of so much of what we need in terms of support for our men and women who serve, and their families, in these types of great challenge. Thank you very much. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: Representing the men and women deployed in support of combat operations around the world, is the Commander of the United States Central Command General David H. Petraeus. (Standing applause)

GENERAL PETRAEUS: Thank you very much. Good morning to you all, and it is indeed a great privilege to represent the 235,000 wonderful soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, coast guardsmen deployed in the Central Command area of responsibility, some of them as the chairman mentioned, very much in harm's way for our country and for our important endeavors in various locations.

As all here appreciate very well, I know, nothing means more to our troopers, especially our deployed troopers and to our veterans than knowing that their sacrifices are appreciated and that their fellow citizens support them.

So, let me take this opportunity and this occasion, this signing, to thank you all for all that you have done for our men and women in uniform, and their predecessors, and for all that you have done for their families as well. We're all very grateful to have The American Legion on point through this covenant, insuring great support in the communities that our troopers call home. Thank you very much. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: Representing the members of the National Guard and their families is the Adjutant General of the Commonwealth of Kentucky Major General Edward W. Tonini. (Applause)

GENERAL TONINI: Thank you very much. The soldiers and airmen of the National Guard have been challenged more in recent years than in any time in our 372 year history. These citizen warriors continue to be asked to give more, both to the citizens of their states in domestic emergencies, and to the nation, with its professional and combat seasoned veterans. We all must ask their employers and their communities to step up and support their efforts.

By working with this covenant, we will all become partners in caring for and honoring the troops and their families before, during, and after their deployments. The

American Legion, with this covenant, is taking the lead in stabilizing the strong support structure that allows the National Guard to continue its historic mission: Providing to the states units trained and equipped to protect life and property, while providing to the nation units trained, equipped, and ready to defend the United States and its interests all over the globe, while continually adding value to America. Thank you. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: Signing the armed forces covenant on behalf of our Reserve forces around the world, is Major General Paul F. Hamm, Commanding General of the 412th Theater Engineer Command, Vicksburg, Mississippi. (Applause)

GENERAL HAMM: Thank you very much. On behalf of Lt. General Jack Stoltz, the Chief of Army Reserves, it is indeed a pleasure and honor for me to be here today representing the Army Reserves.

As you know, we are a skill-rich community-based organization that provides soldiers to the operational reserve in support of the armed forces. As noted, I am the Commander of the 412th Theater Engineer Command located in Vicksburg, Mississippi. Within my command there are about 12,000 soldiers, primarily engineer organizations that exist in the communities east of the Mississippi River, and stretching from Florida to Maine. So, we certainly have a huge representation of the communities in the eastern part of the United States, and we very much appreciate the support of The American Legion. Thanks for all that you do for the nation, and thanks for all that you do for the Army Reserves. Thank you. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: Also signing our covenant today is U.S. Representative Ed Whitfield from Kentucky's 1st District. (Applause)

REPRESENTATIVE WHITFIELD: Thank you very much. Fifty-seven years ago Adlai Stevenson in an address to an American Legion Convention in New York, stated that, "Patriotism is not a short, frenzied outburst of emotion, but a tranquil, steady, dedication of a lifetime."

And in my view, these community covenants represent not only patriotism, but it is also a way for communities and supporters to embrace with love our young men and women in the military and their families.

Last month I introduced in the U.S. Congress a resolution bringing to the attention of the Congress and the American people the importance of the Community Covenants, with the hope that we can get more and more people involved in this important work.

I want to thank you for giving me the opportunity to be with you today, but more important, I want to thank The American Legion for their continued support and dedication and leadership of our young men and women in the military.

Thank you. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: Please welcome U.S. Representative John Yarmuth from Kentucky's 3rd Congressional District. (Applause)

REPRESENTATIVE YARMUTH: Good morning. On behalf of everyone in my hometown of Louisville, I welcome you to our community. We were so proud to have you here with us. Last September we hosted the Ryder Cup in Louisville. Of course in

May we have the Kentucky Derby, and now this great convention. So, I would say we've had a pretty good year.

Today I'm proud to join these distinguished guests in signing this Community Covenant, a symbol our unified support for the men and women in uniform who sacrifice so much everyday on our behalf. The sentiment expressed today is that we can and will always stand in full support of them while they're engaged overseas, and when they return home.

The American Legion is engaged in a wonderful endeavor to ensure the communities across the country take this step forward on behalf of those in the regular services, the Guard and the Reserve. And I applaud these efforts and offer my full support.

As the signing place of the Community Covenant, we may not be Philadelphia and the Declaration of Independence, but this is a pretty good second. I pledge that our community will not just support these efforts, but will take a leadership role in making sure that we are a model for support for America's veterans and servicemembers.

Thank you very much for this effort, and for being here with us. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: Ladies and gentlemen, representing The American Legion, your National Commander David K. Rehbein. (Applause)

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: Ladies and gentlemen, delegates, guests to this 91st National Convention of The American Legion.

You see before you on this stage, the leaders and representatives of America's armed forces, The American Legion and the communities in which we all serve.

I now ask that the department commander from Puerto Rico, Luis A. Figueroa-Ramirez, come forward to represent all of the department commanders who signed this covenant earlier as they arrived at this convention.

And now, lady and gentlemen, distinguished Representatives, I would ask that you come forward. The covenant is on the table to our front. Please join me in signing that covenant.

ANNOUNCER: The Armed Forces Community Covenant being signed today reads: "Together, we are committed to building strong communities through recognition and support of our men and women in uniform and their families. We recognize the sacrifice and commitment that veterans, active, National Guard and Reserve military service members, and their families have made and are making every day in communities across America, and in assignments and deployments around the world in support of our nation's national security.

We pledge by this covenant to work closely, as we have since 1919, in every community in which we serve; to create and encourage a strong relationship between those communities and the military personnel who live and serve in them; to educate all men, women and children in cities and town across this great country of the value and strength that comes from having service members, veterans and their families living in their communities; To assist community leaders at all levels in developing programs and policies in support of our nation's veterans, military personnel and their families; and to support and promote and implement the nationwide efforts of the Armed Forces Community Covenant Program."

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: By signing this covenant today, we have pledged our mutual support between our men and women in uniform, our communities and The American Legion. This is not something new for The American Legion, it's what we do; it's who we are, and it has been so since our founding in 1919.

By this formal ceremony today, we reaffirm our commitment to the men and women serving on active duty. We make this covenant meaningful by ensuring that The American Legion is meaningful in every community. This is done by making your towns, American Legion towns, an initiative that is explained more fully in the brochures throughout the convention hall and in the *Legiontown, USA* booklets in the registration packets.

We cannot leave here satisfied that we have done our part by merely putting pen to paper. Our job has only begun. We will fulfill our commitment by working with the military, the service people, and the military families in our hometowns. Let us roll up our sleeves and work together in support of our common goals of service to America.

I thank all of you who here on this stage for your service to America, and for your commitment made here today. Please take back to your various services, units and military and community leaders this promise from The American Legion. We shall continue to stand proudly at your side for as long as is necessary to assist you in your missions. We will support our troops and their families, and we shall do whatever we can to involve every citizen in every community in that mission.

Delegates and guests of this convention, will you join me now and express your support for this covenant that we have signed here today? *(Standing applause)*

I urge all of you to visit the Community Covenant booth directly outside the convention hall where you can learn how to inspire such a ceremony in your own community. Starting tomorrow you can pick up a copy of this covenant at that booth. Stop by and talk with Major General, Retired, Craig Whelden.

And now, please welcome back to the stage, Michael Peterson with a tribute to our soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines.

...At this time Michael Peterson sang the music selection "Warrior's Anthem."

MR. MICHAEL PETERSON: God bless all those who serve.

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: Michael, before you leave, sir, please accept my personal congratulations. We all have talents, but thank you for using your talent in such a great way for such a wonderful cause. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: Our next speaker serves as the principal military advisor to the President of the United States, the Secretary of Defense, the National Security Council and the Homeland Security Council.

A native of Los Angeles, he graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1968. Ashore he has served in leadership positions at the Naval Academy, in the Navy's Bureau of Personnel, in the office of the Secretary of Defense and on the Navy staff.

As a flag officer, Admiral Mullen commanded Cruiser Destroyer Group 2, the George Washington Battle Group, and the Second Fleet/NATO Striking Fleet Atlantic. Admiral Mullen was sworn in as the 17th Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on October 1, 2007. Please give a warm welcome to Admiral Mike Mullen. *(Applause)*

Address: Admiral Michael Mullen, USN
Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff

Good morning again and thank you. Thank you, David, for that kind and very brief introduction. It is a great pleasure for me to be here with my wife of 39 years, Deborah, in Louisville, which is such a supportive city of our men and women in uniform. And although we'll only be here for a couple of hours, we certainly feel the spirit and the support. And I want to just thank you in a thousand different ways for all of that support and for your commitment to those who serve now, those who have served, and their families. There are also a great number of familiar faces here. I would like to say thank you to my good friend and colleague Dave Petraeus who you recognized earlier. Truly a terrific, terrific partner and someone whose made a huge difference in a time of war, and will continue to do so.

I would also like to say thank you to the Congressional representation here, the local representation, the national representation from other parts of the country, which is so important, for without your representation our system won't work, and we can't move forward.

This is also a great opportunity to honor some of our young leaders with the Spirit of Service Awards in a few minutes. The American Legion has long been committed to issues that are nearest and dearest to my heart: The well-being of our veterans and their families. And on behalf of the over two million men and women serving in our armed forces, I would like to thank you for your service.

As you all know, The American Legion dates back to the end of World War I, from the 1919 charter. Part of your original mission was: "Assisting the personnel of the Army upon their return to civil life in the necessary economic adjustments."

What this means to me in today's terms is they sought to fill gaps, from scholarships to emergency relief assistance. Across several generations, The American Legion has connected millions of veterans and their families with the care they need. Your vision for a strong America starts with our youth and our veterans, and I couldn't agree with it more.

The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan over the past eight years have created a new generation of veterans; a new generation of leaders. This morning I'm going to talk about those leaders and the challenges they face, the unique and difficult challenges of irregular and unconventional warfare; challenges which require a special kind of leadership.

I truly believe that anything is possible with good leadership, and the best leaders know that listening and learning are critical to success today, as well as in future engagements. And we must develop and retain professionals, ready to do just that. Today we've got the most combat experienced force probably in our history. They've seen a lot, done a lot, bled a lot, and accomplished a lot. And we cannot afford to lose their collective wisdom. They are the future of the military, the generals and the sergeant majors of tomorrow. And I want to make sure we are doing everything in our power to keep them around, and that means not only looking after them in their career potential, but also the needs of their families who have been so exceptional in supporting their loved ones in uniform.

Like many of you, I came into the service during the Vietnam era. As the conditions and lessons learned in Vietnam served as the backdrop for the leader I have been throughout my career, today's young leaders are being shaped by our involvement in the broader Middle East. Despite all that's been done to bring stability to that region, really

since the end of World War I, we are still learning about the various cultures that shape the region's landscape. Because understanding takes time, and without consistent engagement, a willingness to see things from another's perspective, there will always be a trust deficit. And where trust is lacking, partnerships falter.

During World War I, T. E. Lawrence and a few others committed themselves to learning the customs, the languages, and the cultures of the people of the Middle East. They fought beside them, earned their friendship, but most importantly they won their trust. As much as they hoped and tried to achieve an independent Arab state, shifting economic empires outstripped ideals of obtaining the consent of the governed. In Fromkin's book, *A Peace To End All Peace*, he discusses the breakup of the Ottoman Empire. I've heard it called one of the definitive books about the region. What really struck me about this book, especially when taken together with Lawrence's *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, is that the ability to view situations through other people's eyes is essential to good leadership. And good leadership decisions depend upon our knowledge of the kind of fight we're in.

So how do we gain the level of understanding that today's warfare demands? Well, for one, you have to be there. You have to see and hear firsthand what the issues are. You can't hope to see problems through someone else's eyes if you're not looking into those eyes. As Lawrence himself said, the fight he championed was, "An Arab war waged and led by Arabs for an Arab aim in Arabia." In Iraq, Prime Minister Maliki and the political and military leadership are working on solving their own problems. Iraqis solving Iraqi problems. Or in Prime Minister Maliki's own words, "Building a state on the ruins of dictatorship."

I, myself, have made it clear to the Iraqi leaders, we're leaving. Now is the time to establish the long-term relationships we both need to be able to continue to help foster a secure Iraq. But the solutions are now largely political and wholly Iraqi.

The Pakistani's likewise are waging their own war against extremists, for Pakistanis, in Pakistan. And in Afghanistan the war being waged to defeat **al-Qaeda** and its extremist allies is led by an international security force, with Afghans, for Afghans, in Afghanistan. We've got to help them. That's why I ordered the establishment of a Pakistan-Afghanistan coordination cell inside my own staff, to work exclusively on the issues of that region to stay engaged. Believe it or not, it's easy to lose focus in the Pentagon, and to rotate officers in and out, not only of Afghanistan in general, but to specific areas within the country so that they can become familiar faces and names so they can build trust.

The unique challenges of irregular warfare are highly complex. A struggle for the people's confidence. So in today's fight, as leaders we must show a sense of urgency; we must engage with resolve, and we must be patient to reap the benefits of our work together. We must do whatever we can so that today's investment produces stability and security, and ultimately engenders trust. And I'm talking about more than a military solution. The military piece is really a small part of the equation. What the people of Afghanistan need is rule of law, not the law of armed conflict. We need to help them get to the point where they have a government that delivers at every level.

I've seen a lot of discussion these days about whether this is a war of choice or a war of necessity. I've seen public opinion polls saying that a majority of Americans don't support the effort at all. And I say good, let's have that debate. Let's have that discussion. Let's take a good hard look at this fight we're in, what we're doing and why we're doing

it. I would rather see us as a nation argue about the war, struggling to get it right, than ignore it. Because each time I go to Dover to see the return of someone's father, brother, mother or sister, I want to know that collectively we've done all we can to make sure that sacrifice isn't in vain. *(Applause)*

Now, I don't set the policy in this country, no military leader should. I don't get to decide whether we go to war or we don't, and that's not my job. The President makes those decisions. My job is to advise him. I tell him what I think. I give him the best military advice I can, and I do that in a completely apolitical fashion.

Now let me tell you what I think. We're coming up upon another anniversary of the 9/11 attacks. Try to remember how you felt that day. I know I do. I was in the Pentagon in a meeting not very far from where the plane struck. I lost a good many fellow sailors in our command center that day. Well, the people behind that deadly day are still at it. They live and plan and train in safe havens along the Pakistan/Afghanistan border, and they'd like nothing better than to see either country or both, fall prey to the grip of an extremist ideology. To the degree we let them succeed, we let ourselves become vulnerable.

My mission, the one currently given to me by the President, is to prevent that from happening. And that's what we're going to do. Will some of that work involve tasks that strengthen governance in Afghanistan? Yes, because the enemy has governing ambitions of their own in Afghanistan. They know if they can make the Afghan people fear us more than they can trust us, they have a better shot at the preeminence they seek. They know if they can provide the basic services that right now in many areas no one is providing, they will win confidence, and they will win influence. We can shoot at them all we want, but until we take from them the very popular support they need to breathe, we cannot defeat them. To some, it may look a lot like nation building. But at its core, it's about giving the Afghan people alternatives, choices that steer them away from the war and violence that has racked their country for hundreds of years, and more toward the representative government, the responsive government, we hope they can live with and believe in, in 2009.

The war in Afghanistan is about defeating **al-Qaeda** and its allies, but to do that we have to defeat the choices those extremists are forcing on the people of Afghanistan. This isn't just a war against something. It's a war for something: The trust and confidence of the people who live there, who if given the chance will, I believe, choose not to allow themselves or their land to become a safe haven again.

It's about providing for our own national security. For our part, Secretary Gates and I have promised the President that whether through resourcing or manning, money or people, overcoming this struggle will not be business as usual. We will not allow ourselves to be bogged down by Washington peacetime bureaucracies. We cannot win from the Pentagon, and we cannot win with the efforts of our military alone. We need the best of everyone in the fight, civilian and military. That's why General McChrystal is where he is. He is the very best. He knows what it takes to succeed in the counter-insurgency environment. He is integrating with Ambassador Eikenberry's civilian team to focus on the Afghan people. And as I said, if we don't get it right for the Afghan people, we get it wrong. So the most effective tools at our disposal are not necessarily going to be guns and bombs, though we still need them, the best instruments may be shovels, tractors, and teaching degrees. To quote my good friend Greg Mortenson, "You have to drink tea." Co-author and hero of *Three Cups of Tea*, Greg's been waging peace by building schools in the tribal regions of Afghanistan and Pakistan

for over 15 years, 134 schools I might add. By caring about and understanding the dynamics of the good people of that region, Greg has practically moved mountains.

He told me that in 2000, at the height of the Taliban, there were 800,000 children enrolled in school in Afghanistan, all boys. Now in 2009, student enrollment is over eight million children, 2.4 million of which are girls.

He also reminds us that western fast food culture is not well-suited to that part of the world. Results are measured in decades and generations, rather than minutes and seconds. This important distinction demands a different approach and a different form of leadership in all we do, and it requires patience. It takes time to build relationships; time to learn cultures; time to foster sincerity and mutual respect.

A couple of weeks ago I visited our Defense Language Institute, and met an extraordinary young Army sergeant who had served as a detainee interrogator in Iraq. Although having been trained in Persian Farsi, this young man discovered that in order to understand what the translators were saying, he had to pick up the Iraqi dialect. So in his spare time he worked with the interpreters to hone his language skill. Sergeant Ben Randall's initial deployment was supposed to last 60 days, but he ended up voluntarily extending his tour four times, for 465 days all told. The way he saw it, was that once he established a rapport with a detainee, it just wasn't logical to leave, because doing so would have compromised the mission.

Now, certainly I don't expect our people over there to volunteer to extend their tours. Let me make sure that I have that on the record. But the point is that tour duration matters. And the trust that creates legitimate leadership is truly the desired end. We've got to have the right people in the right places for as long as we need them to be there, which means we all have to contribute. We need to apply our very best with the utmost urgency and with the firmest resolve, and we remain committed to this fight and to prevent anyone from ever carrying out terrorist attacks against innocent civilians and American citizens.

So, what can the average American, the concerned statesman, community or parent do? You can support our veterans and their families with the same sense of urgency and resolve. That, I guarantee, your military is applying, and will continue to apply in today's fight. As I alluded to earlier, the relationship between America and her military during the Vietnam era really shaped who I am today. Our young leaders are being shaped by their involvement in these wars. How they lead will depend upon how well we listen to them; on how well we institutionalize the lessons they have to teach us, and also quite frankly upon the care that they and their familiar received back at home.

And the American people above all are enormously supportive of our men and women in uniform and their families, and you represent that. We have paid dearly for these lessons with lives. We need to be conscious of that. The more we equate destruction with legitimacy, the harder it will be to find the answers to the problems we encounter in this century, and the answers are ours to discover. And they involve building trust; retaining families, and improving communities. Your military and your American Legion share the same vision for a strong America. Invest in our people. We must tend to their wounds, the wounds that are visible and the often more long lasting wounds, those that are invisible, wounds like post-traumatic stress and traumatic brain injury. Wounds that I call signature wounds of these wars. Wounds that shatter families and cripple our forces.

Just as important as preventing the next generation of violent extremists, is preventing the next generation of homeless veterans and broken families. There will be

few quick victories, but patiently listening and learning from those around us, making good on our promises as leaders, will bring us all a lasting peace we can trust.

Thank you all again for your service and your dedication. God bless each and every one of you, and God bless our military and God bless our country. *(Standing applause)*

Presentation of the Spirit of Service Awards

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: Admiral, let me simply say that as is in your heart, in our heart we hold the feelings for those young men and women in uniform, our wishes for their welfare and our promise that we will do everything we can to support them. *(Applause)*

We already know that America has the best military in the world, and it is now time to meet the best of that best military in the world. The awards that are about to be given exemplify excellence in service and in character. 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. These young men and women are selected for this award by their commanding officers from among all entries sent in through their respective services. I would ask Admiral Mullen and General Petraeus, we would be honored if you would join me in presenting these awards to our distinguished recipients.

ANNOUNCER: Representing the United States Army, our first recipient shares his archery skills with children and wounded warriors in his community surrounding Fort Lewis, Washington. He volunteers his spare time to coach in a Junior Olympic Program, is a certified "Archery in The Schools" program instructor, and he has developed a program using archery as rehabilitation for wounded warriors. For his many hours of volunteerism The American Legion Spirit of Service Award is presented to Sergeant Michael Allen Ros, United States Army.

SERGEANT MICHAEL ALLEN ROS: I want to thank The American Legion, Admiral Mullen, General Petraeus, for this wonderful award. It's always very nice to when you set out to do something that you don't look for the glory and try to stay behind the shadows, but to be recognized for the work that you do. It's nice to be honored for something you do that you have a love and a passion for.

A special thanks has to go out to my wife, Chris, and my daughter, Alexandra. Without their loving support I couldn't dedicate the time that I do for this, and they have always been there for me no matter what. I also want to send out a special thank you to The American Legion. All of you work very hard every day to make sure that the sacrifices of the military of the United States doesn't go unnoticed, and also is never forgotten, especially for those that have given the ultimate sacrifice to be called an American. Thank you very much, and God bless.

ANNOUNCER: In addition to volunteering countless hours in his community as a mentor and role model to children and adults alike, Matthew Stroup also leads other volunteers in his community through his leadership of other volunteer groups and organizations. He is active in Junior Achievement, a local Lunch Buddies Program, Ronald McDonald House, Special Olympics and many others. He has twice received the President's Volunteer Service Award, and is credited with mentoring six other recipients

to receive the same award. For his selfless dedication The American Legion awards the 2009 Spirit of Service Award to Navy Petty Officer Third Class Matthew A. Stroup.

PETTY OFFICER 2nd CLASS MATTHEW A. STROUP: I'm not nearly as adventurous with speaking as Sergeant Ros is, so I wrote some things down.

First and foremost I would like to say thank you to the one million plus members of The American Legion, and National Commander Rehbein for presenting me with the Spirit of Service Award.

In particular I would also like to thank Debra Murrell and Marti Wooden. Because of their patient service my family and I have had a wonderful time at our first American Legion National Convention.

My sincerest gratitude also belongs to Admiral Mullen and General Petraeus, not only for their presence here today, but for providing inspiration through their examples of the impact that one man can make through a life dedicated to the service of others.

I would also like to thank a loving and supporting family, headlined by the best woman a man could ever ask for, my wife and my best friend, military spouse extraordinaire, Mrs. Jenny Lynn Stroup. *(Applause)*

Without her I would not be here today. Many people have asked me what I did to earn this award and what it is that I do. How I got here is easy. Hard work, a willingness to try new things, wise counsel, an extremely supportive chain of command, a loving family, and most importantly the endless grace of a loving God. The combination of those things have provided me the opportunity to both chair and create organizations dedicated to community service. I suppose, however, that my biggest contribution comes not from my personal service, but my ability to inspire those around me to get involved in what goes on around them.

However, the bigger question to me is not how I got here, but why. The best example I've had in my life of someone who has fully dedicated themselves to others is a spry little old white haired lady I love, my grandmother, Dorothy Stroup. *(Applause)*

Her life exemplifies to me how a life spent in service to others can bring you more joy than any money will ever bring you, and will provide more happiness in your life than any sorrows that life could bring your way. She has long gone unrecognized for her selfless dedication to the service of others, and I only hope that one day I can live up to the legacy that she has provided for me.

Another more recent reason for why I serve is my first child is on the way, Braden Matthew Stroup, my baby boy. He should be here December 2nd, 2009. Because of him I realize that my ability to positively affect the world around me is more important than ever before. In a country whose headlines are filled with economic insecurity, political unrest, and a casual attitude toward traditional American values, there can be no more pertinent time than now for myself and organizations like The American Legion to restore America to its fundamental values. Thank you. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: Our next recipient has been awarded the Spirit of Service Award for her selfless efforts while stationed in Okinawa, Japan, both in the military and civilian communities. She organized more than 560 volunteer hours and 131 volunteers for the Japanese Education Center, and managed ten Toys for Tots collection sites, in addition to volunteering with Special Olympics and American culture sessions with Japanese

students. Please welcome Sergeant Nicolai Atkinson-Pettigrew, United States Marine Corps. (Applause)

SGT. NICOLAI ATKINSON-PETTIGREW: Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished guests, friends, my fellow recipients: It is with great honor that I stand here before you all. First and foremost I want to thank God for waking me up, and each and every one of you this morning, so I can stand here and receive this tremendous award. I want to thank my parents and my three loving children, who unfortunately are not able to be here with me today. Because of my children I was able to spend countless hours volunteering to serve others. On several occasions my children went with me to these volunteer events. You all applaud me as if I've done something outstanding, but I'm just a regular individual who wanted to make a difference. The true heroes are you veterans that have served your country in uniform and decide the moment I take it off it's not going to stop. You are my heroes. *(Applause)*

Thank you. I stand here today also as a new member of The American Legion society. Thank you very much. *(Applause and cheers)*

I have my head held high not because I am proud, but more so because I am humble and I am grateful, grateful for the opportunity to be here as a recipient of this award. Before I close I want to say what I am proud for. I am proud to be a United States Marine, and foremost I am proud to be an American. Thank you. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: Petty Officer Stephen Diggs serves as a full-time volunteer youth pastor, and leads a group of other volunteers as tutors for over 100 children in his community. He has assisted numerous families to find work by helping with resume preparation, training them on interviewing skills, and volunteering as a driver, racking up over 6,000 miles to assist over 200 people in meeting appointments and running errands. In addition to time, he also donates money to assist local families get through hard times. For his selfless dedication The American Legion awards the Spirit of Service Award to Boatswain's Mate Second Class Stephen Diggs, United States Coast Guard.

BOATSWAIN'S MATE 2ND CLASS, STEPHEN DIGGS: It's a great honor to be here. To follow those three, they set the bar pretty high. First and foremost I want to thank Jesus Christ for giving me the ability and the passion to do what I do. Like they all have said, I don't do it for any recognition, I do it for the love to help other people in need. I just want to thank my loving wife for supporting me, and my three kids.

Everything I do, she's there with me by my side, and I like to think of her as my anchor. She keeps me grounded. And I'm the type of person that likes to kind of go by the seat of my pants and not really think about it, and she like kind of keeps me grounded. I want to thank her for that.

I want to thank you guys, everyone in The American Legion. I want to thank you guys so much. You guys have paved the way for all of us to be up here today. You've made it better for us, and you guys are the real heroes. You guys should deserve this award, each and every one of you guys. In my heart, man, you guys—for lack of better words to say, you guys are awesome. You guys treated my wife and I like family, and it's amazing to be here to see you guys together like a family. It's awesome. I just want to thank you guys so much for this award, and for being here. And again I just want to thank

you for all the service you did, and for the wives to put up with you guys as well. Thank you guys so much. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: Staff Sergeant Tony Jacobsmeier has racked up hundreds of volunteer hours while stationed at Hickam Air Force Base, Hawaii. He's a regular supporter and organizer of local blood drives, and is a mentor and volunteer counselor for various organizations in his community. He organizes and donates to many causes, including the Intrepid Fallen Heroes Fund, to support a TBI Center in Fort Bragg, North Carolina, the local River of Life Homeless Mission, and numerous others. He participates in veterans' funerals, and routinely helps the families with deployed service members in his community. He's been recognized by Tripler Army Medical Center for his support to deployed families, and has been recognized as the Volunteer of the Year for the15th Air Wing. And now he is the recipient of the 2009 American Legion Spirit of Service Award. Representing the United States Air Force, Staff Sergeant Tony Jacobsmeier. (Applause)

STAFF SGT. TONY JACOBSMEIER: Thank you, president and distinguished guests. Thank you so much for all this—my command, Lieutenant Colonel Thomas, Chief Master Sergeant Larry Bloom.

Thank you for the command that actually put us in this position to get where we are today. I thank each and every one of you. I'm humbled and honored to be serving at this time in our country where we are fighting the good war on global terrorism, and we will win. So thank you so much, and we'll keep doing what we've got to do. God bless America. Amen. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: Please join me in thanking these five outstanding young people, and five Legionnaires. *(Applause)*

At this time it is my privilege to introduce to you a very special friend. It has been a true pleasure for me to serve side-by-side over the past year with our next guest. Elected as the National President of The American Legion Auxiliary at the Phoenix National Convention, she has been an active member since she was a young girl in the Juniors program.

She is eligible for The American Legion Auxiliary through the service of her late stepfather, Mr. Jack R. Miller, a U. S. Army veteran of the Korean War. Madam President is an honorary life member of Irvin Hiskey Unit 535 in her hometown of Bellville, Ohio.

Ladies and gentlemen, would you please welcome to the podium the leader of the nation's largest patriotic women's organization, and my very good friend, Desireé Stoy.

Greetings: Desireé Stoy, Ohio, National President
American Legion Auxiliary

Good morning and thank you. Mr. Commander, thank you so much for this opportunity. And he warned me that the podium was going to be set for the national commander, and the rest of us would have to live with it. So I had visions that most of you would only be seeing from here on up, and it looks like I'm pretty right on that one.

It's certainly an honor and a privilege to address the mighty American Legion, so I thank the commander for this opportunity. This is a big deal for this national president. I

thought I would take just a just a few moments to talk to you about the Auxiliary's pride and purpose. You see, all across America I saw it. I saw it in unit after unit, in department after department, Auxiliary members united in purpose to support America's heroes. For that has been our purpose this year, to honor our promises every day.

I'm proud to say that we increased our volunteer hours in VA hospitals all across America by 76 percent. *(Applause)*

Thank you. Our members volunteered over 538,000 hours. Yesterday we launched The American Legion Auxiliary Call to Service Corps, our official start to reach out to military families and veterans facing poverty. You're right, commander, it's all about pride and purpose. I'm proud to be a 42 year member from the Fighting Fifth District in North Central, Ohio. *(Applause and cheers)*

I'm proud that I served as national president alongside my friend, David K. Rehbein, national commander of The American Legion, one of America's heroes. Yes, I consider you a hero. A professor once said to me heroes are not born, they are everyday folks, good people who rise to the occasion. Your commander rose to the occasion this year as he represented you and defended America's heroes. *(Applause)*

He's a tall fella with a good heart, a great family, the best aide ever, and I am fortunate to call him friend. Thank you, commander, for a wonderful year. It is my sincere wish that you and all you serve and lead have a great convention. Thank you for the opportunity to address you, thank you to all of you for the courtesies extended to this national president. It was my honor to serve. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: And I'm going to ad lib for just a moment, because accompanying Desi here this morning is her husband, Tim. And Tim has been a joy to be around to travel with, and to be part of this team this year, and I thank you very much for having Tim along with us. *(Applause)*

The American Legion Youth Champions

ANNOUNCER: Please welcome to the stage now our 2008 and 2009 youth champions. They represent the thousands of young men and women that you support throughout the year through our many programs. Our first youth champion was elected by his peers to be the 2009 American Legion Boys Nation President on July 22nd. He is an incoming senior at Green River High School in Green River, Wyoming. He plans to attend Michigan State to study science and education. Please welcome the 2009 Boys Nation President Christopher Andrews.

2009 Boys Nation President
Christopher Andrews, Green River, Wyoming

I was watching the monitors back here, and after the recognition of our Spirit of Service Award recipients and with the presence of so many important people and so many great people it's kind of difficult to remember, but I was watching and I saw two of my peers that I met at Boys Nation this year, a guy named Cody Donaugh from Montana, and Graham Wyatt from Minnesota, and they were privileged to lay a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown when we visited Arlington Cemetery. And seeing that up there today made me realize the importance of youth programs and how great a role they play in ensuring America's success and ensuring America's freedom in the future. These

programs would have been impossible were it not for The American Legion, so I first and foremost have to thank the Legion. I can't thank you enough. It takes a special kind of person to go overseas and to combat enemies foreign and domestic of the United States, and once you take the uniform off continue to want to serve and to give to the community. And it takes a special kind of person, and I'm forever in your debt. So thank you very much to all of you as veterans and as Legionnaires. I truly thank you.

Of course it's impossible to go to Boys Nation unless you go to Boys State first, and I'm proud to say that I went to the wonderful Wyoming Boys State, which in my humble opinion was the best Boys State this year. Let 'er Buck. *(Cheers)*

I have to thank The American Legion members who helped put on Wyoming Boys State, particularly Mr. Nels Lofgren, Mr. Ron Wood, and Ms. Julie Rust for helping with communications. Thank you very, very much for running such a wonderful program.

Lastly I have to thank those who continue to serve in the Armed Forces today. And as representatives of those people fighting for our freedom, the Spirit of Service Award winners, thank you very much and congratulations on your awards. It would be impossible to be standing here and celebrating not only my success, not only the Youth Champion success, but the success of The American Legion, were it not for the continued tradition of those who actively serve in the military. So although they can't hear me right now, we obviously have to thank them. For it's not what they do that makes them great people; it truly is who they are. So thank you to the veterans, thank you to the Boys State and Boys Nation Staffs, and thank you to The American Legion. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: In competition in Colorado Springs just a few weeks ago, Emily Quiner of Brooklyn Park, Minnesota, captured the 2009 Junior Shooting Sports Precision Championship with a score of 2467.5 out of 2509. She is sponsored by Post 102 in Anoka, Minnesota. Emily could not be with us today.

The 2009 Junior Shooting Sports Sporter Champion is Deckard Day from Albuquerque, New Mexico. He is sponsored by Albuquerque Post 49. Deckard shot a score of 2308.9 out of 2509. Please welcome your American Legion Junior Shooting Sports Sporter Champion, Deckard Day.

2009 Junior Shooting Sports Champion
Deckard Day, New Mexico

It's truly an honor to be here today. I have been shooting competitive air rifle for about one year now for the Marine Corps JROTC program at my school. First of all, I would like to thank my teachers and my principal for allowing me to miss the first three days of school to be here with you all. *(Laughter and applause)*

In college I would like to study either electrical engineering or virology, the study of viruses. I would like to thank my parents for putting up with me when I really doubt anyone else could. *(Laughter)*

I would like to thank The American Legion, the Sons of The American Legion, and my local Post 49 for not only supporting myself, but my teammates and everyone else who has participated in activities supported by the Legion. Thank you. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: The 2009 American Legion Eagle Scout of the Year is Brad Jencks from South Jordan, Utah. The award recognizes his practical citizenship at school, Scouting, and his passion and commitment to community service. He has been recognized

with the Utah Top High School Volunteer Prudential Spirit of Community Award, the Save Our History National Honors Award from the History Channel, Roots Television Documentary Award, four Presidential Volunteer Gold Service Awards, the U. S. Presidential Volunteer Lifetime Service Award, and four National Youth Leadership Outstanding Service Awards from the Boy Scouts of America. Please welcome the 2009 American Legion Eagle Scout of the Year, Brad Jencks.

2009 Eagle Scout of the Year
Brad Jencks, Utah

Thank you very much. In these challenging and changing times The American Legion remains one of the most important sponsors of Scouting, whose influence extends far beyond those boys privileged to serve, and troops under its direct sponsorship.

With humility and gratitude I thank each of you who risked life and limb for our country. I would like to express my gratitude to all those who risked everything they had for a cause greater than themselves. May we never forget your sacrifices while serving in the military of the United States of America. I honor all of you for your service to this, our great country. My great uncle, William Noel Copenhaver, served in The American Legion for 32 years, and encouraged my interests after my grandfather died young. Noel and his American Legion Post 132 of Kearns, Utah, taught me to cherish the memories of men and women who risked their lives in defense of our nation's freedom.

At age 12 I visited a badly neglected mining ghost town cemetery inherited by my school district. I set a simple goal, to clean up the cemetery and map its burials using GPS technology, a 100 hour Eagle Scout project that surpassed 2,790 man hours by the time I earned the Eagle Ring. There were graves of ore miners and military veterans from 38 states who came to labor in the world's largest open pit copper mine. Others came from 30 nations to build their life, and in turn helped build America. Disease, disaster and war took many lives.

Beyond my Eagle Scout project I organized an army of more than 2000 volunteers of every race, creed and economic status. During the past five years we restored and replaced grave markers, proved 1100 unknown burials in many languages, installed a wall of honor and a granite military monument honoring veterans of six different wars.
I authored a 1,500 page historical cemetery book, and a military war hero book. I also donated my research to libraries and free web sites. I produced DVDs for the History Channel and Roots Television, and started a project called Connecting Families Across the Globe. I lead an international research team, helping families locate living relatives who share the same ancestry. My motto: It takes a community, not just a boy.

I thank my family for their love and support; also the Boy Scouts of America and several troops, Order of the Arrow, Silver Moccasin, National Boy Scout Jamboree, and National Youth Leadership Training Programs.

I wish to extend my heartfelt gratitude to the United Veterans Council, the U. S. Veteran's Administration, The American Legion and all its commissions, the Sons of The American Legion, and the Utah American Legion, especially Post 132 of Kearns, Utah.

This generous scholarship will enable me to become an oral surgeon, to devote a major portion of each year to humanitarian service, fixing problems associated with abuse, lack of education, and medical and dental care. This is my life's goal.

For the privilege of being named The American Legion National Eagle Scout of the Year I thank you most sincerely. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: The first place winner in the 2009 National Oratorical Contest is Andrew Dykstal, from Lafayette, Indiana. Andrew's oration was titled "A More Perfect Union." He plans to attend Hillsdale College to study law, with the help of the $18,000 scholarship awarded by The American Legion. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome your 2009 Oratorical Champion, Andrew Dykstal.

2009 1st Place Winner, National Oratorical Contest
Andrew Dykstal, Indiana

I've had the honor of attending many American Legion functions over the last few years. And in many of them, including this one, the day begins with the recitation of The American Legion preamble. And I'm struck every time I hear it by the first part of this interesting little piece of literature. "For God and country we associate ourselves together for the following purposes. To uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States of America." And I'm struck in particular by how closely this resembles the oath of office that is taken by our senators, our representatives, and even our president.

They swear also to uphold and protect the Constitution, usually, traditionally followed by, "So help me God." It is an oath that unfortunately many our elected representatives seem to have a bit of difficulty keeping. But we must bear in mind that because we live in a democracy or a republic, our government simply mirrors the people that ultimately comprise it. And it is because so many Americans struggle to hold our government to this document that the pledge of The American Legion becomes so very, very important. And I believe the oratorical contest is an excellent tool that The American Legion has used brilliantly in the past, and will continue to use in the future to uphold and protect the Constitution of the United States.

I had the honor of competing alongside and against dozens and dozens of young women and men from every state and a few other countries. And we all have two things in common.

Firstly, we knew a lot more about the Constitution leaving the program than we did entering it. This is the best program I've ever encountered for teaching about American government and the history of this government.

And, secondly, we all owe a lot to many people back in our home states. I owe a lot to Post 38 of West Lafayette, particularly Mr. Steinhart and Mr. Brooks and Mr. Springer. And also to Mr. Fred Langley, who has been the Oratorical Chairman of Indiana for the last 14 or 15 years. And of course to Mr. Buss and the other personnel at the national level. I thank you all for your sacrifice and your continued service in support of the American values that The American Legion pursues and upholds so well. Thank you. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: Patrick Singletary is the 2008 George W. Rulon American Legion Baseball Player of the year. He was also selected as the North Carolina player of the year. He played for the Henderson, North Carolina, American Legion Post 77 team. He was honored last month at the Baseball Hall of Fame ceremonies in Cooperstown, New York. Please welcome the 2008 American Legion Baseball Player of the Year, Patrick Singletary.

2008 American Legion Baseball Player of the Year
Patrick Singletary, North Carolina

Thank you so much for inviting me to be here this weekend. It's a great honor to be in attendance with you today. I would also like to wish congratulations to our other youth champions, and also our Spirit of Service Award winners. A more appropriate thank you would be to thank you all for your military service to this great nation. It is because of you that I am able to be here and be honored today. It is because of you that I'm able to play the great sport of baseball. We often take these things for granted and overlook the service that you have given our nation.

I would like to share a story with you today. In my high school history class I had an assignment to interview a World War II veteran. This was one of the most rewarding experiences and assignments I have ever had to do for school. My great Uncle Don served in the Air Force and fought in World War II. He was part of the 726th Squadron of the 451st Bomb Group in Italy, and he was a tail gunner on a B-29. One of the questions I had to ask was, "What was your most memorable moment while you were overseas fighting?" Don told me they had completed their mission in Munich, Germany, by releasing their last Blockbuster—which I had learned was a bomb. He was flying from France back to Italy and their plane was having engine trouble and losing altitude. It was obvious they were not going to make it over the Alps. Don and the crew had two options. They could make an emergency landing in Switzerland, or they could drop their guns and their supplies to lighten the load and attempt to make it over the Alps. They chose the latter, and they made their plane lighter. They were successful and made it over the mountains and back to Italy safely. I cannot imagine myself in a situation like this, making a split second decision that may determine life or death.

There are many of you here today that have similar stories to this one, and I must tell you that I sincerely thank you and have the utmost respect for you and your service to our country. There are many things that we as Americans would not be able to do without this service. So thank you for fighting for our great American freedoms. Thank you for your service to The American Legion. Thank you for The American Legion baseball program. Words really can't describe this tribute, and thank you is really not enough. So I want to earnestly thank you for this wonderful award.

I want to thank George Rulon for his 25 years of service as the Legion's baseball coordinator. I want to thank Jim Quinlan for his service to American Legion baseball and for accompanying me in Cooperstown. Thank you to Vice Commander Jim LaCoursiere for being with me in Cooperstown as well. Thank you to Mike Buss for being with the youth champions here in Louisville.

I would like to thank the North Carolina Legion and Post 77 for everything they do, and for naming me the North Carolina Player of the Year. Thank you to coaches Matt Mabe and Ray Gill for nominating me for this wonderful scholarship. I want to say thank you to my wonderful parents for supporting me 100 percent. *(Applause)*

I also would like to express my gratitude to the Legion for the opportunity you have given me by naming me the Player of the Year. Thank you for this wonderful experience at the convention in Louisville. I greatly appreciate the financial help you have given me. The scholarship money has helped me pay for some of my education at the University of Georgia. *(Cheers)* Go Dogs. Thank you for the chance to go to Cooperstown, New York, to visit the Baseball Hall of Fame. It truly was the opportunity of a lifetime, and a dream come true. I will have some great stories to tell my children someday. I'm so blessed to

get to do something like that, and for that I must thank you for the amazing trip you have provided me with. Thank you very much for everything. I have enjoyed my time here. This has been a truly humbling experience. Thank you. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: Ladies and gentlemen, your 2008/2009 American Legion Youth Champions. (Applause)

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: In each generation a few individuals step forward and rise to the top and provide the leadership we need. It is my privilege this morning to ask you to recognize one of those individuals. "The war is lost," said one U.S. Senator. The surge will never work, some skeptics declared.

Yet, General David Petraeus, the chief advocate of the military troop surge and the Commander of the Multi-National Forces Iraq, refused to share in this pessimism. He never lost faith in America's fighting men and women. He would be the first to tell you that the credit for the success in Iraq belongs to those who served and those who are still serving there.

A graduate of the United States Military Academy, our next speaker, our awardee, earned his MPA and Ph.D degrees at Princeton. His awards and decorations include the Defense Distinguished Service Medal, two awards of the Defense Superior Service Medal, four awards of the Legion of Merit, the Bronze Star for valor, the State Department Distinguished Service Award, the NATO Meritorious Service Medal, the French Legion of Honor, and the Gold Award of the Iraqi Order of the Date Palm. He is a Master Parachutist and is Air Assault and Ranger qualified. He assumed the post of Commander, United States Central Command, on October 31st, 2008.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is my great honor and my privilege to present The American Legion's Distinguished Service Medal to General David H. Petraeus, United States Army. *(Applause)*

Presentation: The American Legion Distinguished Service Medal
General David H. Petraeus, United States Army

Well, good morning to you all. Thank you, Commander Rehbein, thank you Dave for that very kind introduction. And, much more importantly, thank you for your lifetime of service to our country in uniform and out. You have provided superb leadership for this tremendous organization, and I know that everyone here this morning is very grateful to you for it. Thank you very much. *(Applause)*

And although he had to leave and get back to keeping the plates spinning, as we say, I also want to publicly thank the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, Admiral Mullen, who spoke here earlier, for his courageous leadership and character. We have a tough period ahead, and our country is very fortunate to have him as our nation's senior military leader. I must say, though, that your introduction, the very warm welcome and this recognition, could tempt a man to feel a bit important. But were that temptation to strike I would recall a story that one of Admiral Mullen's predecessors, the great General Jack Vessey, used to tell. Remembering it has always helped me keep my ego in check regardless of the circumstances.

The time was 1982, and General Vessey had only recently become the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, culminating some four decades in uniform that began with service as a young First Sergeant in Italy in World War II, and including earning the

Distinguished Service Cross for Heroism in Vietnam when his battalion's fire base was nearly overrun. So here he was, serving as the senior officer of the greatest military in the world, and he and his wife had been invited to attend the much anticipated performance at the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, where they sat in the Presidential Box and were treated royally by one and all.

By the end of the evening General Vessey was understandably I think feeling pretty good about his station in life, perhaps even a tiny bit important as he and his wife left the Center and stood waiting for their car. Before the car arrived, however, General Vessey saw retired General J. Lawton Collins, a legendary former Army Chief of Staff who had earned the nickname 'Lightning Joe' as a highly decorated, hard charging, no-nonsense corps commander in World War II. On seeing General Collins walk by General Vessey touched him on the shoulder, held out his hand and said, "Good evening, General Collins. I'm General Jack Vessey, the new Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. It's good to see you, sir." General Collins stopped, turned, took General Vessey's hand, shook it briskly, looked Vessey up and down, and said to him, "Vessey, get me a cab." *(Laughter)*

When I heard General Vessey tell that story some years back, someone in the audience of course immediately asked, "What did you do, sir?" "Well," Vessey responded, "I got him a cab." And I want to assure all of you here this morning that if anyone needs a cab later I'll be out front doing my duty. *(Laughter)*

Well, it is great to be with you all today. This is a very significant gathering, and it is an honor to be here. And needless to say, it was a privilege to sign the Community Covenant together with such a distinguished group of leaders and public servants earlier this morning. Indeed, the fact that so many distinguished leaders are participating in this convention is a tribute to the remarkable people and tremendous work of The American Legion. You have certainly displayed, as Admiral Mullen stated, resolve and urgency in caring for our veterans. And as I expressed during the Community Covenant signing, our troopers and our veterans value more than anything else the appreciation and support of their fellow citizens. So thank you again for all that you have done and will do for our men and women in uniform, for our veterans, and for their families as well.

In light of the enormous respect we all have for The American Legion, it's a particular honor and more than humbling to receive the Legion's Distinguished Service Medal. I hasten to add, however, that it is an award that I can accept only insomuch as I do so on behalf of the 235,000 soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines and Coast Guardsmen deployed in the Central Command area of responsibility. Day after day on the ground, in the air and at sea these courageous, committed troopers perform difficult missions against tough enemies under the most challenging conditions for our country, and as those in this room know very well, for each other. This morning, in fact, I thought I might take a few minutes to quickly give you a brief update on some of the missions our troopers are performing in a few of the 20 countries of the Central Command region, in the skies above them, and in the seas around them.

In Iraq our troopers are working to help our Iraqi partners solidify and build on the hard earned progress of the last two years in the surge. During that time, as you know, Iraqi and coalition forces dealt the extremists in Iraq significant blows, reducing their capability substantially. Those sensational attacks, like the tragic bombings in Bagdad last week, remain a serious concern. Overall levels of violence are dramatically reduced from the height of the sectarian violence in the summer of 2007. As some here will recall, in fact in June 2007 there were 160 attacks per day. In the past eight months or so that

number has generally been below 20. Still a concern to be sure, but obviously a significant improvement.

There have been a number of other encouraging developments as well, including the conduct earlier this year of provincial elections deemed free and fair by the United Nations, and the subsequent seating of new provincial councils and governors. Significant improvement in the production of electricity, continued revival of markets and commercial enterprises, opening of major new hospitals and so on. And in the bulk of the country Iraqi security forces have proven capable in the performance of the security tasks they have taken over from our troopers. Though again, the sensational attacks seen recently in Bagdad and some other areas are cause for concern.

All in all, though, it does appear that we will be able to continue execution of the U.S.-Iraq Security Agreement, and the plan to reduce our forces from the current 130,000 to 50,000 over the next year in accordance with our plan. Again, to be sure, innumerable challenges remain. Resilient Sunni and Shia extremists, malign external influences, the upcoming conduct of national elections, lingering ethno-sectarian mistrust, budget pressures, improving but still inadequate levels of basic services, the release of thousands of detainees, the ongoing return of hundreds of thousands of Iraqis displaced by sectarian violence, and unresolved internal boundary disputes. Iraq has a tough row ahead. But again, the progress over the past two years has been significant. And needless to say, our troopers will continue to work hard to support our Iraqi partners as they confront their country's many challenges.

In Afghanistan we are engaged in a very tough fight. The security trend there in recent years has been a downward spiral in many areas of the country, with levels of violence at record highs in recent weeks in particular. The Taliban and other elements of the so-called extremist syndicate have without question expanded their strength and influence. But our fundamental object in Afghanistan remains very clear. It is to ensure that transnational extremists like **al-Qaeda** are not able to reestablish the sanctuaries they enjoyed in Afghanistan prior to the 9/11 attacks. Given this mission, our troopers and our NATO and Afghan partners are engaged in a war that is, as President Obama observed last week, fundamental to the defense of our people.

Accomplishing our mission in Afghanistan, though, requires more than just killing or capturing terrorists and extremists. It requires a robust comprehensive counter-insurgency campaign, and that is exactly what our troopers, along with their Afghan, NATO, and other international partners, are intent on executing.

They are working to improve security by securing and serving Afghan communities, and by holding areas that have been cleared. They are endeavoring to help develop the Afghan security forces, to support reintegration of reconcilable elements of the insurgency, and to reduce the illegal narcotics industry that undermines efforts to establish the rule of law and finances the insurgency. And they are working with our civilian partners in helping foster the growth of Afghan governance so that it can achieve legitimacy in the eyes of its own people.

Our troopers' hard work has, despite the increase in violence, paid dividends in a number of areas. In the important area of education, for example, as Chairman Mullen noted earlier, there has been significant progress. Since the fall of the Taliban in 2001 enrollment in Afghan schools has grown by nearly 600 percent. The number of trained teachers has increased seven-fold, and 4,000 schools have been constructed. There have been significant achievements in other areas as well; in road construction, expansion of

medical services and the spread of telecommunications. And last Thursday of course, despite widespread Taliban threats and numerous attacks, millions of Afghan citizens stepped forward to vote for their next president and for provincial councils.

Despite the important achievements in various areas, given the deterioration in the security situation, an enormous amount of hard work and tough fighting lies ahead in Afghanistan, and reversing the downward trend in security in particular will require sustained substantial commitment from all involved. Of course the situation in Afghanistan is closely related to that in Pakistan.

And a number of developments in Pakistan over the past four and a half months have been heartening. The Pakistani government, clerics, and people increasingly have united in support of military operations against the extremists operating inside Pakistan's borders. Indeed, Pakistan's leaders and people have come to see the Pakistani Taliban as a threat to their country's very existence, and this is significant. Robust Pakistani military operations in Swat Valley and in other districts of the Northwest Frontier Province have cleared militants from those areas. And operations in the federally administered tribal areas in recent months have resulted in the death of militant leader Baitullah Mehsud and a number of other important extremist group leaders. These encouraging developments notwithstanding, however, the enemy in Pakistan is far from defeated, and many extremist elements have yet to be engaged, particularly those that typically operate outside Pakistan's borders. But even here one can sense the beginning of a realization among Pakistan's leaders and people that extremists operating from their soil and neighboring countries challenge the so-called writ of Pakistani governance, and inevitably will turn on their own country's security forces and citizens. And it goes without saying that we will continue to support the Pakistani military and government as they grapple with the security challenges of such enormous importance to them and to our country and the rest of the world.

Well, I wish I could say that by discussing these missions I have discussed all of the missions in the CENTCOM region. In truth I have just given you an overview of our most significant operations. Beyond these our troopers are always heavily engaged in many other important undertakings that don't always turn up on the front page of the paper. They are also, for example, helping host nations confront extremist networks and deterring aggression elsewhere in the region. They are protecting maritime trade routes and countering piracy on the high seas. And they are preventing proliferation and interdicting arms smuggling. Even as they carry out these and other operations, they are also helping to build partnerships in the region and working to increase the capabilities of host nation security forces to address the challenges they face. This is in short a very busy time in the Central Command area of responsibility, and I can assure you that you can be very proud of the soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines, Coast Guardsmen, and civilians who are deployed in that region of the world. *(Applause)*

As I know you all recognize very clearly, these missions in Iraq, in Afghanistan, and elsewhere across the CENTCOM region demand a tremendous amount of our troopers. Indeed we have asked a great deal of our military men and women and their families in recent years. Many of them have endured lengthy separations during repeated tours in combat. And again I know that the members of this great organization, one that does so much to support our courageous troopers and their families, know this very well. And, as you also know, our men and women in uniform have performed magnificently in all of these missions. It is in fact truly awe inspiring to witness their initiative, courage, skill

and determination as they operate in crushing summer heat and harsh winter cold, in mountains and in deserts, dealing admirably with the challenges and frustrations of working in cultures vastly different than our own. They have also demonstrated characteristic American versatility, proving when required to be statesmen as well as soldiers, diplomats as well as warriors, as they conduct full spectrum complex counterinsurgency operations.

Beyond that of course they have demonstrated extraordinary courage in harm's way for our country, for innocent civilians, and above all of course for their comrades on their left and right.

Indeed, they more than deserve the description Tom Brokaw gave them after seeing them in action in Iraq, when he termed them 'America's New Greatest Generation.' They are, in short, young men and women who represent the very best of what our nation has to offer, and it has, needless to say, been the greatest of privileges for me to serve with these great young Americans in various positions in the Central Command Region for nearly five of the last six and a half years.

I know that some of you here this morning are veterans and members of the original Greatest Generation, while others represent every generation since then that has served and defended our nation, and so this morning I would like to conclude by thanking you. For the troopers of the New Greatest Generation are the proud inheritors of an American heritage of commitment and valor that you sustained and passed on to them. As has always been the case, today's men and women in uniform stand on the shoulders of those who came before them. And because of your accomplishments and your record of service and sacrifice, they stand very tall indeed.

And so this morning on behalf of those who serve our country today, especially those in the CENTCOM region whom you honored with the medal that I accept on their behalf, I want to thank you for all that you have done in serving our country and preserving the freedoms we cherish, and celebrating the values that have made our country great, and above all in supporting our veterans and those who wear the uniform today and their families. Thank you very much. *(Standing applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: Ladies and gentlemen, please continue to stand and congratulate with me the 2009 recipient of The American Legion's Distinguished Service Medal, General David Petraeus. General, Thank you. *(Applause)*

Presentation: Operation Comfort Warriors

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: Ladies and gentlemen, more than 35,000 of our men and women in U. S. military uniform have been injured since the global war on terrorism began. Two years ago Past National Commander Morin asked you for help, financial help, to buy comfort items for the troops recovering at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany. The American Legion family responded, and responded big time. More than $335,000 was raised.

We are now doing that again. This time it has been extended to assist troops in military hospitals and warrior transition units across the United States and overseas. It's called Operation Comfort Warriors. The purpose is to purchase DVDs, CDs, iPods, phone cards, sweat suits, anything that the troops could use that would not normally be funded through government channels. All administrative costs are covered through The American Legion national budget, so not a penny of donated money goes to marketing.

Every penny goes to the troops. In early December I set a goal to raise $50,000 by the end of the holiday season. By January 1st more than $100,000 had been raised. Even in a tough economy The American Legion family responded. *(Applause)*

But more is required. The need is still there. You have an opportunity today to make your contribution. Please visit our Operation Comfort Warriors booth located in the lobby outside this hall. If you donate $10 or more you will receive an Operation Comfort Warriors pin. We will also be accepting contributions from the departments immediately following the National Security Report on Thursday morning. And now, ladies and gentlemen, please turn your attention to the video screens as part of our next presentation.

...The Convention delegates viewed a movie clip from the film "Taking Chance."

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: Ladies and gentlemen, if you have seen the film *Taking Chance*, you will know why we are honoring our next guest with our prestigious Patriot Award. Retired Marine Lieutenant Colonel Michael Strobl, portrayed so well by actor Kevin Bacon, not only escorted Private First Class Chance Phelps on his final journey home, but also eloquently told his story to the world. The essay that he wrote was widely circulated on the Internet and became the screenplay for the film.

The Sundance Film Festival says this on its website, "*Taking Chance* is about respect, about death and sadness, about honor and the military fraternity, and about the American community during a time of tragedy. It is an extraordinary film from any perspective." Apparently there are many others who agree, because *Taking Chance* has been nominated for ten Emmy Awards.

Ladies and gentlemen, please give a warm welcome to the 2009 American Legion Patriot Award winner, Lieutenant Colonel USMC Retired, Michael Strobl. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: The award reads, "For your unswerving devotion to a fallen comrade. While accompanying Private First Class Chance Phelps home to his final resting place in Dubois, Wyoming, your professional and solemn interaction with your fellow Americans and PFC Phelps' family exemplified the hallmark of an outstanding and compassionate U. S. military officer. As immortalized in the film "Taking Chance," the remains of our fallen heroes are treated with the utmost respect from the moment they leave this life to their repatriation at Dover Air Force Base, until the final honors are completed at their funerals. Moreover, your eloquent essay, which was converted into the screenplay for the film, promoted the honorable nature of military service before a large audience. On behalf of the 2.5 million wartime veterans of The American Legion, thank you for your service to this nation and your outstanding performance of escort duty while bringing home a fallen warrior. Presented this 25th day of August, 2009, at the 91st National Convention." (Applause)

Special Presentation: The Patriot Award
Lieutenant Colonel Michael Strobl, USMC (Ret.)

Thank you very much. I can't tell you what an honor it is to accept this award from The American Legion. If I could, I would like to take just a couple of minutes and tell you a little bit of the rest of the story. Whether or not you have seen the movie—this I'm about to tell you isn't in the movie, but you may find it interesting. Chance Phelps was 18 years old, had just graduated from high school in western Colorado, and he joined the

Marine Corps because he felt it was time for him to do his part. And nine months later he was deployed in the Anbar province of Iraq with the First Marine Division. April 4th, 2004, was supposed to be a day off for Chance, a day for him to rest and relax. But his platoon had a patrol to conduct, and he refused to let them go out while he remained in the rear. So he took his usual spot in the turret of a Humvee, manning a 240 Golf machine gun, and they took off.

He was in the rear vehicle. The lead vehicle was struck by an improvised explosive device, which not only disabled the vehicle and injured the driver, but it also triggered an intense ambush from the flank of the convoy. Chance, in the rear vehicle, he could see what was happening, and I think against all basic instincts, he and his vehicle, they drove right into the teeth of the ambush and positioned themselves between the enemy and the pinned down Marines. And from that position he returned accurate and withering fire on the enemy until eventually he drew all of their fire towards him, and was ultimately fatally wounded.

It's also interesting I think that in the back of that Humvee there was another Private First Class, and as soon as Chance slumped over, killed instantly, they pulled him out of the turret and the other Marine jumped right up and got the gun back in action. And kind of to echo General Petraeus' words, I am astonished at what these young men and women are doing for us, and I wonder sometimes, are they afraid of anything. And I think I have figured out in the last couple of years since *Taking Chance* has become widely circulated, that there is one thing our current service members might be afraid of, and that is of letting down the legacy of veterans like you that have done so much for this country and have handed them not only their freedom, but have handed them a legacy that they just refuse to let down. So in many ways I think you who have served before are continuing to serve through the legacy and the example that you provide for our current service members. So I thank you very much for this award, but more than that I thank you for what you have done and what you continue to do. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: Our next speaker is a champion for America's veterans, for their troops and their families. He represents North Texas, Central Texas, and the Brazos Valley in Congress.

Since becoming Chairman of the Military Construction and Veterans Appropriations Subcommittee in 2007, he has authored an historic 17.7 billion dollar increase in funding for veterans health care and benefits, the largest increase in the history of the VA. He also played a key role in enacting the new Post-9/11 GI Bill.

He is the 2008 recipient of The American Legion Distinguished Public Service Award, please welcome Representative Chet Edwards. *(Applause)*

Address: The Honorable Chet Edwards
United States House of Representatives

Commander, thank you for your very generous kind remarks, and most importantly for your leadership for our country in uniform and now as the national commander of The American Legion.

I am so honored to be with each of you today, knowing who you are and what you have done for our country. I come here to say thank you for that as a father of two young sons. And to Colonel Strobl, thank you for reminding all of us in this country what giving ones last full measure of devotion to country is truly all about, and that the sacrifice to the

country does not end with one's life, reminding us of the loved ones who continue to sacrifice everyday for the rest of their lives because of others, their loved ones service to our nation.

It's such a privilege for me to be in the same room with so many who have given so much on behalf of our great country in time of war and peace, in uniform and out.

I want to begin by thanking you for giving me your Distinguished Public Service Award last year. Knowing what you have done for our country, continue to do for our country, it will be one of the greatest honors of my life. And I would like to say now what I said then, that I know who the real heroes are, and I'm looking at them. Thank you for that. *(Applause)*

As a son of a World War II naval aviator who was born one year before The American Legion's first National Convention, I know that Legionnaires have been fighting for our country and standing up for those who have fought for all of us, long before I was born. That's why it's such a personal privilege for me to work with you closely for the last two and a half years that I he been able to chair the House Appropriations Committee on Military Construction and Veterans Affairs.

While we are always looking toward the future, I think it is important to take a few moments from time to time to reflect on what you and the Congress together have accomplished. It is a reminder that your work as leaders of The American Legion and the American Legion Auxiliary truly is making a difference for veterans all across this great land of ours. Let me mention 10 accomplishments that we've accomplished together in the last two and a half years.

First, we've increased VA discretionary spending by 60 percent. With 90 percent of that going to health care, that is a $23 billion increase in the VA discretionary baseline budget. And it does represent the largest increase in the nearly 80 year history of the Veterans Administration. And in my book, you, our veterans, have earned every dime of that funding. *(Applause)*

Second, together, we have passed a new GI Education Bill, $64 billion over 10 years. That new law matches, and in some ways exceeded the original GI Bill which I consider one of the most important pieces of legislation the U.S. Congress or any Congress has ever passed. Now our troops and vets, because of your leadership, our troops and vets who have fought to protect the American dreams for our nation's families will have a better chance to bring that dream to reality for their families.

Third, together we have funded over 3,384 new physicians, and 14,426 new nurses in the VA. That means better care, more medical services, and shorter waiting times for doctors' appointments.

Fourth, together, we have funded the opening of 145 new VA community clinics, and 92 new vet centers.

Fifth, we have funded the hiring of 8,300 new VA claims processors to try to start reducing the unconscionable backlog in veterans' claims. As I see it, I would be willing to bet you didn't wait six months when Uncle Sam sent you into harm's way, and no veterans should have to wait six months to receive his or her earned benefits. *(Applause)*

Six, together with The American Legion, we have increased the mileage reimbursement rates for veterans having to drive many miles, sometimes hundreds of miles each way to get the VA care they've earned and deserved. We have increased it for the first time since 1979, from 11 cents a mile to 41 and a half cents a mile. Some of us maybe old enough in this room to remember 1979. Remember what gas prices were then

back then? 95 cents a gallon. You know that extra 30 cents per mile reimbursement for our vets needing medical care, may not mean a whole lot to some people, but I know you and I know veterans for whom that is the difference between their even being able to afford to drive to get the care they've earned and deserve, or not being able to do so.

Seventh, together we have been able to dramatically increase funding for VA mental health care services. We have nearly doubled that in just two years. And in our fiscal year 2010 budget, which just passed the House last month, we will provide $4.6 billion for mental services for VA care. And thank God, that as a country we've finally matured to the point of understanding that sometimes the mental wounds of war can be just as debilitating, just as painful, and sometimes more long lasting than the physical wounds of combat.

Number eight. With your leadership we have doubled the funding for the Homeless Per Diem Program in the VA. And I will tell you, as one person, I will not sleep well until there is not one homeless veteran on one street in one community here in the land of the free and the home of the brave. *(Applause)*

With the leadership as a partner, since 2003 we had faced a limit, a cap on increased income eligibility for nonservice connected veterans to receive VA care. With your leadership, last year we passed and this year the VA is implementing, the first time again in six years, a 10 percent increase in that income threshold. That will mean for thousands of middle class veterans who are struggling to find affordable health care today that for the first time in their lives the doors of our VA hospitals and clinics will be open to them.

And tenth, we have heard your call for timely passage of VA appropriation bills. That is why last year we passed the fiscal year 2009 VA appropriations bill on time before the new fiscal year began, and it was the first time that had been done since 1996. Even better, my fiscal year 2010 VA appropriations bill which passed the House a few weeks ago, has for the first time ever, thanks largely to your tremendous focus in making this a high priority, we've included for the first time ever in a VA appropriations bill, advanced appropriations so our veterans can get their funding and their care efficiently and effectively. In that VA bill, discretionary funding is increased by over 10 percent. All VA funding for fiscal year 2010 represents a 15 percent increase. And the fact is that the president asked for the largest increase in VA discretionary funding that any president has requested in the last 30 years.

And by the way, next year's funding, the advanced funding will be an 8.3 percent increase over the historic level of fiscal year 2010, and I wanted to say to you just a word about your next speaker. Many of you have known him well. I have known him for nearly 20 years. General Eric Shinseki. I knew him when he headed up, commanded the 1st Cav Division at Fort Hood. I knew him as Chief of Staff of the Army. In the Army he was a soldier's soldier, and I believe as Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs, Secretary Shinseki will be a veteran's veteran. I won't tell you all the details of his behind the scenes work already on behalf of veterans, but I'll tell you these budgets wouldn't be for 2010 and 2011 what they are, had it not been for Secretary Shinseki.

With The American Legion as our partner, Congress has not only passed historic increases in VA funding in the past two and a half years, we've now done it on time, and now with advanced appropriations, and with the New GI Education Bill. Even as Congress faces tough budget decisions in the years ahead, given our huge national deficits, I believe our having increased together the VA discretionary budget baseline by

over 60 percent in less than three years, has set the bar higher for veterans funding for health care and benefits for decades to come.

These vital accomplishments would not have been possible had it not been for the leadership of The American Legion, and I come here today to thank you for that. Your work in Congress in ensuring that veterans will no longer be honored on Veterans Day with speeches and dishonored in Congress every other day with inadequate budgets. You have made a difference, and I thank you for that. *(Applause)*

For those of you from California, if I can do a little lobbying here, I hope you'll say thank you tomorrow to Chairman Bob Filner, Chairman of the House VA Committee. He's been a strong voice for veterans, particularly the leader in the House on the advanced appropriations measures. If you're from South Carolina, please thank budget chairman John Spratt. And if you're from Wisconsin, please thank my friend, he can be a little crusty at times, but I tell you what, Appropriations Chairman, Dave Obey from Wisconsin, has been there these last two and a half years playing a key role in these historic funding increases, and we would not have the advanced VA appropriations funding in my bill for 2010 and 11, had it not been for Congressman Dave Obey. So we got the Wisconsin delegation back there.

And let me say, this might surprise some of you, it's a long way from San Francisco to my district in rural central Texas, but I have to say to you when it has come to fighting for veterans health care and benefits, and it has come to leading the effort in the House for a new GI education bill and advanced appropriations for the VA, Speaker Pelosi has done more on these veterans issues than any Speaker, democrat or republican I have observed in my eighteen and a half years in the U.S. Congress despite all The American Legion and the Congress have done together for veterans since 2007.

And I want to thank Steve Robertson, your legislative director, for the tremendous work he has put in and the difference he's made. But despite all of our progress, you and I know there is still so much work left to be done. I need your help to pass our fiscal year 2010 and 11 budget, including advanced appropriations on time before October 1. So, talk to your U.S. Senators. And whether it's meeting the needs of those facing PTSD, or a waiting list for VA benefits, or providing jobs for veterans or many our other issues, our work is not yet done. You know that better than I. We need your continued vital role in ensuring that the VA is using its historic funding increases wisely, efficiently, and effectively.

I want to finish with a story. It's a true story. John David Fry was a young man of eighteen, living in Lorena, Texas, just next to my hometown of Waco, when, as a senior in high school he decided that he wanted to serve his country, and signed up to serve in the United States Marines. In 2005, Gunnery Sergeant Fry was sent to Iraq where he volunteered to be an Ordinance Disposal Technician, basically defusing IEDs. This great Marine and American through a 12 month period defused dozens and dozens of bombs, probably saving hundreds of lives. Only God knows how many lives that this great soldier, this great Marine saved.

On one occasion he went into the home of an Iraqi family where a young retarded Iraqi boy had been chained to the wall of his living room with a bomb strapped around his chest. And this father who had his own wife and own three children back home in the United States, risked his life that day to save the life of that young Iraqi boy, and to save that family grief for the rest of their lifetimes.

On another occasion he was wounded and was sent to Germany and told he would receive a Bronze Star and a trip back home. Not out of disrespect, but out of loyalty to his country and his duty, he said, "No, I want to go back to Iraq. That is my duty to try to save the lives of my fellow Marines." So, he didn't come home. He went back to Iraq.

Seven days, seven days before John David Fry was to come home to his loving family then at Camp Lejeune, he had his bags packed, he had finished anything the Marines would have asked him to do on that tour of duty, and yet a call came in from al-Anbar Province there had been found three IEDs in a major road there. And John David Fry, this father of three young children, volunteered to go out on that mission. He didn't have to do it, but he wanted to do it for his comrades and for his country.

He defused the first bomb safely, and then the second bomb. But what he didn't know is the third bomb, the last of so many he would have ever been asked to defuse in his service there, he didn't know that under the third bomb was a fourth bomb planted there by the terrorist. And on that day in 2006 in March, this great American who had saved so many lives, of Iraqis and Americans, gave his life to his country.

Just a few weeks ago I had the privilege to call his widow, Malia Fry, whom I had met several times, to let her know that a bill that I had offered had been signed into law, the John David Fry Scholarship Program to try to honor her family and so many others like them, by ensuring that every child who's lost a mother or father in military service since September 11, 2001, would receive a full GI scholarship. *(Applause)*

In talking to Malia Fry that day was the most humbling and moving moment of my 18 years in Congress. It was humbling because I knew even as we spoke, no matter what I ever tried to do in Congress, I could never begin to fully repay the debt of gratitude I owed her and her three little children, Gideon, Kathryn, and C.L. for the sacrifice they had made in order to protect the better future for my two little boys and for our family.

I feel that same sense of gratitude and humility today as I come and meet with you, leaders of our country, leaders of the largest veterans organization in the United States. I come here to say thank you and God bless you for what you and your families have done to make a better life for the American family and the greatest country in the world.

Thank you so very much. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER DAVIS: Representative Edwards, we wish to thank you for your dedication to the veterans of this nation. Congratulations on the fine work you are doing. Ladies and gentlemen, let's give the Representative another round of applause. *(Applause)*

Announcements

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER DAVIS: Before introducing our next speaker, I have an important announcement for the National Security Convention Committee. All members of the National Security Convention Committee who met on Sunday morning, are to reconvene at the Convention Theater on Level 1 at 11:50 a.m. The committee has a very important matter of unfinished business that must be conducted. Again, all members of the National Security Convention Committee from Sunday morning are to reconvene at the Convention Theater on Level 1 at 11:50 a.m.

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: My next introduction gives me a great deal of pleasure. This is a man that I came to know early this year as we met in his office

to discuss issues, issues of concern to veterans; issues of concern to The American Legion; issues of concern to the agency that he is now leading.

He is a 1965 graduate of West Point. Secretary Shinseki completed 38 years of uniformed service in the U.S. Army, including two combat tours in the Republic of Vietnam and service as the Army's Chief of Staff from 1999 to 2003.

He became the seventh Secretary of Veterans Affairs on January 21st, 2009. We have had several conversations, good conversations, cooperative work together. He has become a friend, and it is my honor to introduce to you the Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. *(Standing applause)*

Address: The Honorable Eric K. Shinseki
Secretary, Department of Veterans Affairs

Thank you all very much. Thank you. Very kind of you. Such a warm welcome. Commander Rehbein, thank you for that kind introduction, and thank you for this invitation to join The American Legion here in Louisville.

Now let me acknowledge, I know they are known to you and have already been introduced, but let me acknowledge some of your special guests and your leadership who are here this morning. I believe Secretary Solis from Labor may still be here, but I would like to thank her publicly for the terrific working relationship we have with labor, specifically on veterans' issues, especially homelessness and jobs for veterans.

I would like to thank Chairman Edwards, House Mil Con Veterans Affairs Appropriations Subcommittee. Mr. Chairman, thanks for your devotion many years to young men and women who served in uniform and their families. I know that firsthand from our work together, but I now know that in our work about your devotion to veterans, and thanks for your great support.

Congressman Yarmuth and Congressman Whitfield, good to be back here in your districts, back here in Louisville again. American Legion directors, executive directors, John Sommer who I know quite well from his days in Washington; Peter Gaytan, Marty Justis and Jeff Brown; Dan Wheeler, your national adjutant; Tommy Cisna, national commander, Sons of The American Legion; Legionnaires; fellow veterans, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen. Good morning. I'm most honored to be joining you at this 91st Annual Convention.

Two hundred years ago this past February, Abraham Lincoln was born here in Kentucky. We know him primarily as the man from Illinois, the man from Springfield, but he was born here in Kentucky. In his second inaugural address delivered as the Civil War was drawing to a close, President Lincoln called on our nation "to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow and his orphan." I cite those words, because these are the words that are on the outside of the building, the main entrance at 810 Vermont in Washington, D.C. where I go to work every day. That's Lincoln's words that remind us what our mission is.

That charge is as compelling today as it was in 1865, when he delivered it at his second inaugural. It underscores the uniqueness and the vitality of our advocacy on behalf of the veterans. Now, neither memories nor words can ever repay the debt our nation owes our veterans. Standing at Gettysburg, this same president, Abraham Lincoln, bore added testimony when he said in that famous address, "The world will little note nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here."

Now, Legionnaires in your day you earned similar accolades and testimony for your service in Europe; over the skies in Japan, and Korea, Vietnam and Kuwait and Somalia. On these bloody battlefields the seeds of American heroism were planted. They are being sown again today in places called Iraq and Afghanistan. It is not just what you did in uniform that is remarkable, it is what you did also when you came home that lifted the U.S. from emergent power after World War II, to global superpower by the end of the century, and it was about leadership. It was about your leadership.

Earlier this month we celebrated implementation of the new Post 9/11 GI Bill. Chairman Edwards and the congressmen present were a part of delivering this legislation that provides opportunity for our youngest veterans. Now, just as you were responsible for passage of the original GI Bill of 1944, and I'm going to talk about that in a minute, your commitment here again was instrumental in getting this new 9/11 GI Bill passed through the Congress.

Returning World War II veterans leveraged the educational opportunity they had under the original GI Bill, and it sustained economic growth for the nation, catapulting the U.S. into the world's largest economy and in time, the leadership of the free world, and victory in the Cold War without a shot being fired.

Let me just remind us what the original GI Bill provided to our country. In the 12 years between 1944 and 1956 when that bill was available to veterans, our country became richer by 450,000 trained engineers; 240,000 accountants; 238,000 teachers; 91,000 scientists; 66,000 doctors; 22,000 dentists, and a million other college educated veterans who went on to lead our great country in the second half of the 20th century. This Post-9/11 new GI Bill has the potential to impact the country in the same way, thanks to your leadership and the leadership in Congress.

Additionally, you have strengthened our communities through such benchmark initiatives as Boys Nation; Boys State; the Boy Scout program; American Legion Baseball; the National High School Oratorical Contest and The Heroes to Hometowns program. Your Operation Comfort Warriors Program has raised over $200,000 to buy comfort items and other goods for our wounded service members recovering in VA and military facilities worldwide.

You have been our eyes and our ears identifying the needs of our service members and veterans, and our conscience for doing what's right. Your military Family Forum Initiatives gives the families of service members a chance to voice their concerns, enabling all of us to solve their problems. Thank you for your continuing service to America. For over 90 years we have been side by side, and we look forward to continuing this important partnership.

Now, over the past seven months I visited VA facilities large and small, urban and rural, complex and simple all across the country. I've had the opportunity to speak with VA leaders, members of their staffs and veterans. I also invited each of our 21 VISN directors to share with me their requirements; their priorities; their measurements for performance and quality and safety, and their need for resources, resources in terms of people, money and time. I took the final four hour VISN presentation two weeks ago. This was time well invested, a valuable learning experience for me, seven months into this assignment.

Every day, 288,000 people come to work at VA to serve veterans. We have only one mission: To care for our nation's veterans wherever they live, by providing them the

highest quality benefits and services possible, and I would add, we must do this faster, better and more equitably.

The veterans I've met in my travels have been uplifting. Many struggle with conditions inevitable with old age; others live with uncertain consequences from exposures to environmental threats and chemicals; still others have recently returned from Afghanistan and Iraq baring fresh wounds of war, visible and invisible. Out of my encounters with veterans three concerns keep coming through. They talk about access; they talk about the backlog, and they talk about homeless veterans. And let me touch on each of those for a few minutes.

Access. Of the 23.4 million veterans in this country, roughly eight million are enrolled with us. Five and a half million have used our medical services at least once. Three and a half million visit our medical facilities regularly, in some cases, weekly.

Why have over 15 million veterans never enrolled with us? That's the question I've asked, and I intend to answer it. But whatever their reason today, VA must and will continue reaching out to them to explain our benefits, our services, and the quality of our health care system. *(Applause)*

Now, a major initiative which will expand access is the President's decision to welcome back some 500,000 Priority Group 8 veterans who lost entitlements in 2003. We began registering them in July, and we expect 266,000 of them to enroll with us this first year through 2010.

Another initiative to expand and improve access, is the evolution of our health care delivery system. You all are familiar with aspects of it. VA has 153 medical centers which are the flagships of our nationwide integrated health care enterprise.

Now, about a decade ago, VA, brilliantly in my opinion, brilliantly decided to move away from the concept that was existing then, which is: Here are our flagships, come visit us, to a different concept, one that endeavors to delivery health care to wherever veterans live. To do that we have created a system of 768 community based outpatient clinics; 232 vet centers; outreach clinics; mobile clinics on wheels that go out to the most rural areas to find veterans who have no access to us, and then when necessary have even contracted specialized health care locally. We will be up over 830 community based outpatient clinics at the end of 2010.

Our next major leap in health care delivery will be to routinely connect those flagship medical centers to distant community based outpatient clinics. And there are even more distant mobile clinics that travel the rural and highly rural areas of our country via an IT backbone that places specialized health care professionals in those medical centers, in contact with patients via telehealth and telemedicine hookups. But here's what this means: Today we're even piloting connectivity from those medical centers right into the homes of chronically ill veterans, to provide better monitoring for them, and the prevention of avoidable acute episodes. This means that veterans will drive less to receive routine health care, but they will have better access day to day; it will be higher quality and more convenient, especially for veterans challenged by long distance travel, and prevention, that's a key word here, prevention will mean healthier lives.

The backlog. Even though as I indicated less than 50 percent of the veteran population in this country receives care or benefits from VA, we have a backlog in disability claims. The total number of claims in our inventory today is about 400,000, and I know there's various numbers floating out there, but the total number of claims being handled today is about 400,000. And of that number, backlogged claims that have been in

our system for longer than 125 days, total roughly 145,000 cases. In July we closed out 85,000 claims. In July we received 89,000 new claims. So you get the picture on the numbers. Regardless of how we parse the numbers, I will tell you we have a backlog that's too big, and veterans are waiting too long for their paychecks, and I am going to do something about that. *(Applause)*

In April, President Obama charged both Secretary of Defense Gates and me to build a fully interoperable electronic records system that will provide each member of our armed forces a virtual lifetime electronic record that will track them from the day they put on the uniform the first time and take the oath of allegiance, through their time as veterans until the day they were laid to rest.

VA is already a leader in the development and use of electronic health records, so is the Department of Defense. Between us, DoD and VA have an opportunity to drive the improvement of health care through a fully interoperable electronic health record. And our achievements here may go beyond just veterans and service members, and could help the nation as a whole. So we're working with the president's chief performance, chief technology and chief information officers to harness the powers of innovation and technology. For VA, just this step alone, the electronic records that transfer all that data from the Department of Defense automatically to us will mean faster processing, higher quality decisions, no lost records, and fewer errors. I'm personally committed to reducing the processing times of disability claims. That's something I look at every week. We have work to do here, but we have moved up. *(Applause)*

Homelessness. Veterans lead the nation in homelessness, depression, substance abuse, suicide, and we rank right up there in joblessness as well. Here again, this is an accumulation of neglect. We estimate that 131,000 veterans live on the streets of our cities every night, the cities of this wealthiest and most powerful nation in the world. They are men and women, young and old, fully functioning and disabled from every war generation including the current operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, and today they also come with children. Some of them will sleep on the streets here in Louisville tonight.

Now, six years ago that number was 195,000, so today at 131,000 we think we're moving in the right direction, and that tells us that we probably have the right partners out there on the ground, the right plans and the right programs in place, and now we need to provide the resources that keep this thing going in the right direction. As I say, we're moving in the right direction to remove this blot from all of our consciences. President Obama and I are committed to ending homelessness among veterans. We're going to take those 131,000 homeless veterans off the streets in the next five years. *(Applause)*

No one, no one who has served this nation as we have, should ever find themselves living without care and without hope. Now I know, just because I've been around the loop once or twice, I know that there are no absolutes in life. So when I tell you we're going to take 131,000 veterans off the streets in the next five years, I know what a tall order that is. But I also know if we don't put a big target out there we wouldn't be giving this our very best efforts. And so that's what I have put as our goal, we're going to take 131,000 homeless veterans off of our streets in the next five years.

But to do this well, we'll have to attack the entire downward spiral that ends in homelessness. Homelessness is just the last rung, you know, and the loss of hope. We must offer education; we must offer jobs; we must treat depression; we must fight substance abuse; we must offer safe housing. We have to do it all. No missed

opportunities here in going from 131,000 to zero and keeping it there. Education, jobs, mental health, substance abuse, housing.

Education. I talked about the original GI Bill. The President and Senators Jim Webb and John Warner, because the rollout for the new GI Bill was held in Virginia, Jim Webb, Senator Webb was the primary author and sponsor of bill. And so the rollout was held in the state of Virginia at George Mason University. And the president, Senators Webb and John Warner were present, and the program was kicked off on 3 August. We expect roughly 150,000, upwards of 150,000 veterans to take part in this fully funded degree producing program at a state college or university or their choice this year. An additional 1,100 private institutions have also elected to participate in a special arrangement of the GI Bill called The Yellow Ribbon Program.

This investment in America's future will go on for decades to come. And I told you what happened the first time we did this: Thousands of trained engineers; scientists; doctors; dentists; accountants; teachers. Lightning is about to strike twice here. Lightning is about to strike twice, and those who have answered our nation's call are going to be benefited into being leaders for our country in the 21st century through this program.

Jobs. I recently addressed over 1,700 veteran small business owners of the 5th Annual Small Business Symposium on 21 July. I reminded them that—it's an old phrase I've heard over the years and it's true every time I look at it—veterans hire veterans because they know what they're getting. Customers and partners value veterans' skills, knowledge and attributes, and are eager to work with them. Just last fall in a survey conducted by the Human Resource Management Society, over 90 percent of employers said they valued veterans' skills, in particular their strong sense of responsibility and teamwork.

VA puts veterans first in our contracting awards, because we recognize the on-time, on-budget, quality solutions they bring to our contracting needs. In fiscal year 2008 our unique Veterans First Buying Program resulted in VA spending more than $2 billion on veteran owned small businesses. Now that represented 15 percent of our procurement dollars which is up five percent from the previous year. During that time we also doubled our support to service disabled veteran owned businesses. That means 12 percent of our procurement dollars, 1.6 billion, was invested here in service disabled small business owners who are veterans.

At VA our experience is that veteran owned small businesses have high likelihood for creating new jobs. Again, veterans hire veterans; high likelihood for developing new products and services and for building prosperity. And in this time of economic downturn, more than ever we have to be sensitive to the challenges veteran owned small businesses have, and we have put a spotlight on it, and we intend to increase our numbers inside the VA on contracting with veteran owned small businesses during this next year.

Homeless health care. We will spend $3.2 billion next to prevent and reduce homelessness among veterans. 2.7 billion of that amount will be on medical services. The remaining 500 million on specific homeless programs. With 85 percent of our homeless funding going to health care, it tells you that homelessness is primarily a health care issue, heavily burdened with depression and substance abuse. The psychological consequences of combat and all of you in the audience who have been through it understand this, the psychological consequences of combat affect every generation of veterans. VA now employs 18,000 mental health professionals to address our mental health needs. We know that if we diagnose and treat, people get better. And if we don't,

they don't, and sometimes their problems become debilitating. We understand the stigma issue. It's there in the military, it's there in professions, I think it's there in the country. We understand the stigma issue, but we're not going to be dissuaded. We're not giving up on any of our veterans with mental health challenges, and definitely not on our homeless veterans. *(Applause)*

Homeless housing. As I indicated, we have about 500 partners in nearly every major town and city all across the country helping us get homeless veterans off the streets. You know them, Swords to Plowshares, Catholic Charities, a variety of partners, five hundred of them. With 20,000 HUD-VASH vouchers from the Department of Housing and Urban Development, and our $500 million to invest in 2010 to cover safe housing and rehabilitation of veterans, we have been able to coax off the streets, we are going to reduce the number of homeless veterans next year and each year thereafter for the next five.

So, education, jobs, health care and housing. We have to do it all, and we're going to go after it. We have work to do here. We think we have momentum, and we know where we're headed. And next time, this time next year I hope to have a better report for you.

Now, President Obama has charged me with transforming VA for the long-term into a 21st century organization. It will be different from the one that exists today. Five years from now we intend to be the provider of choice for more of that large population of 23.4 million veterans. The 15 million veterans who aren't enrolled with us today. We would like to be the provider of choice in insurance and healthcare and education and home loans and counseling and in employment. Now, to achieve this kind of status with veterans, we have work to do ourselves. We must make it easier for them to understand their entitlements, and then we must make it simpler for them to access their benefits and healthcare services, and we intend to do that.

Beyond the five years, we're looking for new ways of thinking and acting. We're asking why, 40 years after Agent Orange was last used in Vietnam in 1970, this secretary is still adjudicating claims for service-connected disabilities related to its toxicity. And why 20 years after Desert Storm we're still debating the debilitating effects of whatever causes Gulf War illness. Left to our present processes, and that's what it is, a process called the scientific method where you gather data; you compare it over time; you write papers; you collaborate, this is the process. Twenty or 40 years from now some future secretary could be adjudicating service-connected disabilities from our currently ongoing conflicts. It makes no sense to me. We're going to do better, we must do better, and we will. Now, if you haven't already heard, the Institute of Medicine recently released a new study on the possible link between Agent Orange and heart disease and Parkinson's. We have the study under review now, and I assure you we're going to get this right.

Any organization our size is bound to have what I call the occasional disappointment, and we haven't been spared them in recent months. Whether they're endoscopies or brachytherapy, many of these issues occurred in the past, but I take responsibility for fixing them. Some of these disappointments resulted from someone cutting corners, others were failures in leadership behavior and professional ethics, and still others were part of our system and need to be addressed. These issues will be resolved. Only resolved when a sense of responsibility, accountability, and discipline is established throughout the VA. I told you 288,000 people come to work every day. They are good people. But establishing responsibility, accountability, and discipline is my job. It's a responsibility of leadership and it must extend from my office to the furthest

reaches in our footprint. We are your advocates, and we have begun to retrain the workforce.

My remarks this morning comprise a seven month progress report in the state of your department, the Department of Veterans Affairs. I intend to do this again next year. Much more remains to be done. I intend to have much more to report next year. We need your continued support and assistance if we are to become that provider of choice. My mission is to serve veterans by increasing their access to our benefits and services; to provide them the highest quality of health care available, and to do what I can to control costs. Doing so will make VA a model of good governance; doing so will also keep faith with President Lincoln's charge to care for those who have borne the battle, and grant them the dignity and respect they deserve until they are laid to rest, and even thereafter. That is my mission.

We look for your advice and support in all of these endeavors. Thanks to you we now have a new Post 9/11 GI Bill. Thanks to you we also have an agreement with Congress on advanced appropriations, and the members present were part of that. Both the House and the Senate appropriations committees have recommended advance appropriations for VA medical care in 2011. I know this has been a priority of The American Legion for some time, and I would like to thank you in the partnership of veterans health care budget reform, for your leadership in getting us this far.

Now as I've said, much more remains to be done. This is a seven month report. Some days it seems like seven years, but it's been seven months. Your support and your advice continue to be very important to me. And I thank Commander Rehbein and your national leadership for being there when I've needed it, and they have indeed partners. And so for all that you do, you have my deepest respect and thanks.

God bless the men and women who tonight and every other night of the year perform their lonely and demanding missions in faraway places like Iraq and Afghanistan. God bless all of you have and all of our veterans who have served our nation, and God bless this great country of ours. Thank you very much. *(Applause)*

Now before I leave the stage here, I would like to do one last piece of business. Before I leave, I have a personal thanks to deliver to one of your national leaders. For 38 years, John Sommer has served our nation's veterans at The American Legion, but at VACO, at the headquarters of VA, we know him very well. And as he prepares to retire, I would like to take this opportunity to thank him for the incredible contributions he has made on behalf of men and women who have worn the uniforms of our country.

Starting at the Department of Ohio, his home state, he came to Washington; served on the Board of Veterans Appeals; at the Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Division, and as executive director of the Legion's Washington office. For nearly 20 years, from academia to VA's Advisory Committees to the Halls of Congress, he has been there, and he's been your tireless advocate.

I admire John because everything he does is for veterans. He keeps nothing in reserve. We would be hard pressed to find a more dedicated, selfless, and principled advocate for veterans. I'm going to present him a medallion this morning from the VA. It's a very, very modest way of saying thanks, and I wish we could do more. But I would like you to join me in thanking this steadfast patriot for his selfless service to America, to all of you, and to all the men and women who have defended her. On behalf of our nation's veterans, and everyone at VA, I'm proud to present this medallion to John

Sommer for his lifetime of dedicated service to veterans. So John, if you would please come forward. Thank you all. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: In one of those original meetings with the secretary, one of the things we discussed was the challenge that he faced in getting his arms around some of these problems, and I think from the report that you just heard, Secretary Shinseki has met that challenge well; has his arms around some of these problems, and we can really now see that department take some steps to solving some of those problems. It's great to see.

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: Our next guest, U.S. Representative John Yarmuth was elected to represent Kentucky's Third Congressional District in 2006. He was appointed to the Committee on Budget, and the Committee on Ways and Means, which is the oldest, and considered by many to be the most powerful committee in the Congress.

Congressman Yarmuth was born and raised here in Louisville and served as president of his freshman class in Congress, and is senior whip for the majority party. He was named 2007 Legislator of the Year by the Kentucky Reading Association, and "Outstanding New Member of Congress" by the Committee for Education Funding.

Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome Congressman John Yarmuth. *(Applause)*

Greetings: The Honorable John Yarmuth
United States House of Representatives

Well good afternoon. It's great to be back here after this morning. I get to welcome you again to my wonderful hometown. It is a great honor to have the 2009 American Legion Convention here in Kentucky's Third Congressional District. As I said this morning, we've had a pretty good year with major events. First, the Ryder Cup last September; then the Derby and now this incredible event which brings so many dedicated Americans to our great city.

So, I'm very appreciative that you're here, and join all of my fellow Louisvillians in welcoming you and thanking you for choosing our city. Now I hope that even though you have a very busy schedule during your few days here, that you'll take some time to experience so many of the things that make Louisville a great place to be, a great place to live and visit.

One thing though that you won't be able to visit, and it really isn't in our Chamber of Commerce brochures, but which really make Louisville the place it is, is our incredibly committed veteran community. We have over 70,000 veterans here in Louisville, and they contribute on a daily basis to the vitality, the innovation, and the spirit that again makes this such a wonderful place. For decades and decades tens of thousands of our veterans have made countless contributions to our community, and I know they will continue to. I'm here because of a military situation. My father came to Fort Knox from New York to go through basic training, to go to World War II. Met my mother here at a USO event and the rest is history. Here I am. So I feel very much connected to the military presence in our region and to Fort Knox particularly.

One of the things I want to do this afternoon is to talk about one of those very, very special veterans who contributed so much to our community. We lost him this spring. His name was Robley Rex, and he died a week before his 108th birthday. He was one of the

last surviving World War I era veterans, and he spent his entire long, long life working for his fellow veterans. He was a most familiar face in our VA hospital here. He gave 14,000 hours of volunteer service at the Veterans Administration hospital. Almost all of those were after his 85th birthday. The week before he died, he was there at the VA helping to make life a little better for his fellow veterans, and he will be sorely missed. I know it's a little presumptuous of me to do this, but I'm going to welcome you here for him, because I know he would have been so proud to have been here with you to show off his city for so many of the people he cared so deeply about.

I've introduced legislation in the House, and Senator McConnell has introduced identical legislation in the Senate, to name our new Veterans Administration hospital, which is online to be built and opened in 2013, we've introduced legislation to name that hospital for Robley Rex because of what he's meant to his fellow veterans for so long. And I expect that to pass, and that will be a great tribute to him. But his spirit is no different than the spirit that pervades this room that lives in every one of you, and it serves as such a great example to all of us in public service who try to find, as my introduction said, the ways and means to support not just our men and women who are serving actively, but also to those who have served. We know, as Secretary Shinseki said, that we have very, very serious challenges facing us in caring for our veteran population in the future. We also know that we have an unwavering commitment to doing that.

I had the great pleasure of serving with two champions, one of who was here this morning, Chet Edwards; one of whom will be here tomorrow, Bob Filner, who every day when they wake up in the morning they think what are we going to do today to make sure that we meet our obligations to pay the respect and the support to our veterans who have given so much for our country. And that's a great honor. And I think we've made great strides in our efforts to support our veterans. We will continue to do that.

And I must once again thank this organization for the incredibly moving ceremony this morning, the Community Covenant. Our community's commitment to our veterans as I said is unwavering. When I took office two and a half years ago, one of the first things I did was to form a veterans advisory committee. We meet several times a year. The American Legion has a seat at that table because we want to know on a regular basis what we can do to realize and to meet our obligations to our veterans. It's been extremely helpful to me. We also have a women's veterans advisory group, because women veterans do face some specific problems that we aren't always as cognizant of. And again, they have been very, very helpful to me in guiding my work in Congress.

So, we look to you. We in Congress look to you for guidance. We need to know how we can help, and we will promise you—I promise you again as I did this morning, this community will be a model in fulfilling the obligations of the commitment of the Community Covenant, and I look forward to working with The American Legion and veterans throughout the country to make sure that this country always honors the people who sacrificed so much for us.

Thank you again for coming to Louisville. It's a great honor to have you here. And I know you'll come back in just a few years and then we can all tour the beautiful VA facility named after Robley Rex, and he will be looking down from heaven and saying, "Hey, you all, welcome to Louisville." Thanks very much. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: Before I introduce our next speaker, please let me ask that the Legion Riders that will be presenting checks, if you would gather behind the stage at this point in order to expedite that presentation.

Several months ago the *Washington Post* published an op-ed by our next guest, the wife of an Army soldier. She wrote, "I know that many of us feel embittered, powerless, and disconnected from the Army in which we and our husbands serve." Within days her email inbox was full of messages from soldiers, from their families, and even from the White House.

Kristina Kaufmann Turner has done all military families a great service by reminding Washington that it is not only soldiers who serve, but also their families as well. Please give a warm welcome to our National Convention to Kristina Kaufmann Turner, a very brave lady. *(Applause)*

Address: Kristina Kaufmann Turner

Thank you, Commander, for the kind introduction and the opportunity to speak on behalf of today's military families who serve right beside their soldiers. I am an unlikely Army wife. I graduated from the University of California Berkeley, possibly the most liberal school in the country, and my husband went to West Point.

People often ask how we met. Vegas. We met in Las Vegas, the only way that could possibly happen. Apparently, though, what happens in Vegas doesn't always stay there, because I ended up in the Army. Fort Sill, Oklahoma, to be exact, the home of the field artillery. Huah!

We were married in June of 2001, so pretty much the only Army I have ever known has been an Army at war. As you all know, military spouses have a longstanding and proud tradition of volunteerism. We take care of our soldiers and we take care of each other. I stand in awe of the care, compassion, and resiliency our military families continue to show under extremely difficult circumstances.

But we are tired. As we approach eight years of war, too many military families are quietly coming apart at the seams. My husband did his command at Fort Bragg from 2006 to 2008, airborne. Our unit was deployed in some capacity the entire two years, and in my role as the battalion's family readiness group leader, supporting over 600 soldiers and their families, I saw firsthand the impact deployments have not only on the soldiers, but their families as well. To quote one Army wife, "Life is unbelievable when he's deployed. The long nights without sleep, the days without knowing your husband is alive from the last patrol they went on, the pit in your stomach every time you round a bend to your house praying there is not a chaplain's sedan in front of your house. Then when you should be happy because they've made it home, the nightmare, as hard as it is to imagine, gets worse."

While our command experience was incredibly rewarding, and we were both honored to be serving, it was also stressful, difficult, and extremely frustrating. Bottom line, there were not nearly enough resources available. And although I did everything in my power to help, I felt like I left a trail of broken and damaged families in our wake. The old saying is, "If the Army had wanted you to have a family they would have issued you one." Although DoD has made a concerted effort in the past couple of years to address some of the challenges we face, they are way behind the power curve when it comes to assessing and dealing with the impact on families, particularly when it comes to mental health. There are well meaning initiatives trying to address various facets of the problem. However, the fact is they're not working very well. Why? Well, for one thing,

the military has been measuring success based on effort expended, the amount of money spent and programs created, as opposed to how effective these programs have actually been on the ground. This has led to a significant disconnect between military leadership and those of us in the trenches, so to speak. Too many soldiers and their families perceive these efforts to be little more than lip service. To quote another Army wife, "I hear all the time how the military is doing so much for the family, but I'm constantly in the dark. I hate canned responses of I don't know, or I can't answer that but I can refer you to someone that can, only to have that person have me stuck in voicemail purgatory for all of eternity."

I believe our top military leaders are sincere in their desire to support military families; but good intentions, covenants, and proclamations are not enough. We need to fully fund and professionalize the family readiness groups, place qualified social workers and/or mental health professionals at the unit level, incorporate family support training into the educational curriculum at all levels of command, and hold NCOs and officers accountable by including an assessment on how well they do on family support in their evaluation reports. I'm thrilled that The American Legion has proposed a resolution incorporating these recommendations to modernize the family readiness groups.

No soldier returns from a deployment unchanged, even those with no physical or psychological wounds, and that means no family is ever the same. Reunions are wonderful, but it's not easy putting a family back together after a long deployment. And just when you feel like you've hit your stride, your soldier is back in the field and training for his next deployment.

We military families are a practical and self-sufficient group of people. We don't spend a lot of time talking about what ifs. We do what we have to do to cope with what has become our new normal. When civilian friends ask how we do it we say, "What choice do we have?" This 'can do' attitude of the military actually means 'can do without.' It's a badge of honor soldiers and their families have been proud to bear. But after eight years of war this badge is wearing very thin.

Legionnaires, I know I am preaching to the choir when I say we as a nation have a solemn obligation to care for those who fight and defend our way of life. When a soldier takes the oath to support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies foreign and domestic, the fact is his or her family, spouse, children, parent, brother and sister, willingly or not take this oath too. Behind every soldier in uniform today is a family struggling with the stresses of war.

But this is not just a moral imperative, this is about national security, a fact that The American Legion's outstanding leadership is fully aware. If you have a broken family you will have a broken soldier, and then you are not going to have an Army. And since one percent of the population is fighting these wars, this poses a very real problem. If we don't take action now to recover and sustain our military families we will lose a generation of them. Volunteer wives cannot handle the serious issues facing military families alone. Suicide, battery, divorce, depression of spouses and children, PTSD, death and economic peril—we are truly at the end of our ropes. And what is happening with some of the children of these soldiers serving multiple tours is truly heartbreaking.

So what is the good news? Well, the good news is we don't have to do it ourselves. We have people like you and organizations like The American Legion who are ready, willing, and able to help. The problem is the majority of soldiers and their families know very little about the Legion and other veterans and military service organizations. If I had

known the Legion could help our soldiers and their families, I would have asked for help. Those of us living on installations often feel very isolated from the rest of the country, and our National Guard and Reserve families have it even tougher, feeling isolated both in the civilian community in which they live, and the active duty community.

After meeting with Commander Rehbein and the Legion's national leadership, I am convinced they have a solid plan to improve their outreach to today's military members and their families. In fact, some Legion outposts are already functioning as de facto soldier and family assistance centers for our Reserve and Guard families living far from military installations. DoD, for its part, must do a better job of allowing VSOs and other nonprofit organizations to connect with us. Because to be perfectly honest, we don't care where the help comes from, we just need the help.

So what can you do? Well, here is one little old Army wife's call to action. When you go back home to your states, tell your fellow Legionnaires what I shared with you today. Reach out to us; let us know you are there and that you want to help. Sometimes just having someone volunteer to help with the lawn or fix a leaky faucet, or invite us to a barbeque when we're ten months into a 15 month deployment, is enough to keep us going for a while. Adopt a single soldier when he or she returns from a deployment. So instead of spending the first two weeks before leave in the barracks, which is usually just a few blocks from the class six, the soldier is spending time with you, a fellow veteran, a person who understands without having to ask. The challenges we face are complex and difficult, and the solutions will not be easy or free. But we must begin a campaign to truly support our military families not just in word, but in deed. We must harness and focus the energy and resources of the military, military service organizations, the administration, our legislatures and the American people to deliver real results.

We are proud to serve. I'm a proud Army wife. We don't expect or want people to feel sorry for us, but we do want you to know that we are here and we were hurting. And because most soldiers and some families cannot or will not ask for help, I'm asking on their behalf.

Finally, I want to thank the commander, Phil, Joe, Alex, and the rest of the Legion's national leadership, and to all of you in this room, thank you for your service. We truly do stand on the shoulders of those who have served before us. Thank you.

Huah! *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: I just thank Kristina, because among the other things that she's done, she's opened my eyes to some of the problems, and brought some ways that we can really provide some help. And I know we will provide that help.

I mentioned the Riders that were gathering for their presentations. If there are departments or individuals that will be making a contribution to the Legacy Fund, we would like to have them also up behind stage.

And let me read a letter to you, greetings from the senior Senator of the Commonwealth of Kentucky, Mr. Mitch McConnell.

"To the veterans, families and friends of The American Legion. I am sorry that my schedule prevented me from being in attendance today. But let me say that it is an honor to have a group as distinguished as yours in my home state. I hope you all feel welcome here in Louisville. It is a privilege for the Commonwealth to be the site of your 2009 National Convention. There is no group that inspires me more than our nation's veterans.

America remains a beacon of freedom throughout the world today because of the commitments and sacrifices made by the men and women of our armed forces. Veterans such as my father, who served in Europe during World War II, have bravely answered the call of duty in the face of oppression and tyranny around the globe, to ensure that we would remain safe and free here at home. Their legacy lives on as our troops courageously defend the United States from dangerous enemies. As an American I am forever indebted to those of you here today who have sacrificed your safety to protect our freedoms and our way of life. I would ask that each of us keeps those currently in harm's way in our prayers, and that we remember those who have paid the ultimate sacrifice for the cause of freedom. Thank you for your service to our nation, and for your inspiring patriotism. I wish you all the best during the Legion's 91st National Convention.

Welcome to the bluegrass. Sincerely, Mitch McConnell, U. S. Senator, Kentucky."

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: We were privileged as we led up to this convention—and when I say "we" I am referring to Ann and I—to spend four days with an outstanding group of individuals. A group of individuals who make what they do part of who we are, as you heard Michael Peterson sing earlier.

For four days the American Legion Riders were on their Legacy Run this year to raise funds for the Legacy Scholarship Fund. They left out of Indianapolis with the largest group we have ever had on that opening morning, a group of 200 motorcycles as they rolled out of Indianapolis across Ohio, into Wheeling, West Virginia for the first night. The second day to Shanksville, Pennsylvania, for the Flight 93 Memorial, and then on into Front Royal, Virginia, that night. We had to leave them there to come to Louisville to begin to prepare for National Convention. Each day, each stop, donations were received. They continued on to Charleston, and from Charleston into Louisville on Friday. We met them there out at Post 201, and again there were donations received. At the close of that run, as they got here to Louisville, they had raised and received a total of $248,000 for The American Legion Legacy Scholarship Fund. *(Applause)*

In the ensuing few days that total—because of donations received here since then -- that total now stands at $353,000. I can't think of another group right now, another group of us, who is doing a better job of living who we are and doing what we believe in, and upholding one of those four pillars, that one that is so important about our children.

Our Riders are on stage. I hope you will join me in welcoming them to our National Convention. I believe they are being represented by one of their own, Mr. Terry Woodburn.

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

Thank you, Commander. This presentation will be brief, but it will come in segments. I'm going to give a few remarks, after which there will be a short video, and then we will get to the contributions, and then I have a presentation after that to the commander.

A precipitous purveyor of provocative proverbs once potentially prophesied. You have no idea how long I rehearsed those P's. *(Laughter)* Anyway, this precipitous purveyor once prophesied that only a biker would understand why a dog hangs its head out the window of a moving vehicle. And educationally speaking, taking a yellow jacket

bumblebee down the back of your shirt at 70 miles an hour will in fact increase your vocabulary instantly by double. *(Laughter)*

I stand before you an example of both of those proverbs. What a ride we had. And by the way, before I get too far into this I want to suggest that not only did the commander and first lady come with us on this ride, during the course of the ride—I believe it was Wednesday—the commander and the first lady celebrated their 37th wedding anniversary. *(Applause)*

We also had a gentleman in my group that was celebrating his 75th birthday on this ride. 75 years old and still riding hard. We left Indianapolis almost 200 strong. We picked up and dropped off along the way. About 1,300 miles later we pulled into Louisville with a tremendous police escort getting into Post 201.

The first day is always exciting, but I'll guarantee you the last 50 to 70 miles is a little difficult. At the end of that first day you're kind of skooching in your seat, trying to find a spot on a cheek that hasn't been sore yet. And you're kind of dragging that last 50 to 70 miles wondering how you're going to make it to the end of that, and then you go by overpasses from Zanesville, Ohio, all the way into Wheeling, West Virginia. There were only two overpasses that didn't have somebody on it. One overpass, as soon as we approached it they threw back a tarp and just tons of red, white and blue balloons hit the sky. At other overpasses they had fire engines with hook and ladders, the ladders extended with flags flying. On one overpass there was one sole individual, a local police officer, who was standing and saluting the bikes as they went under. And when you see that, that last 50 to 70 miles is no longer that tough to take. Your back is a little straighter, your shoulders get a little wider, and your eyes get a little more focused because you remember why you're doing what you're doing.

Does that make us real special? No. But what it does do is make us committed to what we're doing, and what we're doing is in fact very special, as you've just heard some of the numbers. And I have no doubt that by the time these brothers and sisters up here continue to make their contributions, we will I'm sure be well between $400,000 and $500,000, if not more so.

I want to thank a couple of people by name, that being Executive Director Marty Justice; Director of Membership, Billy Johnson, and Assistant Director of Membership, Bill Sloan. And there is a mess of other staff I won't try to name that were involved with this. But those three individuals really coordinated this run and made it happen. And when you've got 250 bikes on the interstate stretched out over two miles, you can't imagine the logistics that it takes to make that successful. The Riders don't ride if the logistics aren't there.

We had one fuel stop where you marshal, you then start the bikes fueling, and then you relocate to get ready to go out again in the same order you pulled in. We fueled at one stop almost 200 bikes in 27 minutes. That's organization. *(Applause)*

So my thanks to all the logistics folks, the people behind the scenes who get no credit, but the Run is not smooth without what they do in taking the time of months of work to make sure that it happens correctly. At this time I would ask you to sit back and enjoy a short video.

...At this time a Legacy Run video was shown to the Convention delegates.

DEPARTMENT ADJUTANT WOODBURN (IL): I've got to tell you it was just an absolute ton of fun to be with that many Riders doing what we do. And the forecast every morning all the way around our entire route of 1,300 miles was gloom and doom, rain, rain, rain, rain, rain, and we didn't get rained on until we left Charleston, about 15 minutes worth, and that was about it. We were either ahead of it or behind it. We'd pull into gas stops and people would say, boy, you should have been here 40 minutes ago you'd have got wet, really wet. No, we were in just the right spot then.

At this time, Mr. Commander, if I might to start the presentations I would like to call on the Department Commander of Illinois, Mr. Bill Flanagan.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN FLANAGAN (IL): Commander Rehbein, I have a check here for $5,000 that you can add to our total that was given to you out of Post 201, and as soon as I can find the finance officer I'll get you another $400 from our drawing last night.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (AZ): We're from the great State of Arizona, and we're going to donate $8,700 as a group of Riders to contribute to this great cause. Thank you, Commander.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (IL): Commander, from Post 615, Tinley Park, Illinois, I have a check for $3,000.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN HOLLAND (SC): Mr. Commander, my name is James Holland. I'm the Past Department Commander of South Carolina. Mr. Commander, on behalf of the Department of South Carolina, from the great State of South Carolina—as you know, I walked across the state advocating for the Legion.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN HOLLAND (SC): Talking about the contributions of veterans to the community and the Legacy Scholarship Fund. When I finished my walk I came in with $8,000. But along the way people made pledges and promises to me, and I have here $11,204.77.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (NC): Commander, from the Riders from North Carolina we present you a check for $7,883.66.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (ME): Commander, the snow has finally left the roads of Maine, and we managed to get one of our Riders out of there in time to deliver the check from the Department of Maine, The American Legion Riders, a check for $14,967.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (ND): Commander, on behalf of the Department of North Dakota, the North Dakota American Legion Riders, which consists of five chapters, total membership of approximately 100, we would like to present you a check for $10,488.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (KY): From The American Legion family of Post 6 in Madisonville, Kentucky, $1,700.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (WI): Commander, from the 11 ALR members of Wisconsin, we want to say what a privilege it was having you and the first lady on the run with us. And from the ALR members of Wisconsin we have numerous checks for $15,526.97.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (VA): Commander, I told you back in Front Royal, Virginia, that the Department of Virginia was not finished, that we would see you on this stage today. We would like to present you with a check for $3,300, which makes a total donation of the Department of Virginia at $28,800.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (NJ): From the first chapter of New Jersey, some 11 years old now, Post 391, I would like to present you with $2,500.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (NJ): Commander, on behalf of the Department of New Jersey we would like to give you a check for $500 to add to that.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (NH): Commander, last year New Hampshire gave you a check for $5,000 for the Legacy Fund. This year, to give credit where credit is due, we have a Past Department Commander Chuck Lewis, who is a liaison from the Legion to the Riders, and he asked our Riders to step up to the plate. He also has a bad sense of timing. He stepped out for lunch as I'm here. But on behalf of the Department of New Hampshire, we would like to give you a check for $14,400.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN McBRIDE (DE): On behalf of my post actually, American Legion Post 6 of Seaford, Delaware, I present you with a check for $1,000 for Legacy Run. You will get another one. Rick's got one and he's not here.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (AL): Mr. Commander, on behalf of the Department of Alabama and The American Legion Riders I wish to present you with a check for $7,481.

DELEGATE WATSON (MS): Commander, on behalf of the Riders of the great State of Mississippi, I'm Tommy Watson, Commander of Post 6, with Mel Gibson, Rider Director of Post 44, we worried the Riders all during the trip selling pins, and so we have cash in the amount of $1,388 to present.

DELEGATE SHORT (IN): Commander, one of our Post Commanders gave this to me from our Indiana 7th District, Post 103. He was ill this morning and asked me to bring this up and present it to you, for $300.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (NM): Commander, on behalf of American Legion Post 69 in Alameda, New Mexico, we have a check for $5,000.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (AZ): Commander, on behalf of Post 29, Glendale, Arizona, and ALR Chapter 29, Glendale, Arizona, I have a check for $2,500.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE: Commander, on behalf of Chapter 83, and 17 riders at our post, a check for $1,000.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (OH): Commander, on behalf of the Department of Ohio, here is a check for $10,000.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (GA): Mr. Commander, I would like to present to you our Department Commander, Mr. Butch Adams, for the purpose of a donation.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN ADAMS (GA): Commander, the Department of Georgia Legion Riders had ten Riders ride the whole trip with one honorary vet, and they are commonly affectionately known as The Dogs, Department of Georgia. We have one person who has been on every single ride since the Legacy Ride started, which we have with us today, Bob Bryant. We represent all the Legion family with this. And we kind of built it up a little bit. Our highest up to this year has been around $15,000, $16,000, but we're proud to present today $20,000.

DELEGATE SANDELL (PA): Commander, the outgoing Department Commander, Department of Pennsylvania. A little over a week ago you and I had the pleasure of presenting a wreath at the Shanksville Memorial. And I pledged to you at that time that Pennsylvania would have $7,000 for the Legacy Scholarship Fund. That grew a little bit. I would like to present a check for $8,000. I have the big one, my commander has got the little one.

DELEGATE MARY ANNE OTTE (NE): Mary Ann Otte, Assistant Director on behalf of Chapter Post 84, Columbus, Nebraska. $1,098.

DELEGATE ROLLAND OTTE (NE): Post 340, Morse Bluff, Nebraska, is proud to present our national commander with a check for $100. Oh, yeah, I suppose you don't think that's much, but you haven't seen Post 340. Yeah, we're proud to do it.

DELEGATE LANDKAMER (NE): I'm Jerry Landkamer, from Norfolk Post 16, Norfolk, Nebraska, and The American Legion Riders Chapter 16 has a check, Commander, for $5,306.03.

DELEGATE CROSIER (NE): Commander, I am the commander of the Department of Nebraska. We're a very proud state. We understand why each one of these chapters wanted to present their own. Norfolk, $5,306.03; Papillion, $850 even; Lincoln Post 3, $2,430.37; Omaha Post 1, $5,677.34; Columbus, which was presented, $1,098; and Morse Bluff, $400, for our grand total of $15,461 from Nebraska.

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: Outstanding, sir. Thank you, commander. And the Morse Bluff Post is the one that sponsored the Legion baseball team I played on a long time ago.

DELEGATE FARMER (VT): Commander, the Department of Vermont, the commander's project, proudly gives to you $3,700 for the Scholarship.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (TX): Commander, I know you know where Converse, Texas is. Our Riders, Terry and Velma Smith, presented you with a check in Indianapolis, and I took a nap along the way and never did catch up with them again, but I picked up a few cash donations on the way, so I would like to present you with this $25, to make our total donation $32,025.

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: Outstanding. TJ is a big part of why this ride is what it is today. He couldn't be with us a lot this year, but we owe him a whole lot.

DELEGATE BARBOUR (MA): Commander, Bill Barbour, Department of Massachusetts commander. And on behalf of the Department of Massachusetts and all of our delegation and members back home, we're pledging $5,000, and the check is in the mail, sir.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE: China Post Number 1, operating in exile, with representatives in over 90 countries and 30 operating divisions. We presented you with $5,000 at last year's convention, sent another $1,500 in December, and principally our divisions in Jubail and Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, have had a casino night and raised another $7,300 from China Post Number 1.

DELEGATE MARSHALL (FR): Bill Marshall, NEC, Department of France, joined by my department commander. I have two or three checks here I want to present, and I want to present them individually so I can recognize those people that donated to us. Commander, the first check is from Department of France for $500. And this check, it's not too much, but it was $62.74, raised by the 1982 Post in Germany, a small post. And on behalf of my wife, Helga, and myself, there is a check for $100. And on behalf of Robert and Dorothy Hunan, a check for $150. And my chaplain promised me a check for $100, and I can't find him. So I'm going to put his $100 in, because chaplains don't lie I don't think. For a total of $912.74, Department of France.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE : Commander, first of all, Billy just handed me these two checks. These two folks didn't want to come up on stage. First of all, Howard and Patricia Waddles, they're from Wheatland, Wyoming, there is a check for $100. And then from American Legion Post Number 4 in Mount Clemens, Michigan, there is a check for

$1,020. Then on behalf of the Department of New York we have a check for the Legacy Fund in the amount of $20,000.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (MO): Got a little money here for you. Mr. Commander, on behalf of the 400 plus Legion Riders in the Department of Missouri I wish to present you with a check and cash of $13,030.

DELEGATE MOSS (NV): I'm Vic Moss, from Paradise Post 149 in Las Vegas, Nevada. And about six days ago—well, more than that, about seven days ago, a small group of us took off from Nevada on the ride, and did about 2,200 miles coming in, and picked up people along the way. And we picked up some money as we did it as well, and we want to give you a total of what we have done. All right. The unofficial western leg. We picked up money in Durango, Kansas. Let's see. Lubbock, Texas, came up and met us up in Dodge City. They brought us money. Post 149, Nevada. Everything we picked up along the way, and our post, $4,309.83.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (MN): Commander, on behalf of the great State of Minnesota, where you were privileged to see one of our white snowfalls that we had. In addition to what our American Legion Riders brought, from Department of Minnesota we want to give you another $8,300.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (KS): Commander, on behalf of Lysle Rishel Post 68, Hutchinson, Kansas, our Riders group put on a breakfast, lunch, and dinner all in one day. They had a poker run as well. And I have a check here for $1,659.71.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (MT): I know it's unusual for American Legion members to be gamblers, but we had a couple of gamblers in the Department of Montana who won some money last night. We would like to give $100.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (MX): From the Department of Mexico we would like to donate $1,100.

DEPARTMENT ADJUTANT WOODBURN (IL): Thank you, Commander. We have one more presentation. It's not money, but we think it's special. If you would ask your lovely lady to please join us here? As was indicated, they celebrated their 37th wedding anniversary, and they did both in fact ride a good portion of the way. So what we would like to do in our own way would be to make a presentation. We understand you were going to use your helmet because you may be purchasing your own machine at some point down the road?

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: Maybe.

DEPARTMENT ADJUTANT WOODBURN (IL): We don't think you are. So what we did was have your helmet signed. And I don't know that there are 250 signatures on there, but it probably won't miss it by much.

MRS. REHBEIN: All right. I had a great time on the ride. This is what an old biker chick looks like. *(Laughter and applause)*In addition to the donation I made the other night, an additional $605, it's around $1,600 and some dollars.

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: $1,661.02 was her total. $605 here in this envelope.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (KS): Commander, this is from the great state of Kansas. And there are two things that I would like to give. The Department of Kansas and the Department of Missouri has teamed up with the Kansas City Royals, and they will give a portion of their ticket sales in two games. One of them was in June, the next one will be September the 26th. But this evening we would like to give to you the Legacy Fund checks for $4,753.

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: Outstanding, Tom. Thank you.

There are a couple of guys over here that are just about done. As soon as the other one gets his shoes off they'll get it finished. You know, when you ride with those folks—you saw the donations that come in here. But on top of that in order to do that they pay their own expenses on that Run. And many of them will ride for two or three days to get there to start, and then ride for four days. And then ride two or three days home. That kind of dedication, I don't know where else you can go to find it. But on that trike at the back of that run, you get up in those mountains and you're coming to the top of a hill and you can look all the way down the hill and across the valley and up the other side, and you can't see the beginning. It's an amazing sight. They talk about the overpasses. You watch that Run go by sometime. If that doesn't fire you up, nothing ever will. They are great people. They are doing a great thing, and we need to thank them. Do we have a total, sir?

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE: Here is $255,000.

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: Today, right here, $255,000. The goal this year was $400,000. The total donations since the start of the run, including what was received here $609,131. Outstanding. Huah! And what makes it special? It's for those kids. Those kids that have lost a parent. A lot of them will receive a college education because of what you did. So when you see one of the Riders, take them by the hand and tell them thank you, because I don't know how to say thank you well enough. We all need to, every one of us. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: Our next guest served as the mayor of the city of Louisville from 1986 through 1998. In 2002 he was elected to the newly created post of Mayor of Louisville Metro with 74 percent of the vote. A former president of the U.S. Conference of Mayors, he was voted the city's best civic leader five times in Kentucky Monthly. He has won plaudits for his efforts to revitalize the city's urban core and for improvements to the periphery through new infrastructure.

Would you please help me welcome Louisville Metro Mayor Jerry Abramson.

Greetings: The Honorable Jerry Abramson
Mayor of Louisville Metro, Kentucky

Well, welcome everyone back to Louisville. You can say it right, Louisville, right? In 1988 we practiced this, I've been here a long time, 1988 we practiced it, and I figured enough of you got it right so that we could bring you back again and you could teach the other group.

Welcome to Louisville, Kentucky, the 16th largest city in the United States. How many people here from Boston? It's a smaller city. How many people here from Atlanta? It's a smaller city. Sixteenth largest city in the United States. I bring you welcome from all 700,000 of our citizens. I also bring you welcome as a life member of the Highland Post 201 right here in our hometown.

You know, I served during the Vietnam era, but my mother and my father were both in the military in World War II. My father—actually my mother outranked my father in World War II. My mother pretty much outranked my father throughout their lives.

But the great story I love to tell for those of you who are of my era, you remember that when you went to middle school or junior high school, about that time it was very in

to wear an Army jacket to school. Well, my Army jacket is the only one in my junior high school that fit, because I wore my mother's. *(Laughter)*

We hope you have a wonderful time while you're here in this community. We are strong believers in what you stand for and what you do, and if anyone questions what The American Legion is about, the last 20 minutes certainly should put their mind at ease that you have committed yourself to these youngsters, those who have had parents that have given their all to ensure that those kids on to college, that is unbelievable, outstanding, and we applaud you for all that you do for those young people and their familiar. Congratulations in that regard. *(Applause)*

Now we know you're going to be here through Thursday, and I suspect a few of you all have found a watering hole here or there or a restaurant here and there. I hope if you have a chance when the convention gives you a little time or if you're able to stay beyond Thursday, that you go down to the Frazier Arms Museum and look at that, take a tour through that facility; go through the opportunity to see the Louisville Slugger Baseball Bat Museum, take a tour. When they give you the little bat, remember you cannot take it on an airplane. We pick them up from you. When you go out to the airport you'll see the little container that we take them from you because they won't let you take them on the plane. Put them in your satchel, in your suitcase.

I hope you have a chance to be able to enjoy our waterfront; go out to see the Kentucky Derby Museum, and have a feel for what Louisville, Kentucky is about, because we love what you're about, we love what you do. Maybe it's because Fort Knox is right up the road and so many folks in that wonderful facility that continues to grow now as the HR center of the world for the United States Army, continue to interact with our hometown here. So, we appreciate those who have served. We appreciate those who are serving today throughout the world on behalf of all of us, and we say welcome to Louisville, Kentucky. Have a wonderful time while you're here. Come back. We're here each and every day. Don't wait so long to return the convention. We'll see you soon in the future. Thanks for being a part of Louisville. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: I need to thank the mayor publicly for his patience as we finished the Legacy Run donations. We appreciate that very much. And I know some of you are looking at your agendas and wondering about the Secretary of Labor. We were notified this morning that due to unavoidable circumstances, she will not be able to address our Convention. So that will not happen, and we regret that.

I also regret having had to interrupt this introduction earlier when our national vice commander was beginning it. There is a man here that has provided leadership in The American Legion family; has been a good friend as we've travelled together as much as we could this year, because like President Desi, our schedules did not intersect that much.

He has been a member of the Sons of The American Legion for 25 years. A member of Squadron 88 in Mattoon, Illinois, he has served the Detachment of Illinois in almost every office from the squadron level up to detachment commander, during which time the Detachment of Illinois reached an all-time high in membership.

He has taught flag etiquette to grade schools and Boy Scouts; distributed poppies and volunteered at the Illiana Veterans Hospital. He's eligible for membership in the Sons of The American Legion through his father, I. Edward Cisna, who served in the Air Force during the Korean War. Would you please join me in welcoming the immediate Past National Commander of the Sons of The American Legion Tommie Cisna.

Greetings: Sons of The American Legion
Thomas E. Cisna, Illinois, Past National Commander

Thank you. Right up here in front is another past national commander from Illinois, Mr. J. R. Stillwell. I wish to introduce to you a friend of mine that has travelled some with me this year and truly made this year very special, my wife, Kathy. *(Applause)*

I bring you a warm welcome and greetings from your program, the national Sons of The American Legion, an almost 102 membership program. This year the Sons, number one in donations to the Child Welfare Foundation, with a yearly donation coming in at almost $344,000, there's also another goal made this year, the Sons now stand at over $4 million to date donated to the Child Welfare Foundation. *(Applause)*

Now there was a challenge made at the beginning of the year by the president of the foundation, Mr. Dennis Boland, that if, and I said when, the Sons make their goal of this $4 million, that Dennis would take Kathy and I out to dinner of our choice. Well, I started off by saying that it would be nice to go to the Kula Golf Course in Hawaii, and that led to some discussion of Kathy and Dennis on a plane and me in a boat with no oars. So I know I'll have to come hungry to this dinner because I'll be eating for over 330,000 members that made this happen. And I hear that it is decided on St. Elmo's in Indy in October.

As always, the Sons have concerned ourselves with veterans care and help, and this year is no exception. The reports and some of the totals are in this year, and donations by the Sons under VA&R, over 250,000 hours volunteered, almost $1.3 million reported for VA&R. Almost $71,000 donated to Fisher House. And over $3 million donated under the Americanism totals.

Another area the Sons have turned their attention to this year was CMN, the Childrens Miracle Network. Josh and Friends, this area was a huge success to the Sons. Almost 1200 Josh Dogs donated. Now you have to remember an average before the Sons turned their attention there this year, forty to fifty a month, and Dr. Lang is very appreciative that it has turned into over a hundred dogs a month and still climbing, there are still reports coming in, CMN money this year donated by the Sons, almost $100,000. The Sons, your Sons, are making sure that kids that need a smile, get one.

Now I would like to personally thank all of the dual members here. Your membership is also helping us make this goal. I would like to congratulate the Legion Riders on their program status and on the fine job that they do for the Legacy Fund, because they are making a difference also.

And to the veterans in this room right here, I want to personally thank you, not only for your membership in the world's largest veterans organization, but for your service to our country. For you are the reason that I was able to grow up a free man in a free country and we are able to gather here today. Thank you. *(Applause)*

Also I want to thank you for electing David to be national commander. Now, not only did you elect a man that can hold his ground with congressional committees, with the President of the United States and his cabinet, but he can also grill up brats and burgers in his backyard and does a fine job. Now these are some fine qualities to have.

I would also like to, personally like to thank David for all his support to the Sons in the past many years, and especially this year. David and Ann have been friends of ours for many years. And for his Legion career to bring him to this office this year and for me to be able to serve with a friend is truly special. Well, it's just the best year ever.

I'm very proud of my father's service in the Air Force out of which came my eligibility, and just look in this room how many have earned their Sons eligibility also.
I am very proud to be a Son, and I have had purpose this year. But remember, Sons, S-O-N-S, Serving Our Nation's Soldiers. Thank you very much. *(Applause)*

And I have also brought presents. Commander, if you would. You can start with the big one if you would like.

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: You know you talked about barbecuing in my backyard, our backyard. I think he must think that my skills need a little bit more development. *(Laughter)* Thank you, Tommie.

PAST SAL NATIONAL COMMANDER CISNA: There's more to it.

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: This is a plaque that contains the words that President Lincoln gave at Gettysburg on November 19th, 1863 in the Gettysburg Address. Used the beginning of those words at the Flight 93 Memorial three or four days ago. They are both special places. These are special words. Thank you, Tommie.

PAST SAL NATIONAL COMMANDER CISNA: Thank you Commander. Thank you very much. *(Applause)* With your permission, would Milt please join me at the podium. Sons of The American Legion National Commander's Special Award presented to Milt Heffner, for taking care of my friend, David Rehbein. Signed Tommie Cisna, National Commander 2008-2009. Thank you Milt. Thank you very, very much for your service. Very good.

MR. HEFFNER: I will just say what a pleasure it's been to be serving with Tommie, and to have his friendship and his dedication to the Sons of The American Legion. Thank you. *(Applause)*

DVD Presentation: The History of The American Legion

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: Next on our agenda is a project that I'm very excited about and very much looking forward to the results. The California Film Production Company is making a documentary about the history of The American Legion. Thirty percent of the proceeds from the sales of the DVD will go directly to American Legion programs, so it is important for us to support this DVD. They will be available early next year so be sure to check the Magazine and the Dispatch and the web site for more information about it. But for the moment, this is a clip from the DVD. Watch and enjoy.

...At this time the delegation viewed a video presentation The History of The American Legion. (Applause)

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: And please join me in welcoming to the podium from Blackhorse Productions, the folks that are making that DVD, Mr. Stephen Grudenic and Jason Heit.

MR. STEPHEN GRUDENIC: Blackhorse Productions has maintained a consistent goal since we started almost 10 years ago. The goal is to preserve history. We have worked with military and veterans organizations in preserving military footage, war stories, anonymous battles, heroes, and memorializing those who gave the ultimate sacrifice.

Our documentary, The History of The American Legion, will include the amazing accomplishments of this great organization since its founding in 1919. We hope this

historical video will be used as a learning tool so that everyone will have the opportunity to learn about the accomplishments and the mission of The American Legion.

We fund the production of this documentary, and we share the proceeds from each DVD sale and television broadcast with The American Legion. The DVD will be available for purchase through The American Legion in early 2010. Your support is greatly appreciated.

MR. JASON HEIT: First of all I want to say that it's been an honor and a privilege to tell your story. The hardest part of making this film has been what to leave out. You can imagine the difficulty of trying to pack this organization's great history into a one hour documentary film. You have done so many great things for veterans, soldiers, and civilians. For that, we give you our gratitude. Thank you for the opportunity to tell The American Legion story. Thank you for your support of this film, and thank you for your continued service to your country. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: Our next guest, or maybe I should say a member of our organization, one of the people that's responsible for us being here, enlisted in the Air Force in 1964, and then retired as a Senior Master Sergeant in 1988. A 42 year member of The American Legion, he served as a post commander for seven terms; district commander; department area vice commander; department senior vice commander, and then in 2008 was elected department commander of the Department of Kentucky. Would you please join me in welcoming one of our hosts, Past Department Commander, Department of Kentucky, Ted Austin. *(Applause)*

Greetings: Teddy W. Austin
2008-2009 Department Commander of Kentucky

Commander Rehbein, Adjutant Wheeler, distinguished guests from the international American Legion family. We here in Kentucky welcome you. Now I wrote that about a month ago. I didn't realize it would be almost through before I got to say it. He also told me whoever gives the shortest speech today gets the prize, so I'm going to try to get that.

It's certainly an honor for us folks to host it here, and what a great opportunity we have to meet old friends and make new ones. And this time I only had to drive 20 miles to get here.

We're proud of the work that we do here in Kentucky, just as we're proud of the work that you do every day across this great country of ours. And while our main focus is on the work of The American Legion here, we certainly hope you've had time to see some of the hospitality around our American Legion posts. And if you get a chance, there were two items here in Kentucky that we're extremely proud of. Not far from here in Lawrenceburg, Kentucky, our American Legion Auxiliary did all the background work and hosted, it's their project, to build a healing field where we pay tribute to all of the military from Kentucky that have lost their lives in Iraq and Afghanistan. We're also extremely proud of the unique Vietnam memorial that sits in Frankfort. It's the only one like it in the nation. And if you get a chance to see those two, please do so.

I hope that you're enjoying your stay here. If you can't find an answer to something, we can help you grab somebody that's got one of these white Kentucky shirts on, we'd be glad to help you in any way we can, and I certainly thank you and welcome to the Bluegrass State. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: And another of our hosts serving as the president of the National Convention Corporation, a man that served in the United States Marine Corps during the Korean War. Kentucky Department Commander 1984 and 1985; Alternate NEC 1985-1989; NEC 1989-1993. A life member since 1973 and a Legionnaire since 1963. He currently serves on *The American Legion Magazine* Commission. As I said, the president of the National Convention Corporation of Kentucky, Mr. Silas Noel. *(Applause)*

Greetings: Silas Noel, President
The American Legion National Convention Corporation of Kentucky

Mr. Commander, national officers, Legionnaires and guests. See I wrote this for a good morning speech, but I guess it's a good afternoon on behalf of The American Legion of Kentucky. I welcome you to the 91st American Legion Convention to the Commonwealth of Kentucky, the Bluegrass State, internationally known for its horses, tourism, bourbon, and beautiful women.

Kentucky has hosted the National Convention three times. We haven't finished this one, but in 1929 we had a National Convention here, but I doubt if there's anybody in this hall that was there. I was born but I wasn't here. And also in 1988, I imagine there were lots of you that were here in 1988. We had a great convention. You know what they say, the third time is a charm, and this is the third time and we're charmed. Look at the parade we had the other day. *(Applause)*

I also would like to thank Dick Holmes, Bridget Williams and staff for all the work they've done. They've gone more than 110 percent out, and if I ever had to take part in another National Parade or Convention, I certainly would want them on my team. I want you to enjoy the Convention. Thank you, welcome and come back you all soon.

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: The Army, Navy and Air Force Veterans in Canada Association, or ANAVETS, is Canada's oldest veterans and community service organization with more than 27,000 members and 74 units throughout Canada. There is one unit in the USA referred to as ANAVICUS. Today we are fortunate to have with us a gentleman who has indicated his life to Canada's veterans and their families. Having served in the Royal Canadian Navy from 1957 until 1972. Legionnaires, would you please join me in welcoming Mr. Gordon Marsh, the dominion president of the Army, Navy and Air Force veterans in Canada. *(Applause)*

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

Thank you, commander. Commander Rehbein and ANAVICUS President Comer, honored guests, comrades. It's an honor for me to have been invited to address you today at your 91st Convention. On behalf of the executives and all members of the Army, Navy and Air Force veterans in Canada, it gives me great pleasure to bring you greetings and to be able to express our appreciation for the friendship that exists between our two associations.

The men and women of the armed forces of our country established this friendship and brotherhood as comrades in arms in past wars. This bond, forged in combat, makes

our relationship unique and enduring. Today our mutual concern for our troops and our veterans continues to join us together.

Comrades, our young men and women are again fighting shoulder to shoulder in Afghanistan where they are facing new challenges dealing with an unconventional enemy who uses innocent civilians as shields; plants indiscriminate roadside bombs, and coerces its followers to strap bombs onto themselves. In many respects, this is a war of terror, a psychological war designed to weaken our moral resolve and inflict psychosomatic injuries on our troops.

As a result, not only are we seeing the physical injuries and deaths associated with combat, we more than ever before have to deal with psychological injuries. This has led to the battle that we as veterans organizations are now fighting. Fighting with our own government to improve the health care associated with post-traumatic stress.

At the same time that our new veterans require support for their injuries both physical and psychological, our older World War II and Korean War veterans require more care as they grow older. This is all happening at a time when the government is trying to stimulate the economy by spending money it doesn't have.

As a veterans organization, our role today is to ensure that our government does not forget its veterans. It must not be allowed to renege on the promises made to those who it has sent off to fight our country's war. We will continue our fight to ensure the government remembers and honors our veterans for what they have sacrificed for our country. Our politicians must be reminded that they have a sacred obligation to provide for those veterans in need, and that they live with dignity and receive the care that is due.

Our present focus to our Minister of Veterans Affairs is that not only is the money spent on veterans proper and ethical, it will stimulate the economy in a meaningful way. Comrades, ANAVETS motto is "Shoulder to Shoulder." Thank you for allowing me to stand shoulder to shoulder with you today, and let me reaffirm the ANAVETS solemn pledge to stand behind their troops and our veterans. Thank you very much. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: And as so often happens, we missed one donation to the Legacy Fund, and we're not going to miss any donations to the Legacy Fund. Mr. Carl Williams from Colorado.

MR. WILLIAMS (CO): Thank you, commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: This is on behalf of The American Legion Riders, District 11 in Colorado in memory of Van Carlson, and the gentleman that passed away December 8th of this year. This is given in his memory $1,200 by his wife. It's from the memorials for the gentleman. We thank you very much Carl, and thank the family for us.

MR. WILLIAMS (CO): Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: The Royal British Legion safeguards the welfare, the interests and the memory of those who have served or are serving in the British Armed Forces. It is one of the United Kingdom's largest membership organizations. Today we are fortunate to have with us a veteran of the Royal Air Force, and the national chairman of the Royal British Legion. Please help me welcome Peter Cleminson to the podium. *(Applause)*

Greetings: Peter Climinson, National Chairman
The Royal British Legion

Commander David, honored guests, and delegates. It's very good to be with you at your 91st Annual Convention, so thank you for your kind invitation and for the excellent arrangements that has made our visit so smooth. In particular, my thanks to our hosts Daniel and Mary Ludwig who welcomed us at 3:00 a.m. on the day we arrived.

My first memory of America was meeting your servicemen in my hometown of Liverpool as a school boy in the run up to D-Day. You were as generous then as you are today, and my shouted requests to the marching column, "Have you got any gum, chum," was met with a shower of Wrigley's and it was a great treat for us in war torn Liverpool with strict rationing in force. You stood with us then, as we stand with you today in the troubled Middle East. It is good to know that we face the threat of terrorism together. There is much to do, but do it we will. Together we will defeat the forces of darkness. Not to do so would be unthinkable. *(Applause)*

I was in Basra last October and was able to meet many of your boys and girls and see it firsthand how well our forces work together. Long may that continue.

Like you, the Royal British Legion is a campaigning charity and we have had major successes in the last year with our Honor the Covenant and Return to Rationing campaigns. This has increased compensation for injury, and improved support for our troops, and lifting some of our veterans out of poverty. Hence, the reference to rationing.

Our welfare work increases, particularly in the current recession where it is most, most necessary, we distributed over a $120 million last year in grants and services. Of particular note is our debt counseling service which is making a real difference to those who get in difficulty. We have, like you, enormous influence with government ensuring that the voice of the military is heard. And your victory over the billing of disabled veterans for care I believe is of very particular note.

Our Director General, Chris Simkins, helped to write the recent command paper reviewing conditions for our armed forces. A demonstration of getting your retaliation in first. I'm particularly proud of the Royal British Legion's remembrance tours, taking veterans and their families worldwide to visit battlefields and war cemeteries. Very often, a widow visiting her husband's grave for the first time, a profound experience that brings peace and closure to her great loss; memories of Private Ryan at your cemetery in Normandy in that wonderful film. There is much more I could tell you of our work in the U.K., but time is getting it on, so perhaps we can talk in the margins of this Convention and that would give you and I much pleasure.

And this reminds me of talking in the margins, of my visit with Una to Canada last year, and some of you here know that you that Una outranks and out medals me by a mile. She served 20 years in the Territorial Field Army Hospital Unit. At that Canadian Convention I spoke in front of some 2,000 Canadians. After I had spoken, one of the delegates said to Una, "In your wildest dreams did you ever think Peter would speak to 2,000 Canadians and do reasonably well for a Limey?" Wait, there is more. Una looked him in the eye and said, "My dear boy, I must tell you Peter never ever features in my wildest dreams." *(Laughter)* I had to simply vote for the rest of that convention.

So may I close with sincere greetings from your friends in the Royal British Legion and our thanks for being such a good friend to us over the pond. Our united strength will ensure our mission is accomplished; we are shining the Legion torch and holding it high into many, many dark places. So thank you, and may a Limey say, "God bless America."

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: Very well put, sir. Very well put.

NATIONAL CHAIRMAN CLEMINSON: And now if I may, I have a small memento of my visit here, which is giving us already so much pleasure, it is our Legion emblem on a plaque for Commander David.

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: Sir, thank you. That is beautiful. That is very beautiful. And please accept a small token of my appreciation for you being here.

Another group of friends, the Korean Veterans Association is a patriotic honor organization that strives for veterans' friendship, welfare promotion, and rights.

This history shared between the veterans of South Korea and our own Korean War veterans is an unbreakable bond. As we note the recent activities of North Korea, the alliance between the United States and South Korea is as important as it ever was. It is an alliance not just of strategic interest, but a friendship. Last November when we visited Korea, we were welcomed by the Minister of Veterans Affairs General Park. He was scheduled to appear at this Convention. We were saddened to hear of his untimely passing. The Korean Veterans Association is represented here and would you please give a warm welcome to the Chairman of The American and Canadian Departments of the Korean Veterans Association Colonel Lee, Byung Hee, *(Applause)*

Greetings: Col. (Ret) Lee, Byung Hee, Chairman
American and Canadian Departments
Korean Veterans Association

Thank you Commander Rehbein. I won't take very long. I want to say just a few words in a short time, because you know already scheduling of time is over, so everybody waiting for lunch.

I am pleased to extend my heartfelt congratulations to all those gathering for The American Legion 91st Convention today. Our Korean veterans, eight million members in Korea, many thank you and remember all of the sacrifice service of Korean War. As we know, still their intention of nuclear weapons by North Korea. We wish strongly build up and maintain this international security of the United States and the Republic of Korea alliance.

Again, thank you for your support, all of us, and I wish you all of the best successful Convention. God bless veterans, and God bless America. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: I would like to present this token of our appreciation for our visit to your association in Korea to you sir, and please thank and express our sympathy to the family of General Park on his passing. Thank you.

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: Canada's largest veterans organization, the Royal Canadian Legion, works hard to ensure that ex-military personnel and their families are treated fairly. Since the organization's formation, it has focused its efforts on securing adequate pensions and other well-earned benefits for veterans and their families.

With us today is the dominion chairman who has served more than 23 years with the Third Battalion of the Black Watch Royal Highland Regiment of Canada in his hometown of Montreal. He has been with the Royal Canadian Legion for 20 years. Please give warm welcome to Dominion Chairman Thomas Irvine. *(Applause)*

Greetings: Thomas Irvine, Dominion Chairman
The Royal Canadian Legion

Good afternoon, comrades, distinguished guests, and members of The American Legion. I bring you greetings from your friends to the north, The Royal Canadian Legion and its 360,000 members from coast to coast. I am most pleased to represent our Dominion President, Comrade Wilford Edmond who wishes you all success in your deliberations on Legion business.

This is a great place to host the convention. I understand that it also hosts "the greatest two minutes in sports," the Kentucky Derby. Now I will take this city to new heights as it hosts the greatest five minutes in greetings. *(Laughter)*This is also the city where the first public showing of Edison's electric light bulb took place. So Louisville can say that it was definitely ahead of everyone else in the electricity consumption department. At least it was back then, but I digress.

Let us talk about our Legions. There may be a border between us and our histories may be slightly different, but we do have one thing in common, we appreciate our veterans. They are the reason we exist. And while we may be far apart in some areas, there's one thing that we can agree on, these people who serve our respective nations at home and abroad are our greatest national assets. And the services we can deliver to them should be second to none.

I am sure that you will agree that when our military forces serve together as they are doing right now in Afghanistan and have done so in the past, they are a team that is hard to beat. But responding to our veterans' plight is a significant challenge during this period of economic downturn and recovery. Still, it remains an unquestionable priority that they continue to receive the care and treatment at home they so richly deserve. But they will only receive it if we keep on the pressure of our respective governments.

It is unfortunate that in this day and age we still have to fight for the rights of those who have given so much to their countries. One would think that this would be a matter of fact, but it isn't. In Canada we still have a long way to go. But isn't that why our branches were formed in the first place, to look after those who have served.

I look upon our two great nations and our respective Legions with a sense of pride. What we do and what we have achieved, sure, we will disagree on some things, what neighbors don't, but what neighbors have so much in common as the United States of America and Canada? But these issues pale in the shadow of comradeship that our forces shared shoulder to shoulder in the trenches and on the beaches at Normandy. Even today our joint operations in NATO, and our combined commitment in NORAD, emphasize the unique bond that's has grown between our two countries.

We can never forget the sacrifices of our fallen veterans who have made all of this possible. That is why I am here, to bring you greetings and best wishes from your fellow veterans in Canada.

Suffice it to say that my wife, Collette was welcomed with your customary gusto, and I can only say thank you for your very kind hospitality. It has been tremendous.

So let me close my remarks by saying that we from the north have become very familiar with Louisville, not for the Kentucky Derby or for the fact that one third of all bourbon distilled in the U.S. comes from here, but that they make something here that we all share, the Louisville Slugger baseball bat. So my friends, knowing your interest in baseball, it is time that we all hit one out the park for our veterans. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: Another friend from the trip to Asia. He currently serves as the overseas liaison director for veterans affairs in Taiwan, Republic of China. When we visited the Republic of China we were received very graciously by Minister Kao Hua-chu and his wife. They had also planned to be here today, but in light of the recent typhoon, the natural disaster that their country is currently recovering from they did as every responsible leader would do, they are home helping with that effort.

Representing the minister, and as I said, serving as the overseas liaison director, a good friend, Mr. Hans Song. *(Applause)*

Greetings: Hans Song, Overseas Liaison Director
Veterans Affairs Commission, Republic of China

Good afternoon. National Commander Rehbein, national officers and our dear friends with The American Legion. As the national commander just introduced that Minister Kao Hua-chu wanted to come in person, however, three days right before we were to leave Taiwan for this trip, he was summoned on a contingency assignment to work as the CEO for the aftermath management of the typhoon disaster. And as the national commander mentioned quite often in his speeches during this Convention, we veterans need to face challenges, and this is what Minister Kao is doing, he is facing the challenge that is given to him by the nature, by our country, and requested by our people.

He was wanted me to convey his deep appreciation for the kind donations and assistance that you gave to relieve the disaster victims in this typhoon disasters. And if I may, I would like to report to you that as of yesterday there were already 170 victims unearthed from the mud slides. And still there were more than four hundred missing. We are hoping that miracles will happen, but I don't know. We hope that we can at least find their bodies to comfort the families. Once again, we thank you for all our assistance and kind friendship. *(Applause)* Thank you very much. And please pray for us when you conduct your everyday prayer.

In November last year we were honored to have National Commander Rehbein and the National President Stoy over to Taipei for a short visit. Our President Ma Ying-jeou, received them in the president's office for 40 minutes, which signifies that we in the Republic of China really appreciate the friendship of The American Legion and the Auxiliary. During the 40 minute meeting, our President Ma Ying-jeou clearly explained his policy to develop relationship among mainland China and the United States. At his presidential inauguration, our President Ma vowed to bring better economy and dignity to his fellow countrymen. And he told the American congratulatory envoy that he would lead his government toward a much better relationship with the United States of America in over 15 months. Now we have reopened the negotiation channels after a hiatus of over a decade. In virtually a few months our new administration has transformed 60 years of cross strait relations to better reflect the needs of our people in reality of the changing times.

The improvement of the relationship between Taiwan and the United States is another achievement our President Ma is proud of. President Ma is a peacemaker. The United States has positively assessed and supported our current cross strait development, and that demonstrates our policies are being favorably received. In the words of the American Institute in Taiwan Chairman Raymond Burkhart, equivalent to your ambassador to Taiwan, "The relationship between our two countries has now entered a new era of cross strait civility."

To explain Taiwan's international space has been one of our continuous goals and efforts in the past so many years. We hope to enhance Taiwan's meaningful participation in international organizations for the betterment of our citizens. We appreciated it that President Obama's administration has kindly given the friendly hands to support us in participating in the World Health Assembly, the WHA, and we shall work harder to seek more opportunities to get engaged in more global activities like those of the United Nations. Of course, U.S. arm sales are equally central to the relationships between our two countries.

Our good friends in The American Legion, we will assure you that Taiwan will not free ride on the United States for its own security. This is why, while we are improving the relationship with the mainland Chinese administration, we still urge your federal government to not hesitate to provide Taiwan with the necessary defensive weapons as stipulated in the Taiwan Relations Act, especially the F-16 C/D fighters, Which are indispensable at present to maintain the air balance over the Taiwan Straits.

We in the Veterans Affairs Commission in the Republic of China, Taiwan, very much cherish the friendship of The American Legion. You have always passed resolutions in support of the Republic of China during your annual conventions and the Veterans Affairs in Taiwan truly appreciates it. The Veterans Affairs will certainly look forward to your continuous friendship and support in the above-mentioned regards.

Thank you again for allowing me to speak here in Louisville, and I wish you all a successful convention and good health. Thank you. *(Applause)*

But before I leave the podium, I would like to present to National Commander Rehbein a medal on behalf of our government in appreciation of Mr. Rehbein's contribution to promoting the relations between our two countries. And the citation reads: "Mr. David K. Rehbein, 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 David K. Rehbein is presented the Medal of Order of Resplendent Banner with Cravat, numbered 3660 by the government of the Republic of China, in accordance with Article 11 of the Armed Forces Declaration Regulations."

Signed by President Ma Ying-jeou, and cosigned by Premier Liu Chao-shiuan, and Minister of Defense General Chen Chao-min. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: Hans, I accept this very proudly, and would you please pass along our best wishes to the minister and to the president. He received us in his office and it was a very good visit. Thank you. *(Applause)*

National Commander's Report to Convention
David K. Rehbein, Iowa

You'll notice on your agenda that it is the time for the national commander's report. Before I begin this report let me clarify something. You've heard speakers that, well, there's a little bit of confusion as to what time it is on the clock. I have not had lunch. It is now officially still morning. (Laughter)

I want to thank you for the year that you allowed me to live as your national commander. We have travelled a great many miles, more than I've counted. We visited a number, a large number of outstanding posts and departments and met many great members of The American Legion family. But rather than talk about the places we've

been able to go, I want to just refer you to an online journal that I kept this year, so that the folks back home could keep up. It's still online, will be there for some time yet. It's the old campaign website www.davidrehbein.org. Go there, take a look, that's a good travel log.

I think it's more important to talk about did we measure up to the Four Pillars this year. We started talking about pride and purpose. The purpose for which this organization was formed; the pride that comes from being a member of this organization and knowing that we are still fulfilling that purpose 91 years later. But I think I want to spend a few minutes talking about how that purpose and that pride fit in to some of the accomplishments that this organization has had during this year. And I'm going to take the title of a George Strait song and remind you of it, and you'll know why at the end of my report. The title of that song is *Write This Down*. Because there are things in this report I want you to use. I want you to remember down the road. They will be useful to you. But as we look back at the year at the accomplishments, and let me hold up one pillar at a time and talk about what your organization has done.

And let's start with veterans. Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation, because if we had one pillar at the beginning, that was it. We had some opportunities this year and they started early, some time at the beginning of the year to spend up on Capitol Hill on some issues that were of great importance at the time: The budget for the coming year, because we were told there wouldn't be one until February or March, there would only be a continuing resolution. And the GI Bill because we were told at the time that the VA did not intend to implement that in-house, but to go to an outside company. And we had the time, and the energy, and the resources to go to Capitol Hill for two weeks and talk to senators and representatives, people like Chet Edwards, and address those two issues with them. And I will tell you this, it was the most amazing two weeks of my life to date, because when you go to Capitol Hill and you spend a day talking to those senators and representatives, and you go home in the evening and then you go back the next morning and you can see change, you can see change based on what this organization had to say. And you know it's changed based on the strength of this organization.

Those two stories that we had at the beginning of the week: There will be no budget, the GI Bill is going outside, at the end of the two weeks the Congress is saying it's not a matter of if we will pass a budget, we will. It's just how fast we can get it done. And they got it done before the fiscal year started. And as Representative Edwards told you for the first time in over a dozen years, the VA budget was not only big enough, but it came on time. You did that, because The American Legion has the strength it has. And at the end of the two weeks the VA issued a press release at three o'clock on Friday afternoon and said we can't find a company that can implement the GI Bill, so we're going to do it in-house as we've done every GI Bill to date. You did that. Your resources. Your strength.

And then we got into the spring and issues popped up, issues that thankfully The American Legion again had the strength and the resources to respond to. When the proposal came down that there would be billing of private health insurance out of the VA hospitals for service-connected treatment, your organization responded. Your organization put the press release out to the media, and the media responded because they understood that fundamental responsibility of the United States government to provide that treatment and to provide that treatment in such a way that those veterans and those families did not sacrifice anymore than they already had. And because of your strength, 48 hours later that proposal went away. *(Applause)*

And then a few weeks later when that Department of Homeland Security report came out, and again it was time to stand up and be counted and make our voice heard and make sure that the folks inside the beltway in Washington understood the honor that our veterans should be treated with; the respect that they should be accorded. Not the suspicion that they should be looked at as potential right-wing extremists. And again you responded. *(Applause)*

We will have the secretary here tomorrow. She will speak to you. The secretary did the right thing, she pulled that report back. That report is no longer officially a part of the Department of Homeland Security. And beyond that, she pledged that her department would be at the job fairs that The American Legion puts on, to make sure that our folks, our men and women when then come out of the uniform, when they come back to civilian life, they have that first job to help them land on their feet. Those are things you did.

Where are we now with that pillar? We're in the midst of the discussion on advanced appropriations. And we're winning. It's gone through the House successfully. We need to get it through the Senate. We need those budgets a year in advance so the VA can plan. We need those budgets, not only big enough and not only on time at the beginning of the fiscal year, but when we get advanced appropriations they will be predictable so that the VA can do the planning and the staff recruitment and all of that work they need to do to be ready to spend that money in the most effective manner to provide our people the treatment that they have so richly earned and they deserve. That will be a continuing project, but we've taken a lot of steps down the road.

And there's been another fundraising effort since the first of December, Operation Comfort Warriors. It's ongoing, because we still have wounded warriors. We have wounded warriors in the military hospitals in numbers bigger than you realize. Just one of the expenditures within the last few weeks went to Fort Hood where we have 1,500 wounded warriors undergoing rehabilitation. And that's repeated all across the country in the Marines, in the Army, in the Air Force, in the Navy, all the way from Fort Lewis, clear across to Benning and Bragg, and the Marine bases on the coast. But we have an ally, we have a lady that not only went to Walter Reed with us last January, she has since been to the Marine hospital in San Diego. Her name is Marg Helgenberger. You'll hear more from her; you'll see her, because that trip to Walter Reed affected her when she saw those young men and women that are recovering there, when she met some of the wounded warriors.

I think we've added to that pillar. I think that pillar is stronger than it was. I think that pillar stands proudly because of what you did this year, the resources you provided, the funding through Operation Comfort Warriors, and the work you're doing with your representative and your senator to make sure that advanced appropriations becomes a reality.

And the National Security pillar. We've debated for some time now throughout this country what happens with Guantanamo Bay. We believe Guantanamo Bay and that detention facility is doing the job it needs to do. We believe those detainees need to remain detainees. *(Applause)*

And we're beginning into another issue that you heard a lady talk about from this podium this morning, and that's the family readiness groups. She opened my eyes when I heard her speak at our meeting in Washington, D.C. because I had always been more concerned about the National Guard and the Reserve folks, particularly those that live a

distance from the armory, and I made the assumption, and it turned out to be a bad assumption, that the folks on the bases were being taken care of because they were close together. Well, it turns out I had it wrong, because out there with the Guard and Reserve folks, thanks to you they're not alone. Even if the armory is a long ways away, you're there for them, and they have you to support them, but when we set foot on the military base, that's not the case. The only people they have to support those families are those families, and it's worn them down, and it's worn them out. That's a place that we need to do some work. That's a place we can do some work. That's a place we can do some good.

And the other place, TRICARE, military health care. You will see a strong effort beginning this year, but continuing down the road, to better understand TRICARE; to better understand military health care; and to protect them along with the VA. Make them exempt from whatever changes might occur as a consequence of the national health care debate that's going on right now. The VA is a model. The VA is doing it right. A book out there by a man named Phillip Longman, *Best Care Anywhere: Why VA Health Care Is Better than Yours*. A very independent voice commissioned by *Fortune* Magazine. Read the book, and you'll know why VA health care needs to be exempted from any changes because of the debate going on. And you'll also exempt, standing alongside of that, the military health care delivery system. We need to protect them. That's work we'll need to continue to do in the coming year. But that pillar is strong. That pillar is strong because of the young men and women that wear the uniform. That pillar is strong because of the men and women that have worn the uniform, and the men and women that stand alongside us as the members of The American Legion family. That pillar remains strong, but we must, we must make sure that it stays that way.

Patriotism. Honor. That last word, honor. There is a continuing effort, I don't understand it, there is a continuing effort in this country that every picture of every alleged abuse of a detainee needs to be published. The ACLU is pushing that. It's in the courts. It's going to the Supreme Court. At one point two months ago, President Obama was not going to continue the appeals. President Obama was going to let those pictures be released. He received advice from a number of quarters, you being one of them, that there was no point, there was no good to come from that. The only thing that could come from that at this point was harm. Harm to your young men and women out on the battlefield. He received that same advice from his military leadership in Iraq and Afghanistan. As I was in Iraq, General Odierno told us that he had flown to Washington to discuss the issue with the President. And I want to give President Obama credit because he changed his decision. He changed his decision so that the appeals would continue on to the Supreme Court. And the words that came from you and came from his military leadership were strong enough that the president made the decision that he would do everything in his power to see to it that those pictures remained secret. That includes an attempt to classify those pictures, which would cause another court fight, but it would continue to keep those pictures under wrap. They serve no useful purpose. They're part of the investigation. If there was abuse, it will come out of the investigation. All publishing them now does is put our people in danger and attempt to influence that investigation. We will remain opposed to any publication of those pictures. *(Applause)*

And when you talk about honor, we stood beside our heroes this year in our travels. We stood beside our heroes in Iraq and on the DMZ in Korea, and at Fort Jackson in basic training. But one particular hero stays with me. At Normandy, as part of the D-Day

commemoration, the airborne jumps in just as they did on D-Day, except now they're jumping in daylight and they're not jumping into flooded fields.

How many of you have seen the movie *The Longest Day*? Do you remember the paratrooper hanging from the church steeple? True story. When you go to Sainte-Mère-Église around D-Day, a mannequin in a parachute hangs from that church steeple. It's a powerful impact, but it's not as powerful as standing there watching the airborne jump in, holding the elbow of a man that jumped in on D-Day, because he came back. He came back to remember his buddies. He came back to remember what they had done. He jumped on D-Day. He jumped again from Market-Garden. He was trucked into Bastogne; Silver Star at Bastogne. To stand alongside a man like that and watch the airborne come in, you can just feel the honor. There's feelings there I can't describe to you. I wish everyone could do that, could have been there to have those feelings. You do. I know you do. But there are many in this country that still don't understand. It's our job. It's our job to help them understand. It's our job through the Blue Star Banner Salutes. It's our job through the mobilization and demobilization ceremonies. It's our job every time one of our people puts on the uniform, takes off the uniform, is recognized for something, it's our job to be there, to stand alongside of them and help the people of this country understand that honor and make sure that pillar stays strong. *(Applause)*

And our youth programs, we did some things this year in the youth programs that's never been done before, because you could be at home and you could watch the finals of the Oratorical Contest. And you could watch the finals of the Junior Shooting Sports Competition. And you could watch the entire American Legion World Series, because it was all being webcast through your computer. Our staff did yeoman's work, absolutely yeoman's work making those three things happen. Those youth programs are a big part of why I became an active Legionnaire. And the commitment was made at the beginning of this year that it would take an absolute disaster to keep me from being at those youth championships. And I want you to know that we made every one, and we welcomed as many of those youth champions then as we could. If you ever have the chance, if you ever have the chance to go to one of them, go. You will be reassured by the quality of the young people. You know about our youth champions, they are representative of that whole group that participates. They are representative of the best of the youth of this country. And by doing what you do, by keeping those youth programs alive, you help them grow and you help them learn and you help them become better people, because they will become better leaders because of what you've done. That's the fourth.

I think the pillars are strong. I think the organization that you've provided is strong enough to keep those pillars upright, is strong enough to make those pillars support a lot of the foundation of this country. But our work is not done. Because it's not only the national organization, it's not only the work here; it's the work you do. I've seen some things around the country this year that I want to point out to you, and this isn't by any means all, this is only a few, but this is what some folks are doing.

In North Dakota as we were there, they were kicking off their Courage Carries On program because they want to be part of the help to prevent suicide amongst our military people. And so The American Legion of North Dakota is funding their own program, encouraging our young people that have that vulnerability to understand that courage carried them through the experience they've had. And that same courage will get them through this, they just have to have the courage to go get the help.

And then seeing in Kansas, the Department of Kansas put a staff member at Fort Riley to be part of that effort, part of that wounded warrior help taking the initiative on their own as we took the initiative to put a staff member at Walter Reed. They took the initiative to put a staff member at Fort Riley. They weren't waiting for somebody else to do it for them. They did it themselves.

And then there was a joint project, Wisconsin and Washington. A brigade out of Washington coming home, coming home from the Middle East coming into Fort Riley in Wisconsin, and they were going to be there for a week as they went through reintegration and transition assistance and all that training. The Department of Wisconsin, even though these were all Washington folks, stepped forward and said we can provide some help here. We can help them as they go through this week of training. We know how anxious they are. We know how anxious they are to get home, but we can help. They didn't wait for somebody else to do it for them. They did it. And they partnered with Washington to make sure that the things that were needed at Fort Riley for the Washington folks were there, being in part provided by the Wisconsin folks. We come together. That's the kind of unity that's made this organization work for a long time.

Operation Comfort Warriors. I'm going to talk about that again because it's so important, because it addresses so many needs. Those wounded warriors that are undergoing rehab, there is only so much physical therapy you can do, and then the hours are empty. And when the hours are empty, that's when the thoughts of suicide and the depression can creep in. And so Operation Comfort Warriors helps fill those hours with portable DVD players and iPods. And the TBI, the traumatic brain injury, memory loss, there are games out there that help regain brain function, electronic games but they don't fit inside the DoD budget, and so Operation Comfort Warriors is actively helping in the rehab by providing those games. When the last wounded warrior leaves the hospital that will be the time for Operation Comfort Warriors to be over, but not until then. And we hope that you will continue to support it.

Because there are so many good things, that's not the only one. We have the National Emergency Fund; we have the Legacy Scholarship Fund; we have the Endowment Fund that many of you may not know about until we say temporary financial assistance. We have so many places that need your help. We have so many ways that you can help, whether it's help at national, whether it's help at home, make sure you're helping.

And then there's one place that I wish we could have done better, and that's in membership. We started the beginning of this year knowing there would not be a direct mail program, and knowing therefore that if there was going to be success in membership, it would come by traditional methods. It would be us, out there on the street knocking on doors; contacting our members, asking them to renew; looking for prospects, asking them to join. We fell down a little bit, folks. We're down in membership this year. DMS is coming back, but we don't dare, we don't dare let DMS become our crutch. We don't dare stop working traditional membership, because DMS may not be permanent, it may stop working one day. But what's worked for 90 years is knocking on doors and asking our members to renew, and looking for prospects, and showing off our pride and asking them to come join us because they have that pride inside them too, because they believe in the purpose.

And so that's an issue, that's a need. We turn that one to the next national leadership, and I know they recognize that need. I know they will. Because membership

is where all those resources came from. When those fights came in Washington when we needed the resources to fight those battles, it was the strength of the numbers of the membership that provided the resources. And those youth programs, if our membership base sinks, we help less children; we educate less children in the Oratorical Contest; less young men will be on the baseball field and at Boys Nation and at Boys State.

So that membership base, it translates directly into resources, and that's why I asked you to write this down, because next year when you're out there knocking on a door or contacting a prospect, and that person says to you, "What does The American Legion do?" You've got some things from this year that you can tell them. We protected our warriors from having to have their private health insurance pay for their care. And we made sure we upheld the honor of the young men and women that are serving this country. And we're doing our best, we're doing what we can to strengthen the youth programs by making them available to more people.

And then there's what you do in your department and what you do in your post. Make a list. Write it down. Put it on a 3x5 card because that way when somebody asks, don't be afraid to read it. Don't be afraid to refresh your memory. My notes are right here. Take notes with you. But make sure next year when somebody asks that question, that you don't say well uh, gee and I'm having trouble thinking of anything. That's the basis for traditional membership, telling them what we do.

We stood up this year. We were counted this year. We showed, I believe, the people of this country that The American Legion has remained true to its principles; that The American Legion when the time comes will stand up and say, "Sir, that's a bad idea." Or say, "Sir, thank you for the budget." *(Applause)*

We need to keep showing them that lesson, and we will. There are new communication tools coming. There are things you will see out there. There are ways in these communication tools for us to have conversations rather than you simply receive information. That's important for this new generation. We need to hear their voice. It's important to them to know that we listen to their voice.

I'm going to close with this. I want to thank everyone that hosted a department visit. We had a great list of visits. We've been to places I will never forget. And I want to thank your national staff, because every time a new commander comes on board, you can be guaranteed one thing, you just got a raw rookie, and your national staff works very hard to educate and support, and I want you, when you see them, when you see that patch on a Legion cap, walk up to them and say thank you. Your national adjutant, the executive directors, everyone down to the folks that work in the mail room, they believe what we believe. It's not a job for them, it's a calling. And anytime you call on them, every time I've called on them, they have responded. So they have my thanks.

But the folks that I really want to thank are you because of who you are, because of what you believe in. No one that formed this organization is in this room, except that what they believed is in this room. Because you're here. Because you are who you are, because of what you do, this organization 91 years later still has that strength to stand up and be counted; still has that strength to influence the debate in this country on veterans issues.

And I believe that because of who you are this organization will still be that way 40 years from now when we're not here, none of us are here, because of the principles that you have continued to hold are the same principles that the young men and women believe in, and they will be with us. They're coming now. We just may be too impatient,

but you look around, you'll see them. You'll see them beginning to wear district and department caps. When up see them, make sure we help; make sure they understand what The American Legion is about. We do things new ways; we communicate new ways, but the bedrock principles remain those four pillars. And those four pillars are things that are important to them. Those four pillars will be what they support, because they understand the purpose, and because they've brought home the pride, the pride that every one of you I hope feels; a purpose that every one of you I know believes in. Share that pride. Keep that purpose alive. We'll finish this Convention in a couple of days; we'll all go back home; that's when we go back to work, every one of us. It doesn't matter if you're a past national commander that's now wearing a blue cap, you are the leadership. You start the work. You guide it. Thank you for being who you are. Thank you for electing me your national commander. It's been a year of my life I'll never forget. Thank you. *(Applause)*

Certificate of Appreciation
Lawrence L. Vollink, National Chaplain

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: And now it is my pleasure to recognize and honor another individual that was chosen to serve as one of your national officers. The man who has served as our national chaplain this year is truly dedicated to the principle of God and country.

Reverend Lawrence L. Vollink is a retired U. S. Army veteran of the Gulf War era; an ordained minister with Christian Churches/Churches of Christ, since 1970. He is a member of Harry Ollrich Post Number 4 in Mount Clemens, Michigan, and it is an honor to call him to the podium and for me to present a certificate of appreciation marking his year of service as national chaplain. Reverend Vollink. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: The certificate reads, "Certificate of Appreciation presented to Reverend Lawrence L. Vollink, appointed and served as National Chaplain of The American Legion, 2008 to 2009. Given in recognition of faithful and honorable service to The American Legion."

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN VOLLINK: I would like to say, first of all, thank you so much to the Department of Michigan. It's been an honor. I appreciate them so much for all that they have done. My wife, Susie, who also has her sister Linda here, who has been able to watch her while I have been able to be here on the podium.

I am a care giver to my wife. That has been my first obligation. I would like to just say this, as I wrote in my report: It has been truly an honor and a very humbling experience to be called national chaplain of The American Legion.

I prayed at the beginning of my year that I would represent the model well for God and country. And I hope that was answered in the affirmative. The people I have met and served are the greatest, which makes The American Legion the greatest organization in the world. So may God continue to bless us all in all of our endeavors wherever we are. God bless you.

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: At this time I call on Past National Commander Marty Conatser of Illinois to present the plaque of Appreciation to John Aldecoa, Secretary/Treasurer of The American Legion National Convention Corporation of Arizona, for hosting the 2008 National Convention.

Presentation: Plaque of Appreciation to the City of Phoenix, Arizona for the 2008 National Convention
Past National Commander, Marty Conatser, Illinois

Well, good afternoon. It is afternoon where I came from. John, if you will step up. I want to thank John and his committee and the City of Phoenix for the outstanding job they did last year. Now, I suppose we could use a little bit of that heat right now. It was a little warm in Phoenix, but they did an outstanding job. On behalf of The American Legion as being my convention, I want to say thank you and congratulations. *(Applause)*

MR. JOHN ALDECOA: Thank you, Commander. And on behalf of the City of Phoenix, the convention corporation, our convention president—Neal Sundeen, couldn't be here with us today, but we have a lot of volunteers that worked that convention that are here today, and we invite you back. And we promise it will be a little cooler, and maybe by that time we'll have an NFL championship Arizona Cardinals team. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER DAVIS: I now call on National Adjutant Dan Wheeler of the Department of Virginia to issue the Call for the Convention.

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

Call for the 91st Annual National Convention of The American Legion.

By authority of the National Executive Committee the 91st Annual National Convention of The American Legion is hereby called to meet in Louisville, Kentucky, August 25 through 27, 2009.

The Convention business sessions will be held in the Kentucky International Convention Center, Hall 2-D, Level 2.

Purpose

The Annual National Convention is a 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 (noon) of the final session or at the conclusion of all of the business of the National Convention, whichever first occurs on Thursday, August 27, 2009, officers for the ensuing year will be elected. These being the National Commander and five National Vice Commanders, in that sequence.

Representation

Representation in the 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 Treasurer 30 days prior to the meeting of said Convention, July 27, 2009, and whose registration fees are fixed by the National Executive Committee for its total authorized delegate strength have been paid and to one alternate for each delegate." (Section 3, Article V)

In addition to the above, the members of the National Executive Committee are delegates to the National Convention with vote which shall be exercised with 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 Departments to make and accredited substitutes for absentee delegates or alternate delegates shall be recognized by the National Adjutant provided that such substitution shall be officially certified by the Department Commander and Department Adjutant at the time of the certification required by the National Constitution or at any time prior to 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

The 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 in the Convention except as the 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
    Employment and Veterans Preference
    Other Economic Matters
Finance
Foreign Relations
Legislation & Rules
National Security Committee: Joint Meeting (Includes Aerospace,
    Homeland Security and Civil Preparedness, Law and Order,
    Merchant Marine, Military Affairs, Naval Affairs)
Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

Claims and Ratings
Hospital and Medical Services

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WHEELER: Mr. Commander that completes the reading of the call.

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER DAVIS: Thank you very much, Mr. Adjutant. I now declare the 91st Annual National Convention of The American Legion to be regularly convened.

The Chair recognizes Larry Besson of Illinois, Chairman of the National Convention Committee on Credentials and Internal Affairs, Section I, for the purpose of 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 91st Annual National Convention of The American Legion, Louisville Kentucky, August 25, 26, 27, 2009.

The section on Credentials and Other Internal Affairs met at 9:00 a.m., August 23, 2009, in Kentucky International Convention Center, Room 106, Level 1.

Larry J. Besson of Illinois was elected Chairman, and Larry Sheets of Florida 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 27, 2009); 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 27, 2009 and in accordance with Article V of the National Constitution, the voting strength of the 55 Departments is 2,711 allocated as follows:

Alabama	27	Montana	19
Alaska	13	Nebraska	51
Arizona	51	Nevada	15
Arkansas	24	New Hampshire	28
California	124	New Jersey	67
Colorado	30	New Mexico	19
Connecticut	32	New York	153
Delaware	18	North Carolina	51
District of Columbia	8	North Dakota	26
Florida	130	Ohio	130
France	10	Oklahoma	30
Georgia	54	Oregon	29
Hawaii	9	Pennsylvania	211
Idaho	18	Philippines	7
Illinois	121	Puerto Rico	13
Indiana	108	Rhode Island	13
Iowa	67	South Carolina	32
Kansas	46	South Dakota	30
Kentucky	34	Tennessee	35
Louisiana	35	Texas	88
Maine	31	Utah	15
Maryland	75	Vermont	22
Massachusetts	58	Virginia	61
Mexico	7	Washington	39
Michigan	89	West Virginia	31
Minnesota	105	Wisconsin	75
Mississippi	25	Wyoming	13
Missouri	59		

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

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

All in favor so indicate by the usual sign. All opposed. The report of Credentials and Internal Matters Section I is adopted. Thank you for your report.

The Chair recognizes James Koutz of Indiana, chairman of the National Convention Committee on Legislation and Rules, for the purpose of making a report.

Report: Convention Committee on Legislation and Rules
James E. Koutz, Indiana, Chairman

The National Convention Committee on Legislation and Rules met on Sunday, August 23, 2009 in the Kentucky International Convention Center in Louisville, Kentucky. There were 41 delegates to the Committee present and 16 guests in attendance.

Following the preliminary activities to officially organize the Committee, the Permanent Chairman and Secretary were duly elected. I, James E. Koutz, a delegate from the Department of Indiana, 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 Steve Robertson, Legislative Director, The American Legion concerning the national health care reform debate currently underway across the country. Particular focus was on the potential impact on America's service members, veterans and their families. He also addressed the FY 2010 Military Construction, Veterans' Affairs and Related Agencies Appropriations Act currently pending in Congress. He specifically addressed the advance appropriations for FY 2011 included in the bill and the benefits of such action. He closed with discussing the importance of hosting veterans' town hall meeting dedicated to discussing critical veterans' issues with lawmakers and other elected officials.

Legislative Point Papers were distributed to delegates and guests that address a number of key issues pending before the 111th Congress. They address defense, immigration, veterans' appropriations, as well as the flag protection amendment. A great deal of current information was made available to delegates for distribution back home.

Since Congress is currently in recess, the annual Federal appropriations process is currently on hold. To date, the House has passed all 12 appropriations measures and the Senate leadership promises to take action on its appropriations measures when they return from recess. The FY 2010 Military Construction, Veterans' Affairs and Related Agencies Appropriations Act meets or exceeds the funding levels recommended by The American Legion in almost every category. Among The American Legion's legislation priorities in the 111th Congress was assuring advance appropriations for the Department of Veterans Affairs Veterans Health Administration (VHA) in FY 2011. This is a major improvement in the budget process for VHA and its hospital administrators.

The newly implemented Post 9-11 GI Bill is providing improved educational benefits to thousands of veterans now attending colleges, both public and private institutions. Timely implementation of this new GI Bill program was a top priority for The American Legion in this session of Congress.

There has been a major paradigm shift in the future weapon systems within the Department of Defense (DoD). Defense Secretary Gates is working closely with Congress to fund only those weapon systems wanted by the Armed Forces. However, Secretary Gates has express concerns about the growing personnel costs within the overall Defense budget and plans to make recommendations in the FY 2011 budget request due in February 2010. This may result in some changes in the military health care delivery systems, to include both TRICARE and TRICARE for Life.

The American Legion anticipates legislative efforts of both the Administration and some congressional leaders to provide amnesty for illegal immigrants. The American

Legion remains steadfast in its support of enforcement of existing immigration laws and adamantly opposes amnesty for those who illegally crossed borders of the United States.

On September 10, 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 KOUTZ: National Commander Rehbein, as a duly authorized Delegate to this Convention from the Department of Indiana, 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 REHBEIN: You've heard the motion is there a second? ...*Second.* Discussion? All those in favor by the normal sign of aye. Opposed? The motion is carried. The report of Legislation and Rules is adopted.

The chair recognizes Kenneth Danilson of Iowa, chairman of the National Convention Committee on Finance for the purpose of making a report.

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

Forty-five members met at the Kentucky International Convention Center, room L11, Level L at 9 a.m. on Sunday, August 23, 2009 in Louisville, Kentucky. Shawn T. Long, CPA (Indiana), National Finance Director, opened the meeting as staff liaison and informed the committee that nominations were in order for Chairman and Secretary. Kenneth D. Danilson (Iowa) was elected chairman, and Carl E. Levi (Tennessee) was elected secretary, by unanimous vote.

The Chairman introduced the National Treasurer, George A. Buskirk, Jr. (Indiana), who updated the committee on the investment policies of The American Legion National Headquarters. His report is below:

Since the last meeting of the convention Committee on Finance in Phoenix Arizona on August 22, 2008, dramatic negative events have taken place in the American economy unlike any since the Great Depression of 1929.

The severity of this economic downturn and the resultant impact it has had on the state of the American economy has caused the Dow Jones Industrial Average to diminish 42% in market value as of March 2009. In light of this development the National Finance Commission has suggested that I focus my remarks today on a review of the current investment policy of the National Finance Commission of The American Legion National Headquarters and the current overall status of the funds we manage.

Several years ago the National Finance Commission became concerned with the volatility of the overall stock market and many of the economic practices taking place on Wall Street. To name but a few, the dramatic appreciation in value of tech stocks with no historic performance to justify these gains, the unprecedented rise in the sale of pooled income mortgage securities in the secondary bond market with minimal regulation or government oversight, the irresponsible increase in consumer debt by many Americans, and the uncontrolled rise in the cost of fuel oil required to maintain a vibrant U.S.

business environment are but a few of the economic indicators that alarmed the commission.

As the largest Veterans Service Organization in the world, The American Legion is responsible for the management of in excess of $150 million dollars in assets held within 17 separate trusts, endowments and dedicated fund activities for the use of our 2.5 million member programs. It is imperative that as the fiduciary commission responsible to our membership that a conservative investment policy be established and maintained to protect and preserve these assets for use by both the current and future generations of membership of The American Legion.

Beginning as far back as 1992 with revisions in 1997 and 2008 the National Finance Commission created the written investment policy in effect today, long before many not-for-profit organizations established written policies, and we are pleased to announce that this conservative policy has served us very well in the overall performance of our assets during this landmark recession of 2009.

To date, the overall total rate of return of all assets held in The American Legion portfolio is down on average a -2.5% as compared to the national average of -42%. Of the $150 million in assets under management, only 15% of these assets are currently invested in stocks with the remaining 85% invested in the highest quality U.S. government bonds and government agency securities issued by the federal government.

This outstanding performance stems from our current investment policy that prohibits any of our trusts, endowments or investment accounts from purchasing risk oriented investments of any kind such as real estate investments, mutual equity funds, venture capital partnerships, private equity funds, or hedge funds.

Also in this policy our investment advisors and trust officers are prohibited from activities such as short selling stocks, security lending, option trading, the purchase of futures, the use of non-marketable investments or the purchase of foreign securities.

This policy is periodically reviewed to insure that these conservative standards are maintained as investment products and government regulations evolve over time, and prohibits at any time the use of more than 30% common stocks in our pension portfolio with the rest of our assets dedicated to the highest quality government bonds available in the market place.

Reviewing this policy and performance in conjunction with our current national economic crisis, The National Finance Commission is of the opinion that an economic recovery has now begun in the American economy but that the long term vitality of the market is still many months into the future. We feel that the last half of 2009 GDP will show a 0% gain, and that employment will continue to suffer for the last six months of 2009. Longer term we remain optimistic that as orders for manufactured goods cause unemployed workers to return to their jobs that the economy will rebound in 2010 or the first half of 2011.

In conclusion, regardless of the longer term effect of this terrible recession, you should rest assured that the National Finance Commission has taken the most conservative direction available as the investors of your funds and we are satisfied that our policy has served us well to protect and preserve the assets of the organization with virtually no loss over the past 12 months, and that the commission and its policy will continue to serve us well in the uncertain times ahead.

Treasurer Buskirk then recommended that the national dues be set at $13.50. A motion from Gaither Keener (NC) was made that the 2009 per capita dues remain at $13.50. Tony Riley (IN) 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 acknowledged his good friend and previous Director of Finance Paul Allen (MN) and then introduced Jeff Stoffer, Editor of the Magazine. Mr. Henkemeyer reports that The American Legion Magazine division, having undergone numerous changes and adding staff in electronic media, is poised to finish the 2009 budget year by returning a surplus of approximately $500,000 to the general fund. Magazine advertising has improved by nearly $300,000 year-to-date over 2008's performance. The magazine is now on course to exceed $9 million in sales, about $500,000 short of budget but about $500,000 ahead of last year. Careful page management, circulation shifts and relief from the volatile paper market of 2008 all contributed to leave manufacturing and distribution at approximately $613,000 under budget seven issues into the year. The project to re-vitalize The American Legion Web presence is on schedule for its planned launch of Veterans Week 2009.

Mr. Henkemeyer then thanked the Convention Committee on Finance, members of the Finance Commission, and Finance Division staff for their support and guidance as The American Legion Magazine Division evolves to better meet the communications needs of our members, prospective members and others.

National Finance Director Shawn T. Long, CPA presented to each delegate and discussed a nine page seven-year financial review and forecast. He informed the committee that we had a $3,400,000 surplus for the year ended December 31, 2008 and that from our first run projection reports, we are anticipating a 2009 surplus around $2,900,000.

Chairman Danilson reported that the 2008 Crowe Horwath (formally Crowe Chizek) certified annual audit is included in the convention program and instructed the delegates to address any questions to the Director of Finance, Shawn Long or National Treasurer, George Buskirk.

A motion was made by Gaither Keener (NC) to refer Resolution #45 (CA) entitled "Transparency in Operation" to the National Finance Commission. Myron Kirby (IL) seconded the motion, which was adopted by unanimous vote.

Roger Messier (VA) moved to empower the Chairman and Secretary to write and/or amend the report on behalf of the Convention Committee on Finance. Myron Kirby (IL) seconded the motion, which was adopted by unanimous vote.

As there was not further business, the meeting adjourned at 9:30 a.m.

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN DANILSON: Mr. Commander, as a duly elected delegate to this Convention from the great State of Iowa, I move for approval of this report.

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: You've heard the motion is there a second? ...*Second.* Discussion? All those in favor vote by the sign of aye. Opposed? Motion is carried

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: I have a couple of announcements, and then if the national adjutant has any. Evidently there are a couple of more contributions to the Legacy Fund that we have not yet received. If they would come forward quickly.

Operation Comfort Warriors Those donations will be received following the National Security Report on Thursday morning. And the same with National Emergency Fund donations, they will be received following the Internal Affairs Report tomorrow.

Are those Legacy Fund donors close? Yes.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (CT): Department of Connecticut is proud to present you a check for the Legacy Scholarship Fund in the amount of $7,100.

DELEGATE MOORE (FR): Ron Moore from the Department of France, late as usual. I do apologize for my Department and also to all of you. It was a great Run, and we have a couple of checks that I brought all the way from Germany also. It's another $100 from the Department of France. I promised personally to present checks from Ryan Mine Post 5 for $150, Omar Bradley Post GR 42 for $100, from the Thomas Barnett Post 14 for another $120. And unfortunately—every drop in the bucket counts. There was one dollar that came from Walter and Ann Bragg. They asked me to give that to you. And I had a very nice story from Russell and Goldie Warren in Staunton, Virginia. She's 69 years old, he's 76, and they have to drive a truck, a water truck, to try to have additional income for their Social Security. Each one of them gave me $5 and said please give it to the national commander. I said God bless them. And it made me cry, too.

That comes up to a total of $391 I believe, so let's make it a round number. I have another $9 to add to that, too, sir. God bless you, sir. Good riding with you, sir.

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: As there are no announcements, please rise and join me in a salute to the flag of the United States of America. Hand salute. Two! The time is now 3:22. This Convention will stand in recess until 8:30 a.m. tomorrow morning.

...At 3:22 p.m. the Convention recessed to reconvene the following day, Wednesday, August 26, 2009, at 8:30 a.m.

PROCEEDINGS
SECOND DAY

Wednesday, August 26, 2009

...At 8:30 a.m., the Delegates assembled for the second day of the 91st Annual National Convention, and the following proceedings were conducted.

Call to Order
David K. Rehbein, Iowa, National Commander

The Convention will come to order. Ladies and gentlemen. Please join me in a hand salute to the flag of the United States. One! Two!

...At this time, the Delegates stood and saluted the Colors.

For our invocation this morning I call on National Chaplain Reverend Lawrence Vollink, Department of Michigan. Please uncover.

Invocation
Rev. Lawrence 'Larry' Vollink, Michigan, National Chaplain

Let us pray. No, our God has not forgotten. Most gracious God, you are the strength of all who put their trust in you. We ask that you prepare us now to seek to do your good work through this great Convention. Open our hearts and ears to that which will inspire us to do good things through our American Legion. Help us to stand tall when we are given a mission to do. Help us to work with passion in what we believe to be the hope for America. Put us to work through that which we have learned today through all of these sessions. And to you, Lord, we entrust our lives to service as you bless and protect our troops. Thank you for loving them and for loving us. Amen.

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: Please remain uncovered and join us as we recite the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag of the United States, as led by our national sergeant at arms.

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

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: This 91st Annual National Convention is now in session. Before we begin this morning, a couple of announcements. Many of you have inquired concerning Peter Ole. Peter would dearly have loved to have been here. We miss him, and I'm sure he misses us. But some required surgery made it impossible for him to be with us this year. He is planning, he has assured us, and we look forward with great anticipation, to his return next year. So all of you that have missed him know that we miss him too. But we look forward to seeing him back.

And then also, as you may not have seen on the news this morning, it is with sadness that The American Legion acknowledges this morning the passing of Senator Edward Kennedy of Massachusetts. He was a U. S. Army veteran who dedicated his life to public service. Our thoughts and our prayers are with his family at this time.

On another matter, donations to Operation Comfort Warriors. If you have not dropped off your contribution to that operation, please be sure to stop by the booth in the lobby just outside the hall today. This morning, but for sure today. Remember that if you donate $10 or more at the booth you will receive a pin, and tomorrow immediately

following the National Security report we will be accepting contributions from the various departments on this stage.

Our first speaker this morning is truly committed to a well funded VA, and to meeting the needs of this nation's veterans. A former history professor at San Diego State University, he was a Freedom Rider during the 1960s championing civil rights for minorities. He is one of only 22 members of the House of Representatives holding a Ph.D. He represents California's 51st Congressional District, and is the Chairman of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, and a good friend. Would you please give a warm welcome to Congressman Bob Filner. *(Applause)*

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

Good morning. Good morning, Legionnaires. It's a great honor to be here with the premiere organization that represents veterans, fights for veterans, and makes sure that we do the right thing in the United States Congress. So I salute you, I salute your Washington people. We especially salute Mr. Sommer, who is laughing—or smiling more than I have ever seen him smile. He says he's just got one day left as executive director. But we thank him for everything he's done. He's mentored all of us, and we so appreciate it, Dave. Thank you so much for your work.

I'm proud to be here. As I said, I'm proud and humbled to serve as the Chairman of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs. We have done some good things lately. The GI Bill for the 21st century has been implemented; the first checks have gone out. We're trying to replicate in this GI Bill for our latest veterans what the GI Bill in 1944 meant to Americans. I'm here because of that GI Bill. My dad came back from Europe, was able to get some education, and we were able to buy a house. The first time in my family's history we had a house. I lived with relatives in an apartment for a long time. 8,000,000 veterans took advantage of that GI Bill, and we made the middle class of America. So we wanted to do the same thing for our latest veterans. And not only did we cover the full cost of college or some vocational training program, but we've opened it up to those active duty heroes of the Reserves and National Guard who did not get full benefits before. And we made those benefits, if people didn't want to use them or didn't need to, transferrable to family and to children. So I think we've done some good things with that.

In the three years that I have been Chairman we have increased the health care budget of the VA by 60 percent, $20 billion. I think that's important for us to recognize what we have done. *(Applause)*

Of course we need your help, as we always do, to make sure that money is spent right. You're the ones that tell us what is going on in the local clinics and hospitals and med centers around the country. So we need you more than ever. We also, in a campaign that the Legion took a leadership role, I think you know for the last 20 years the VA budget has been enacted on time maybe two or three times. That's bad for a health care system. How can you plan, how can you hire, how can you make sure that the quality of care is maintained? But we passed this year—we're in the midst of passing but it's already been implemented, what we call forward funding, advanced funding. We passed in the House of Representatives not only the budget for 2010, but the budget for 2011 for the VA. Now we know what the number is going to be. And that was the chief, I think that was the chief priority of The American Legion, to get that forward funding, and we were able to get it done with your support and your help.

So we have done some good things, but we've got to keep going. We made a contract with you all that we got to keep. This war that is going on now, like probably wars you've fought in, is pretty divisive in America. It's caused dissent. But we are united in this country and in this Congress to say that no matter where we were on the war or are on the war, we're going to make sure that every young man and woman that comes back from that war gets all the care, the love, the attention, the honor and dignity a nation can give. We are committed to that. *(Applause)*

You know if we don't consciously just say that every day we're going to have some problems. Now, it's hard for me to see out there, but how many of you are from Vietnam era? I can see it's almost everybody. Let me say something about the way we should not have done things when you came home. We know that that war was divisive, but this country, this Congressman, did not distinguish between the war and the warrior. And when the warriors came home we did not welcome you. We did not say we need a new GI Bill for you guys. We did not say we got to make sure your health care is completely covered. We wanted to forget about it. That was a big mistake. This country has a lot to apologize for to make up for it. And we know, you know, half of the homeless on the street tonight are probably Vietnam vets. And the Secretary of the VA, a great leader, General Shinseki, was here yesterday. I don't know if he said it, I think he did. He is committed to making sure there is zero veteran homelessness by the time his first term is finished. I think that's a great aim that we all have to make sure we live up to. And we in Congress are going to make sure we get the resources to do that. Veterans and homeless should not be in the same sentence, same phrase.

We also did not deal with mental health in the way that we ought to have done. And we did not want to say that Agent Orange or any of those herbicides did any damage, so for decades we denied that there was any problem. Then when we finally admitted an Agent Orange problem we built up such a bunch of bureaucratic obstacles that the people, who are trying to get benefits rightly due them from the pain that Agent Orange caused, think that VA means veterans' adversary, because they have to fight the VA so much. VA ought to be a veterans' advocate, and we should say more than I'm sorry to you Vietnam vets. We should clear off all the Agent Orange claims today or yesterday by granting them to those who have applied for them. *(Applause)*

If you were there, we should care. And I don't care if your boots were on the ground, or if you were in the blue waters off Vietnam, or the blue skies up above, or in Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Guam, American bases where shipments opened up and exposed people, we ought to get all of those claims off the books today. People have suffered enough, they are probably sicker from fighting the VA than whatever sickness that they have. And it's time since we have almost 1,000,000 backlogged claims, let's get off 100,000 or more of the Agent Orange claims and grant them. That's how we should say I'm sorry and thank you to the Vietnam vets, and that's what we're going to try to do in Congress this year.

So we've still got a long way to go. We've still got a long way to go. I mentioned the claims. Almost 1,000,000, depending on how you're counting them. But however you count them it's an insult to those we call our heroes, to those who every day we owe so much, and yet we insult them by taking months, if not years, to do a claim.

Now, I hate to mention the IRS to you all, but 15 or 20 years ago the IRS was one of the most dysfunctional agencies in America. You didn't know where your check was, if you had a refund or who was doing it or when you would get it. Now when you file your

1040 and ask for a refund, you'll get a check within three weeks guaranteed. Three weeks. How do they do it? They accept your form subject to audit. They assume it's honest, but they can check it if they want. You get a check right away. Well, why don't we do the same thing with our nation's veterans? Who more should we trust? And I say if you submit all the documentation, the medical documentation, and you have the help, say, of the Legion's veterans service officers, all of whom are certified to do this, we should accept the claim, send out the check subject to audit. That's the way to cut through the bureaucracy at the VA. *(Applause)* You know, we've hired thousands of new claims people, but by the time they get trained and by the time—you know, more claims have come in, other people have retired, we don't seem to be getting anywhere with those backlogs. So let's just cut through all this bureaucracy and do the right thing for you all. That's what I would like to do. I hope we can do that when we get back.

So we still got a long ways to go. We got, as we know, homeless on the street. Veterans who have served their nation should never have been allowed to get to this position, and we got to say thank you and we got to take care of them. We have more women in combat and in the services than ever before; right? And we thank them all for that. *(Applause)* But I got to tell all you guys the VA was built as a male institution, but now we have got to change. We've got to have doctors who understand that if a woman comes in with an amputated arm she didn't lose it maybe just from cancer, she was in Fallujah and had an IED blow up in front of her. We got to recognize that when single moms can't get child care and they bring their kid or kids to the VA the doctors got to see them because that's their only alternative. We should be taking care of that for our parent vets. We got to give the women the doctors that they would like and the respect that they have earned and deserved.

So we still have a long way to go. We did the GI Bill, we have the forward funding. We're doing this and we're doing that. But we still got a bureaucracy that is not always responsive. I think General Shinseki, as he said yesterday, is going to bring accountability to the VA system. Nobody thinks anything happens to them if they do something wrong. We got to change that in the VA, and I think General Shinseki is the man to do it.

So we're going to continue on with your support, we're going to keep the contract that we made with you. And I think the Secretary said it yesterday, there is a lot of debate about health care today, and I want you to know about the VA health care system. They are going to have to pry the VA health care system from our cold and dead hands before anything happens to affect that, whatever we do in health care reform. We're going to make sure that you get the quality of care that is increasing and that you deserve. So we're going to keep on. I thank you all for your service, I thank you all for making sure that your comrades and the later veterans get the benefits because you're working all for them, not just for yourself. We thank you, and we're going to continue to do the right thing for you. Thank you so much. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: Our next guest represents Minnesota's First Congressional District. At the young age of 17 he enlisted in the Army National Guard, and retired 24 years later as a Command Sergeant Major, the highest ranking enlisted soldier to ever serve in Congress. While a student at Chadron State College in Nebraska, he earned the title of Nebraska Citizen Soldier of the Year in 1989. He has served overseas with his battalion in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. As a

member of Congress he serves on the House Veterans' Affairs Committee. Would you join me in welcoming Representative Tim Walz from Minnesota. *(Applause)*

Address: The Honorable Tim Walz
United States House of Representatives

Thank you all. Thank you, commander, for all you do. And I had the great pleasure of meeting your wife this morning and thanking her, because I know, and all of us in here know, that behind every successful commander is an astonished mother-in-law. So it was good to meet Ann. You've done great work, and we truly appreciate it.

It's a privilege to stand here in front of you as a member of Congress, as a retired veteran, but maybe today most importantly as a proud member of The American Legion. I want to thank my fellow Legionnaires from Minnesota for being here. *(Cheers and applause)* If you're feeling homesick, it was 33 up in Embarrass the other day, so if you're missing home. And thank you to our hosts from Kentucky for putting on such a wonderful convention in this beautiful city. We truly appreciate it.

I can tell you that one of the true honors of this job is meeting with veterans and representing the people of Southern Minnesota and the people of this country and meeting with our warriors. I had the opportunity shortly after I was elected to go out to Walter Reed and meet with one of our wounded warriors who was back from serving this country in Iraq. They introduced me—and it was a very nice introduction I got from the commander here. They kind of said the same thing. They said this is Congressman Walz from Minnesota, he's a Sergeant Major, and he came to see you. And this soldier never missed a beat, and he said, "Oh, I'm sorry about that." And I said, "Sorry about what?" He said, "I'm sorry you took a demotion to Congress." *(Laughter)*

And I think he understood, and what you understood, is the sense of pride that goes with being part of this organization, of being part of this nation's military, and the self sacrifice that goes into that. I can't tell you how incredibly honored I am to stand in front of you and watch the things you do. And I say that not just for the care, and what you heard Chairman Filner talk about, the things that you helped move through to make life better for our veterans and families and secure this nation. I'm also a high school teacher, a public high school teacher. That's my job. And I never ran for elected office. I served as a citizen soldier and as a teacher, and I see the work that the Legion does on that side of things, of creating great citizens for this country through youth programs, through sports programs, and through a program that I have taken very close to my heart and seen the great work it does, Boys and Girls State. And I want to thank each of you for building the citizens of tomorrow. And that program has wondrous effects on this country. So thank you very much for that. *(Applause)*

To be very honest with you, I can't think of a single major thing that we've done for veterans in this country that hasn't had the stamp of The American Legion on it. The partnership that we share together, the voice that you speak for veterans, the voice of authenticity, the voice of integrity, and the voice of experience on what it takes of helping us understand these are the needs, these are the issues. What you need to do, telling us as your elected representatives, is you need to make sure this becomes legislation; this becomes the law of the land. And each and every one of those things is ushered through with the work of each of you and with this group up here. And I can tell you—and when I saw General Shinseki, when he came to become Secretary Shinseki and he was testifying for the first time in front of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, Chairman Filner's

committee, the one thing I told him was, I said, "If you want to know where your strength lies, Secretary, you need to turn around." In the front row, it was filled with Legion members. And I said, "They will be behind you every step of the way, but be very clear about this: They will be your strongest advocates for the VA and for veterans, but because of that and because of that commitment they will be your harshest critics and you need to listen to both sides." *(Applause)*

As you heard Chairman Filner I think talk very passionately, and he understood this, especially with this nation's experience from Vietnam, of that clear understanding of separating the war and the warrior, of making sure you understand how much our citizens are willing to give for freedom, and those who have given everything. I am convinced that because of the work of the Legion and other veterans organizations, people sitting in this room, that we are changing that attitude. And I don't think it will ever change back. What I mean by this is the care I see and the commitment I see from citizens when it comes to caring for this nation's veterans is unwavering right now. It is an issue that transcends politics. It's an issue that I am convinced in the midst of turmoil, in the midst of political upheaval, in the midst of debates and things like that, of town hall meetings—if you want to make me feel at home just randomly yell at me some now. It will make me feel a little more comfortable. But amongst all of that, that's the purpose of a democracy, that's the greatness of a democracy. But in the midst of all that there is one issue that unites us as a people more than any other, and that's the care of this nation's veterans. If we can continue to make sure that that remains a central tissue, it unites this country, and we continue passing legislation that truly makes a difference.

You heard about the GI Bill, you heard about advanced funding and advanced appropriations. Not only is advanced appropriations the right way to care for our veterans, it makes good economic sense. And every one of you, every one of you in here understands we are facing challenging times. Everyone in this nation, if they are not concerned, they should be concerned about rising deficits and spending. That is absolutely appropriate. We have a responsibility to make sure that future generations are not saddled with poor decisions being made today. With that being said, we must be absolutely clear, though, making and balancing this budget cannot be done and will not be done on the backs of veterans. It must not be. *(Applause)*

We have done much to make the system better. We have done much to make sure the care that we receive, and rightfully called the best care anywhere, is at the VA. But as you heard Chairman Filner—and you don't need us to stand in front of you to tell it, you work with it every day. You deal with the problems every day of claims backlogs, of wondering what happens, of errors that come up. And rest assured they will be there. Whether it's medical errors or whether its letters going out informing fellow veterans if they have ALS, things like this, they are unacceptable. We all understand that we may never reach perfection, but when it comes to caring for our veterans that must still remain our goal. We must every day strive to make sure there are no errors, there is no one waiting for care, there is no one denied care, and that when veterans come home the one thing they know that is going to be a constant is they are going to be told thank you, and they are going to receive and their family is going to receive the care and the benefits that they have so rightly earned defending this nation. We can make it happen. *(Applause)*

Two things I would say that the Legion has done to forward this process as much as any other. You heard a little about the GI Bill. I think we have an opportunity to make a generational effect on people's lives, of making it that our veterans come home and they

bring back their skills. We know that this, the greatest generation, came back from war conflict, came back from Vietnam, came back from Korea, came back from the Gulf War, and are coming back now from Iraq and Afghanistan with skills that will make this nation better. The idea of fighting for democracy, the idea of working together to solve common goals, those things can happen. But we must remain vigilant on how we make that happen. The advanced appropriation was a great step. But I believe one thing, and I'm asking again for your help in making this happen. All of us know that one of the biggest problems we face is the Department of Defense and the VA and the communication between them. There is not a person in this room that hasn't heard about seamless transition for three decades. And there is not a person in this room who has not lost a sense of optimism about this. I rode from the airport yesterday with an E-6 veteran of Iraq and Afghanistan, and I was talking about seamless transition. And Mark told me, "Oh, don't get me wrong, Congressman. I'm a pretty optimistic guy, but I'm also a realist." Everybody in this room knows if you want realism, you want pragmatism, go to an E-6, they'll tell you the way it is. This troop doesn't believe that we have the fortitude, or we haven't proven we have the fortitude, to bridge the gap between the DoD, who does a fabulous job of fighting conflicts. That's their job. We're the best in the world at doing that, and the VA that cares for our veterans. But there is a chasm that soldiers drop between, that warriors come back and drop between. And then they end up, as the chairman said, fighting against their own government to enter into a system that is meant to care for them. That's why on April 19th, when the president announced the Virtual Lifetime Electronic Record, saying when you raise your hand and swear your oath to this nation, we are going to jointly enroll you across the spectrum from the DoD to the VA. That's smart business. That's the way to care for our veterans. *(Applause)*

I'm encouraged we have the opportunity, because what happens here is we have a better opportunity, one, to capture all the veterans on the front side. In this day and age, and many of us in here are the gray hairs, but we know that these younger warriors coming back, the VA doesn't even capture their email address to contact them.

These are people that grew up without a phone in their house and only a cell phone. They are people that they're connected together by Facebook and MySpace, and the VA has not evolved enough to capture them and bring them in. We must be smarter on that. One, it's a moral responsibility. Two, is we're going to get better care for these veterans in a quicker manner; and three, we're going to save money in the long run instead of letting them drop out of the system, develop medical problems, develop issues with PTSD, and then try and pull them back in and treat them later. We have to be smarter, we have to be more creative, and seamless transition is the way.

Now the reason I bring this up and tell you. I am an eternal optimist, and I say this because I supervised the high school lunch room for 20 years. You have to remain optimistic to survive that. *(Laughter)* But I'm optimistic for another reason. We have a commitment from the administration that seamless transition is a top priority. We have a commitment from Secretary Gates at the DoD that it's a top priority. We have a commitment from Secretary Shinseki at the VA that it's a top priority. And I'll tell you the one reason that gives me the most confidence in this is, is we have this room that understands it must be done. Together we can make sure now is the time, let's get this done, let's make sure that no one ever hears again that their claim has been lost when a fire burned in St. Louis and we don't have any record of your service—let's make sure that never happens to another veteran. Let's make sure they get prompt care, good care,

and we fulfill two important duties to this nation. We fulfill the moral responsibility of caring for our veterans, and we show the next generation, the next generation that will have to protect us.

Everybody in this room prays every day that we will never see another conflict, but we know better than to not plan ahead. We know most likely there will be another conflict. It's our responsibility to make sure that we keep the faith with current veterans, so that future veterans and future warriors know that they can sign up and they will be taken care of. And I can tell you as a teacher, as a member of Congress, as a citizen soldier and a National Guardsman, that we have every reason to be optimistic and proud of this current generation. They are signing up and volunteering to go defend this nation at a time of war in record numbers of their own selfless service. That's something we should all be incredibly proud of. *(Applause)*

So as we move forward we know we can't rest. We know we've made progress. Chairman Filner talked about historic budgets. But we can't lose faith with the public on how we manage that money. We can't lose faith, but we have to get it exactly right. We can't lose faith that making sure that the transition from military life to civilian life is as smooth as possible. Not, as we said again, for the moral obligation or the security, it's an economic benefit to all of us to bring back these skills and bring them back in. All those things are possible, but every single one of you in this room knows you will hear lip service to veterans from every single politician who stands in front of you. The question is how many of them are willing to stand behind you and our warriors when the time comes to get it done. That's the true measuring stone. So we've got our work cut out for us. We've made progress, but we can't go backwards. We can't allow—as I said, when we talk about fiscal responsibility or health care reform, to touch in any way what we're doing in the VA. When I hear people bring up we might have to look at copays in TRICARE and things like that, here is what we need to respond every time: The copay was paid when they swore their oath of enlistment in this nation, and it won't go further.

We have an opportunity to make care for our veterans continue to be the best in the world. We have an opportunity to make sure that our returning female warriors are integrated into the system in a seamless manner like everyone else. We have an opportunity to show that this nation will not forsake its warriors. We have an obligation to show the rest of the world and those who think that they can do us harm or we're somehow divided. What they don't understand is we can criticize each other, but they can't criticize this nation. They will not be allowed to. We will not rest for a minute until those who perpetrated the attacks on 9/11 are brought to justice, and those in the future who mean to bring this nation harm. And the strongest way we show our solidarity, the strongest way we show our defense of this nation, is by the care of our veterans. And I can tell you that those of you sitting in this room, you come, you do this work. You work in local schools, you tell the stories, you work hard. You talk about legislation. You come here and grapple with the tough issues, and you do so for one very, very simple reason. You love this nation more than anything. You understand that this is the world's last great hope on democracy, last great hope of freedom, last great hope to allow people to achieve what they can do, and it happens because of the selfless service of each of you.

So again I thank you for the privilege and the honor to stand in front of you. May God bless you, The American Legion, and this great country. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: Small businesses represent the heart and soul of our economy, and the next speaker knows this well. She is a passionate advocate for small business policy that encourages innovation, economic development, and job creation. A member of the Council on Foreign Relations, she has been a successful manager of small businesses and holds an M. B. A. from Harvard Business School. After being appointed by President Obama to head the U. S. Small Business Administration, she was unanimously confirmed by the U. S. Senate. Please give a warm welcome to the Administrator of the Small Business Administration, Karen Gordon Mills.

Address: Karen Gordon Mills
Administrator, U. S. Small Business Administration

Well, thank you. Thank you, Commander Rehbein, for that introduction and also for your service. Good morning, everyone. It's an honor to be with all of you. You know, as the commander mentioned, I am from the great State of Maine. Or maybe I should say the great Department of Maine. *(Cheers and applause)* And we're very proud to have 175 posts, 25,000 Legionnaires, under the command of Andy Olson. I think they are here today, right up front where they should be. Now, as many of you know, Maine stretches farther east than any other state. And as such we have an airport that is a key departure and arrival point for troops serving abroad, which is Bangor International. With all the troops coming and going from across the country, The American Legion organized the Maine Troop Greeters. Senator Olympia Snow calls them the very best of Maine. And I couldn't agree more, because since 2003 they have been at the airport to greet 4,000 flights and 800,000 troops. *(Applause)*

I'm going to come back to these troop greeters later, but I want to start by simply saying thank you to The American Legion for the many ways that you provide support to our troops and to their families. The American Legion knows that the veterans deserve the best our country has to offer. Our president and we at the United States Small Business Administration share that vision. We believe that it includes the opportunity for veterans who have fought for the American dream to live the American dream. Already more than 3 million small businesses are owned by veterans.

As President Obama has said, these businesses are formed in family meetings around kitchen tables, and they are the heart of the American economy. In fact, we know that small businesses create about 70 percent of the jobs, and that over half of working Americans either own a small business or work for a small business. Throughout history it's been small businesses that lead us out of the recession and into recovery. Today they are gearing up to do it again, and veteran owned small businesses are playing a crucial role.

As we move forward together at the SBA we have got three priorities. We are going to implement the Recovery Act, we are going to reinvest in invigorating the SBA and its partners, and we are going to serve as the strongest possible voice for small business in the American communities.

First the Recovery Act. The economic stimulus. You all know in October credit lines were cut. Many businesses found themselves struggling to find the money to survive. I'm sure that many of the veterans sitting out here either own or work for a small business. It's hard work. Sometimes you need a local bank to step up, or a credit union to get started, help you grow, or help you through the difficult times. That's where the SBA comes in. We have thousands of lending partners who offer SBA loans that are backed by

the federal government. It's a strong partnership. In fact, the banks use the SBA loan guarantees to lend about a billion dollars—a billion dollars every year to veteran owned businesses. This year we knew that the small business community needed a little extra help. That's part of the reason why Congress—and I have to thank the Congressman that was here. All of Congress and the administration and the president made the Recovery Act happen. It allowed the SBA to make two important changes. First, in our top loan programs we reduced or eliminated most of the fees. That's so that small businesses could keep more of their own money. Second, we increased the federal backing on these loans up to 90 percent, so that more lenders would offer SBA loans. And as a result of those two temporary measures money has started to flow again. Our loan volume is up more than 50 percent compared to the two months before the stimulus passed, and that means we've put more than $9 billion into the hands of small businesses so far. I'm proud to say that in the first six months of the stimulus more than 2,500 of these SBA loans have gone to America's veterans. Do you know how much that is? Over $588 million, over half a billion dollars in lending support to veteran entrepreneurs and small business owners.

Now, we're particularly proud of the SBA Pilot Express Loan Initiative, and it's only for the military community. And it has our lowest interest rates. Under this stimulus we have issued more than 1,200 Patriot Express loans, totaling over $90 million. It's called express actually for a good reason. If a bank approves the loan, the SBA often approves the application within 24 hours. That's getting you the capital you need when you need it. And the best part about SBA lending programs is this: Borrowers are reporting that these loans are saving and creating tens of thousands of jobs all across the country.

We're not stopping there. The stimulus also provides the opportunity to renew our commitment to federal contracting. We're making sure that small businesses have the opportunity to receive at least 23 percent of all federal contracts. And we know that veteran owned businesses play a critical role in meeting our nation's needs for the Department of Defense, the Veterans Administration, and others. That's why last week the administration announced that Commerce Secretary Gary Locke and I are going to lead, to co-head a government-wide outreach effort. And the President himself has backed this and said providing these opportunities to small businesses is essential. Over the next 90 days our procurement partners will be part of outreach efforts all across the country. And they will be matchmaking, helping to put contracts in the hands of small businesses, and those owned by veterans and women and minorities. And we're going to encourage veteran owned businesses to go out and market themselves and their products and their services to these agencies. And, in fact, we're going to be part of the small business workshop and the matchmaking event that is going to take place right here at this conference I think this afternoon.

Already billions of dollars—billions of dollars of stimulus contracting money is flowing, and small businesses have gotten over 20 percent. I'm pleased to say also in the Recovery Act contracts we are hitting our goals for getting those contracts to veteran owned businesses, and over half of them are going to service disabled veteran owned businesses as well.

In my opinion it's obvious that contracting with veteran owned businesses is a win/win. Veteran owned businesses will benefit by increased volume and sales and hiring—and usually, often, they hire other veterans. Federal agencies also benefit from

working with innovative and nimble and responsive companies, often with a direct line to the CEO. And when that CEO is a member of the Legion it's particularly valuable. Agencies know that they are working with somebody who understands that a federal contract is an opportunity to live The American Legion motto, which you know is Still Serving America.

I should mention one more thing. You may have heard about a couple of decisions recently that would have given preference to some other programs over the programs designated for our service disabled veterans. In the SBA we said that's not right. Now, I'm very pleased to say that just last Friday the Department of Justice agreed with the SBA, upheld our position, and said that all SBA contracting opportunities have a level playing field, including those for service disabled veteran owned businesses. So with both lending, contracting, and the Recovery Act we are going to get there, we're going to put the brakes on this recession, and we're going to do it arm in arm with veteran owned small businesses. *(Applause)*

We're also going to reinvigorate our agency and create a stronger SBA team to work with all those veteran owned businesses out there. Our men and women of the armed forces know what teamwork is all about. Having a good team is critical to the success of the mission. Similarly, at the SBA we're focused on becoming a stronger team to serve veterans the best that we can. The SBA, it starts with 2,000 employees at 68 district offices around the country, and each one of these offices has a designated person for veterans business development. We add to that. We have partners, 900 small business development centers, 100 women's businesses centers, 350 chapters of our mentoring operation, called SCORE. So far this year these three programs have helped to train more than 50,000 veterans, including some of our nation's two million women veterans.

We also look to the experts in our Veterans Business Outreach Centers. They help with business plans, feasibility studies, mentoring, especially for veterans. We had five of these centers. We now have eight, in all key regions across the United States. If we add it up, each year the SBA assists more than 200,000 veteran owned businesses, service disabled veteran owned businesses, and reservists who have small businesses.

I want to thank our Associate Administrator for Veterans' Business Development, Bill Elmore, who leads this, and he is here today. Overall the demand for these services is up, if you can believe that. It's up over four percent. So at the SBA we're making investments, we're making investments in our technology and in our people. With technology, we already know that veterans are heavy users of our online tools, such as our Small Business Training Network. In fact, 65,000 veterans already this year have used this, and we're going to keep investing in strengthening these information technology tools that veterans use and that they value.

And our people, the SBA's diverse work force, that's our strongest asset. We're very proud to have 350 veterans working at the SBA, and we have also 367 veterans who are part of our online disaster team. They're an on-call disaster assistance team, and they are ready to go into communities to help recover from natural disasters. We're training our employees with new skills to take leadership roles, and we're pushing to ensure that all of our employees and partners are ready to serve returning troops.

Now, we know that thousands of troops are returning from Iraq, and we know that 18 percent of veterans are still unemployed one to three years after they return, and that's unacceptable. But the good news is that these veterans have higher than average rates of self-employment. They have the leadership, they have the knowhow, and they have the

drive to succeed as entrepreneurs. Today my commitment to you is this: When they come home the SBA team will be ready to serve them as they have served us. *(Applause)*

Finally, the SBA must serve as a strong voice for small business. Under the Obama Administration small businesses have a seat at the table. We are speaking out about the high value of veteran owned small businesses. We know that you understand the importance of U. S. competitiveness, and we know that you're helping to move America forward with our national priorities. The track records of veterans in small business is no accident, and the Legion has built this track record over time. The Legion's role with the GI Bill of 1944 is a great example. In fact, we saw that spirit renewed just a few weeks ago when the 21st Century GI Bill went into effect. In my opinion, sending our veterans, our Reservists and Guard members to college is one of the smartest investments that we can make in the American dream. When we equip veterans with the education, the experience, and the SBA tools to succeed, we see powerful stories merge. Let me just tell you one example.

Andy Harrell, Jacksonville, Florida. Andy served ten years as a Navy helicopter pilot. Then he went to work for a company that did helicopter training for the Department of Defense. Then he started his own firm. He entered our 8(a) program, which helps economically and socially disadvantaged individuals prepare for contracting. And then with the help of SBA loans he got contracts with the Marine Corps and with the Army. His company grew from just himself in 2003, to 39 employees today. And all the while he's been helping us meet our national defense goals. I should mention that we just heard this week from Andy, and that he's getting called back to active duty. He's going to Norfolk. So he's looking into a unique SBA loan program for Reservists who need to suddenly leave their business to go serve their country.

So my question for you today is this: Is Andy still serving America? Yes, he is, and in more ways than one. I know that later today you're going to be honoring a number of small and large business owners for their leadership. I want to congratulate all of those winners. At the SBA we know that America can and should look to veterans for big ideas that are going to help create 21st century jobs. We want to hear your ideas, we want to be part of your success story, and we want to serve you as a strong voice in Washington, D.C. After all, we know that veteran owned small businesses not only help build our economy, but they are also making America a stronger, more resourceful, and more influential nation. Truly, the SBA is aiming to serve veterans better in all that we do; with the Recovery Act loans and our contracts, by reinvigorating our SBA team, and by serving as a strongest possible voice for small business. And like you, we're inspired every day by our troops.

So back to the troop greeters. The Department of Maine recently printed this letter in its newsletter. The writer says, "I can't tell you how much it meant to me to be greeted by the many veterans and volunteers at Bangor International Airport on my way home from the desert. I just heard that you're still there, day and night, to greet our troops. I had to write to say thank you. I'm so grateful for your sense of American spirit and dedication." Signed, "A very grateful member of the United States Air Force." *(Applause)*

Whether our troops are heading out or coming home, it's great to know that the four million members of The American Legion family are still serving them and are still serving America. Today the SBA stands beside you ready to shake hands with a veteran, ready to help them pursue and achieve the American dream. Thank you to the veterans here today who are helping to strengthen America's small businesses. Thank you all for

your service to the country, and especially to the service of disabled veterans who are here with us today. It has been an honor to be with you. Thank you, very much.

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: With us here today is the leader of an organization that encourages true patriotism, maintains the institutions of American freedom, and respects our national symbols and the value of American citizenship. I was privileged to be with them several weeks ago in their National Congress, and was received very warmly, made many new friends, saw several old friends, and met many Legionnaires.

The president general of the National Society of the Sons of the American Revolution has been a member of the Texas society for 26 years, and recently rose to their national leadership position. Would you please help me welcome Judge Edward F. Butler of the Sons of the American Revolution.

Address: Judge Edward F. Butler
President General, National Society of the Sons of the American Revolution

Good morning fellow Legionnaires, commander, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen. It is a pleasure to be here with you today, and one of the biggest pleasures that I had was riding in your parade on Sunday. We have been partners in patriotism with The American Legion for I believe six years, and this is the first time that we have been in your parade. We had about 30 members of our color guard dressed in colonial attire, and we were very well received, and we appreciate all of your welcomes.

Our organization was formed on April 30, 1889. That was the 100th anniversary of President George Washington taking the oath of office. Now, notice that it was 100 years later that we were formed. This is what I want to talk to you about today. Each of you have been in the military, and each of you need to write your story. To become a member of the Sons of the American Revolution we have to document our descent from a patriot who fought in the American Revolutionary War. That's pretty tough when you consider that during the Civil War a lot of records were damaged, lost, and we've had 225 years of floods and tornadoes and other natural disasters which have destroyed records.

So I want to talk to you today about creating records. Because in 100 years I predict that there will be organizations, sons of those who fought in Korea, sons of those who fought in Vietnam, sons of those who fought in all the world conflicts that we are engaged in now. What will your descendants know about you, and what can you do to help pass along the story? I want to give you a personal tidbit. I have an 82 year old brother who retired as an Army Colonel. During World War II he had lied about his age, and he was a hospital corpsman, Third Class Petty Officer, assigned to the Fleet Marine Division, and made several opposed landings in the South Pacific with the First Marine Division. He was wounded in combat and continued treating his fellow Marines. For this he received the Navy and Marine Corps Medal. That's all we know about his military service because he refuses to talk about it. We have a copy of the citation that says what he did on that one day. But what else did he do? We'll never know. And I suspect that there are people in this audience who also don't like talking about their military service. But I want to encourage you when you get home to sit down and write your memoirs so that your grandchildren and those great grandchildren who come after you will know something about you.

And don't stop with just what you did in the military. Your descendents are going to be interested in how you met your spouse. They're going to want to know what you did that you enjoyed doing. Did you like to hunt, fish, are you a sportsman, do you follow football teams, basketball teams? You need to personalize your story. Then I suggest to you that you gather all of the important documents in your life. Your birth certificate, your high school diploma, any other certificates that you might have, and put those together with the family photographs that you cherish. Now, if you're not a typist, if you're not computer literate, that's really not a problem. There is a Kinko's in every medium size town in the nation and every town has a community college where you can get students that will type up your memoirs for you, put them on a digital format. They can incorporate these photographs. And I encourage you to do that and send those to your local library, because most libraries have family history departments.

Send a copy to the Family History Library in Salt Lake City. It's the largest repository of family histories in the world. And researchers, that's one of the first places they go. Once you've done this I think you can rest assured that your descendants who come along later will know more about you, and they'll be able to join any of these important organizations that perpetuate our national symbols that are patriotic. And I want to say today that I believe every person in this room signed a contract with the government. You wrote a blank check. You agreed to follow orders if it meant giving up your life. So to me, each and every one of you are heroes, and I salute you. *(Applause)*

Thank you for allowing me an opportunity to speak. God bless you, God bless America, and God bless The American Legion.

Now it's my great pleasure to present one of our society's highest awards, the SAR's Distinguished Patriot Award to your commander, David Rehbein.

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: Thank you very much. *(Applause)*

PRESIDENT GENERAL BUTLER: I just want to finish up by saying that it's a pleasure to be a partner in patriotism with The American Legion. We're proud of our relationship with you, and we hope that we'll get an invitation to march in your parade in Milwaukee next summer.

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: Judge, thank you. Thank you very much, and you know on behalf of The American Legion, thank you for that recognition. Thank you for that beautiful award. It's hard to find the words to say thank you appropriately, but thank you very much.

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: During our Convention opening yesterday, The American Legion signed the Community Covenant, pledging to continue to do what we have done since 1919, support the troops. With us today is the man who is the Secretary of the Army's Representative for the Community Covenant, a retired Army Major General, he is a graduate of Purdue University and earned a master's degree in management at Webster University. He is also a graduate of the U.S. Army War College. Would you please join me in welcoming Major General Craig B. Whelden.

Address: MG Craig B. Whelden, USA (Ret.)
Secretary of the Army's Representative for Community Covenant

Thank you ladies and gentlemen. I want to tell you all I'm a proud member of The American Legion. It's the only veterans service organization that I belong to. *(Applause)*

I want to thank Commander Rehbein, the national adjutant, the staff of The American Legion for embracing the Community Covenant in such a way that they have. I had particularly wanted though to point out the contributions of Bob Spanogle, as most of you know was the national adjutant for many, many years. He's also the Civilian Aide to the Secretary of the Army for the State of Indiana. And last October Bob came to me and he said, "You know, if you want to promulgate this initiative across America, one of the organizations that you need to have taking a lead role is The American Legion, and I think I can get you connected to them," and he did.

And in January of this year I came up to Indianapolis and I spoke to The American Legion staff and national adjutant about this initiative. That led to an executive committee meeting in May that I returned to Indianapolis and briefed, and then again to a workshop about a month ago. And then yesterday culminated in the signing of the Community Covenant document with Admiral Mullen and General Petraeus, your national commander and a number of other dignitaries. Now we have about four or five thousand copies of that document on our desk right outside the door as you leave this hall.

And if you look at the words on that covenant document, you're going to notice that it's more than just a reaffirmation of the wonderful programs that you already do for service members and their families. It's a call to action. It's a call to action by your national leadership to help promulgate this initiative across America into every community, every town, every city and with every governor.

So what is Community Covenant? Community Covenant is an initiative of the Secretary of the Army, and it's about reconnecting the American public for support to our service members and their families in this extended time of war so that we don't repeat what happened 40 years ago with the Vietnam Era veterans. We're now in our eighth year of war. We have a force that's about 10 percent of that, that we had in World War II which was half as long. And our troops are going back on multiple rotations time and time again. The force is under tremendous stress, the families are under tremendous stress. And the Secretary of the Army's vision was to reengage America and remind them of the service and the sacrifices of these wonderful young Americans.

And the way we're doing that is through Community Covenant signing ceremonies hosted by mayors and governors all across the country, county commissioners and other community leaders whereby they reaffirm their support for today's service members and their families. And to the degree that they're willing to stand up and do something above and beyond just signing the document, and institute a new program or initiative, we encourage that as well. And we've seen dozens and dozens of such programs come out of our efforts over the last 16 months.

So what have been the results? In the last 16 months we've had over 300 ceremonies across the country; we've had 560 mayors and over half the governors participate. But that's the tip of the iceberg, because there are tens of thousands of communities all across America, and we need to reach into each and every one of them.

Let me give you some examples of the way this is working across the country successfully. Who's from North Dakota? *(Cheers)* Let me tell you what happened in North Dakota. The governor hosted a ceremony about four months ago, and during that ceremony the governor said to all of those in attendance and to his state, "I challenge you to host a Community Covenant signing ceremony in every town and every city in this state, and in every county." And partnered with the League of Cities for the state of North

Dakota, that's exactly what they're doing. In the last four months, North Dakota has held over 160 ceremonies. And if you go to the League of City's website for North Dakota, you're going to see a challenge to be the first state in the nation to show solidarity for this initiative in every town, every city, and every county. They're well on their way of achieving that, and they lead the nation.

Who's from North Carolina? *(Cheers)* In Greenville, North Carolina on the 27th of October, the League of Cities for the state will hold their annual meeting. And at that meeting they will sign a Community Covenant signifying their support for this initiative. And I will be there, and I will speak to all those mayors present. And standing next to me will be the department commander from The American Legion of the State of North Carolina. And I will tell all the mayors that we appreciate very much your signing of this covenant, but now we would like you to go back and do this same thing in your local community with your local townspeople, and The American Legion is there to help you.

Who's from Kentucky? *(Cheers)* That's a Kentucky yell, isn't it? Last week the Governor of Kentucky signed a letter to all his communities in Kentucky encouraging them to get on board with this initiative, and for every town and every city and every county in the State of Kentucky to host a Community Covenant signing ceremony.

You saw on stage here yesterday, Congressman Ed Whitfield. He participated in the Community Covenant signing. Congressman Whitfield has introduced a resolution in the House Armed Services Committee for consideration for the full House, supporting Community Covenant and encouraging every community in America to do this.

Who's from Florida? *(Cheers)* All right. I'm from Florida. I live in central Florida, so let me tell you a personal story about two ceremonies working there. I went to Mayor Crotty who's the Mayor Orange County. And I said, "Mayor Crotty, let me tell you about Community Covenant and see if you would like to join the hundreds of other mayors across the country who've already done this." He said, "Absolutely. When do you think we ought to do this? Memorial Day? Veterans Day?" I said, "You know, Mr. Mayor, this is all about reaching into middle America; this is about connecting to the average American citizen. If we do this on Memorial Day or Veterans Day, we're certainly going to make a statement, but we're going to make a statement to the people who already love our veterans; already love our service members and their families." He said, "Okay, well what do you have in mind?" And I said, "How about halftime of an Orlando Magic game?" And he said, "Good idea. We're building them a new stadium." So he turned to his assistant and said, "Let's get a hold of the Orlando Magic and see if they'll host us." And that's exactly what they're going to do. And on the 8th of September I have a meeting with the Orlando Magic and the county leadership of Orange County to determine how exactly we're going to package in the 10 or 15 minutes of halftime a very, very powerful message of support for our service members and their families, so that the eighteen to twenty thousand people present that night don't go home and just think about the score of the game, they go home and think about what they saw at the halftime. And maybe that's going to be a testimonial from a wounded warrior; maybe that's going to be a mass swearing in ceremony of new recruits. I don't know exactly what it's going to be yet, because we're going to plan that. But we're going to make sure that everybody in attendance at that basketball game that night doesn't just remember the score of the game, but is moved by what they saw at halftime.

When I approached my own town of Celebration, Florida, I said, "You know, it would be very embarrassing if I'm running a national outreach effort across the entire

country, and my own town doesn't do this, would you be interested in doing it?" And they said, "Absolutely we would. And we'd like to do it on the 4th of July. And the reason we'd like to do it on the 4th of July is because that's where we get the most people." Celebration, Florida is a town that Disney built. There are about 10,000 people living there. And on the 4th of July we had 42,000 people come to see the fireworks. Now, none of them knew that at 30 minutes before the fireworks they were going to see a Community Covenant signing ceremony, but they did. And on stage we had a captain from the Florida National Guard whose unit was about to deploy to Iraq, and Celebration has adopted his unit. And standing next to him was his wife and his two children. And he had the opportunity to speak to 42,000 people and tell them how much he appreciated the fact that Celebration was going to adopt his unit as he goes off to war.

Now, most of the people there didn't know that night that they were going to see anything but fireworks, but I can tell you many people were moved, many people went home that night and thought about what they were doing to support our service members and their families.

So that's what Community Covenant is all about. Raising the level of visibility of the need to support our service members and their families to a new level, and inspire new levels of support. And I can think of no better organization than The American Legion to help me do that.

Many of you have already stopped by the booth and we have exchanged business cards, and I told you I've got a tool kit on our website to show you exactly how to do this. What I need you to do is help me open doors with mayors, with county commissioners, with other community leaders, and once that door is open I can give you the tools to put on a very high quality ceremony, because we have 16 months of experience and over 300 ceremonies behind us. It is not difficult, but it means an awful lot.

So for those of you who have not stopped by the desk, we're going to be here the rest of the day, and I invite you to stop by; tell me where you're from; let me show you what's going on in your own backyard; where we have had ceremonies; where ceremonies are planned, and how you can help inspire one in your own community.

Those of you who have heard me speak before know that I like to tell the story of *Saving Private Ryan*. So let me repeat that for those of you who have not heard it. If you've seen the movie you know it's a story of four soldiers who go off to war in World War II. Three of them are killed in combat. And the news of their death is brought to the mother in one visit. The Chief of Staff of the Army is George Marshall, and he decides we're not going to let this mother lose her fourth son. So he orders a rescue mission: Go find Private Ryan, who jumped into Germany behind enemy lines with the 101st Airborne Division, and is guarding a bridge against a much larger and more powerful German force. Captain John Miller with about 10 other soldiers moves out across enemy lines, and it takes them several days to go find Private Ryan. And along the way they lose several of their men. So when he finds Private Ryan, he says to him, "Three of your brothers have been killed in combat, and my orders are to bring you home." Private Ryan refuses. And Captain Miller says, "What are we supposed to tell your mother?" Ryan says, "Tell her I was here. Tell her I'm with the only brothers I have left. There's no way I'm going to leave this bridge." If you've seen the movie you know that Captain Miller dies on that bridge, but just before he dies, he leans over and he whispers into Private Ryan's ear, "Earn this. Earn it." And what he meant was, don't let the service sacrifices of me and my men go without purpose. Lead a purposeful life. The movie flashes

forward 50 years and you find Private John Francis Ryan standing over Captain Miller's grave. He stands up, he salutes, and he turns to his wife and with tears in his eyes, he says, "Tell me I've led a good life. Tell me I'm a good man."

There were nine million Private Ryan's in World War II's Army. There are about 10 percent of that number in today's Army, and every single one of them is a volunteer, and every one of them has been in combat or will see combat, and they just keep coming, stepping up to the plate, 17 years old, 18 years old, some of them were 10 years old on 9/11; have seen nothing but war since then, and they still continue to come.

So we owe it to them to not make the same mistake that we made after Vietnam. We owe it to them to demonstrate that we are behind them as a nation, irrespective of the politics, irrespective of whether you're for war or against it, soldiers, service members serve the nation. Duty first. So help me do that. Help me reawaken America. Help me inspire a Community Covenant signing ceremony in your neighborhood, and let me help you, coach you, on how to do that in a very powerful way.

Please come see me sometime today right outside the gate, right outside the doors. Pick up your covenant that you saw signed yesterday. Read the words and you will see that it is a call to action for you to help with this initiative. And I look forward to the coming year, and I hope that a year from now I can come back on this stage or wherever we are and tell you that we're measuring the number of ceremonies in the thousands now, not the hundreds, and the reason is, because of the engagement and involvement of The American Legion.

Thanks so much for what you do, and I look forward to working with all of you in the coming year. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: As the general leaves, he already knows what I want you to know, that I have given the general my personal pledge to go home to Ames, Iowa; involve the mayor; involve the president of Iowa State University; involve the Army Reserve units that we have there in town, along with the ROTC and the recruiters, and have that Community Covenant signing ceremony, and make it happen in Ames, Iowa. And I would encourage each of you to do the same thing. It's not enough just to sit here and listen. Now we have to go home and we have to do. *(Applause)*

For a number of years The American Legion has been engaged in a battle to save our war memorials from groups such as the ACLU that are determined to use the courts to remove any and all religious symbols from society. We have been fortunate to have friends in this fight; attorneys from the Liberty Legal Institute and the Alliance Defense Fund effectively defend religious freedom, marriage, and family. And just as importantly, train other lawyers to do the same. With us today are the chief counsel of the Liberty Legal Institute, Kelly J. Shackleford, and the president and CEO of the Alliance Defense Fund, Alan Sears. Would you please give them a very warm welcome. *(Applause)*

Address: Alan Sears
President and CEO, Alliance Defense Fund

Good morning. I'm honored to speak to a room full of America's heroes on behalf of the Alliance Defense Fund, ADF. As our friend Kelly Shackelford will explain in a few minutes, the United States Supreme Court this fall term will soon here the Mojave Cross Case. Mojave could have major ramifications for the future of veterans memorials, and the freedom of religious expression all across our great land. We're concerned.

ADF, on behalf of the Department of California has filed a legal brief defending the Old Rugged Cross in the desert. But that battle is just one front in an ongoing war, a war being waged by the ACLU and its comrades. These elitists seek to systematically cleanse our nation of memorials with religious symbols that honor the sacrifices millions have made to preserve our religious freedoms. Because of these brutal attacks on the memory of the fallen, ADF has allied with The American Legion and legal allies including Kelly and the Liberty Legal, in a national campaign to project our national veterans memorials.

The ACLU's war on veterans memorials has slipped by many of our fellow Americans. Knowing how passionate most Americans are about their faith and their heroes, they don't exactly advertise this agenda. On the website of America's number one religious censor you'll find this question, they pose: Does the ACLU want to remove religious symbols from federal cemeteries? Here's how they answer: No. The ACLU has never pursued the removal of religious symbols from personal gravestones. Personal gravestones are the choice of family members, not the choice of government. The ACLU is opposed, however, to the government's sponsoring, endorsing, promoting and financing religious symbols. And of course, who finances the symbols put on Federal cemetery grounds?

Now, the first thing you may notice is that the ACLU, which has been suing to remove countless religious symbols for decades, takes considerable pains not to answer its own question. Let me assure you in 30 years of experience with them, a fuller answer lies in what they don't say. Here they're saying at least for now, that they may not go after the personal grave markers, but they don't talk about the other crosses, the Stars of David and the other religious symbols that adorn countless veterans cemeteries and memorials, including Arlington National Cemetery. What they don't say even for today, is that they won't to go after more public memorials erected on private property, or after more privately funded memorials on public property like the Mojave Cross.

You want to know what such groups are really up to? Right now Alliance Defense Fund lawyers are defending families of slain Utah State Troopers who established a private foundation to fund memorials to honor fallen officers. But these memorials which cost the tax payers exactly nothing are so offensive to one of the ACLU's like-minded organizations, the American Atheists, and the ACLU's one time Salt Lake City legal director, that they've sued to have these cross memorials ripped out of the ground and hidden away. Well that's their way to say thanks to the people who've given their lives to protect us. So we're standing with the fallen troopers families. And that's the mindset we're up against in these battles.

And the ACLU also makes no assurance whatsoever; that its many allies won't go after government funded personal grave markers in veterans cemeteries that they find offensive. Actually, offensive probably isn't the right word here. The friends of the ACLU feel far more strongly than that about these religious memorials. You want to know how they really feel? The co-president of the Freedom From Religion Foundation was asked if her organization would start filing lawsuits to remove memorials at veterans cemeteries in light of the ACLU legal efforts at Mount Soledad and Mojave. She said, such memorials are quote, offensive, unconstitutional, and catch this, despicable. Despicable. Erecting memorials that recognize the faith of our soldiers who died to preserve our freedom and hers is despicable.

She continued, listen please. I wouldn't jump into the crosses and memorials fray until we see what happens with these other cases. The ACLU might feel the same way.

Let's wait and see. Translation: Wait and see if the Supreme Court rules against the Mojave and our other memorials, then there will be a renewed legal blitzkrieg. And I don't use the word blitzkrieg lightly. These groups are on a search and destroy mission to rid our nation of all public displays of faith and religious symbols at veterans cemeteries and memorials on public property, including the Mount Soledad Cross at San Diego. They want the public square stripped of all memories of our nation's faith, its history, and heritage. The only thing standing between the religious markers on these veterans memorials and these radical organizations are a few votes in the Supreme Court, the work of the Alliance Defense Fund, its allies like Kelly and his team at Liberty Legal, and you at The American Legion.

What's next? Will they attack time honored military decorations such the Distinguished Service Cross for using a religious symbol to honor public service? Since you're a federally charted organization, will they file legal attacks against The American Legion itself for proclaiming that you're for God and country the way they've attacked the Boy Scouts for mentioning God in their oath? My hunch is if they do you'll tell them, "bring it on." And be assured that if they're ever so foolish to do such, we will all defend you free of charge. *(Applause)*

Friends, the day of those battles may come soon, but there are some wonderfully effective things you in The American Legion can do right now to prepare for battle and help defeat the ACLU and its anti-memorials allies.

First of all, get informed. Go to the special web sites set up to provide more information on this joint national campaign to defend and protect veterans memorials. That's telladf.org/memorials. Read how we're working together to protect religious symbols at veterans cemeteries across the country that honor our military heroes.

Secondly, inform others. There are now more than 1,300 ADF trained allied lawyers around the nation. You can invite one of those persons at no cost to come and speak to your American Legion state department or local posts, to educate your members on the scope of this battle before it's too late. Many ADF allied attorneys are veterans, and all share your outrage over this assault on our history and heritage.

So, third. Let us hear from you. Notify us of memorials in your community that could come under legal attack by the ACLU and its allies. Not just the ones with crosses and Stars of David, any religious symbols or references can be targeted. Take some digital photos, write down some history, and help us create a national catalog of these memorials. With the information you provide, we can also make a preemptive strike with local officials by informing them that the memorials are indeed constitutional, and that ADF and our allies will defend them, those memorials free of charge if need be.

Finally. Stand, defend, and call for allied legal support. At the first hint of legal trouble that you hear in a newspaper, on a radio program, call. Don't let another case get lost by default. Last month I was once again with some ADF friends including combat veterans visiting the American cemetery at Colleville-sur-Mer in Normandy, France as many of you have done, and I noticed a photo of your national commander there as well.

As the Star Spangled Banner played, we stood humbly to lay a wreath before the main memorial. Over one's shoulder we could glimpse the English Channel with its waves breaking on Omaha Beach, where the water, as you know, turned red on the morning of June 6th from the blood of nearly 3,000 Americans. Over the other shoulder we could see the crosses and the Stars of David all in rows facing America. It marked the

9,386 graves of these brave soldiers who gave their lives to take Europe back from the evil Nazi war machine.

You know, failure simply was not an option for those soldiers that June morning. If they had failed, it would have taken at least a year to launch another invasion attempt, if another invasion was even possible. During that delay, as many of the people, even Eisenhower surmised, probably the last Jews of Europe would have been eliminated; Great Britain would have been further ravaged by rocket attacks; Stalin's armies might have taken much more of Europe into Soviet domination, and only God above knows what the world would look like today. But of course the Americans and our allies did not fail on those beaches that brutal morning, against all odds they prevailed.

And now we are the ones with a mission. The ones for whom failure once again is not an option. Against all odds we too must prevail. We must defend our veterans memorials against the legal big brothers and their religious censors, for if we don't, the memorials and eventually all memory of who and what they memorialized will be gone.

The ACLU crowd, those who see the monuments that honor those heroes as despicable, work against the very freedoms that they claim to support. You know that there is no threat to America's freedom from those who erect crosses and Stars of David to remember those who paid the price. But there is an imminent harm and a threat to our nation from those thieves of our heritage; those who would obliterate from our public life every expression of our nation's history and heritage; and those who would rob us of the memory of the men and women who for God and country sacrificed their own dreams for ours.

Without God, President Dwight David Eisenhower, the Commander of the Normandy invasion, once told this American Legion, without God there can be no American form of government, nor American way of life. Recognition of the Supreme Being is the first and most basic expression of Americanism.

If you agree with the general; if you believe in the freedoms many of you risked your own life for; if you treasure the liberty that's cost so many of our forefathers, our friends, and our heroes the last full measure of devotion, then please enlist in this battle, this effort to preserve our history, our heritage, and our freedom. If we stand together, we can and we will stop the ACLU. Let's all stand together to keep our religious memorials in place and our freedom alive. My time concludes with a short video that asks the question: What about Arlington? The video tells what can happen if we don't stand. Thank you all for your service, and may God continue to bless America and The American Legion. *(Applause)*

...At this time the delegation viewed a video entitled "What About Arlington?"

Thank you. Thank you so very much. Now I would like to introduce a fellow warrior in this battle, Kelly Shackelford. Kelly, and the Liberty Legal Institute have worked hard for The American Legion as legal counsel on cases before the U.S. Supreme Court effecting veterans memorials from 2004 to now. And Kelly is before the court now with an amicus brief for the Legion in the upcoming Mojave Desert Veterans Memorial case to be heard before the Supreme Court which he will speak about and other things. Kelly. *(Applause)*

Address: Kelly J. Shackelford
Chief Counsel, Liberty Legal Institute

Since 2004 the Liberty Legal Institute has represented The American Legion before the Supreme Court to protect from these attacks on our veterans memorials. And I want to point something out. Over five years ago when these attacks started, it was Phil Onderdonk and The American Legion that was the first group that stepped forward and said, "Not on my watch. Not on my watch." *(Applause)* And now we're at the U.S. Supreme Court, and if we win this case and it's decided in the right way, this could end these attacks on veterans memorials. It could bury them six feet under where they deserve to be buried. I want you to view a quick video that will show you what this case is about, and then I'll have a few remarks afterwards.

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

Let me start out with the bad news. It's actually worse than what you just saw. After the court ruled that that memorial had to be torn down, Henry Sandos, the wonderful man that you saw there and had promised the last dying World War I veteran who built that, Henry Sandos stepped forward to the government and said, "I own five acres of private land in this Federal preserve. How about if I give you my five acres if you'll just give this one acre with the memorial back to the veterans?" Congress thought, that's a great idea. A congressional act was passed to do the land transfer. The ACLU found out and they went into court and they said, "Judge, they're trying get around your order. You have to stop this land transfer." And the district court and the court of appeals said, "Yes, we're stopping the land transfer. You cannot give this memorial back to the veterans, it has to be dismantled, destroyed instead." That is the case that the U.S. Supreme Court took. And then on October 7th it will be hearing, and then deciding afterwards.

And it's not just about this one memorial. I mean, think about it. If you have to tear down a seven foot tall veterans memorial in the middle of 1.6 million acres of desert, what does that mean that you're going to have to do with the 24 foot granite cross, the Cross of Sacrifice, in Arlington Memorial Cemetery? What are you going to do about every community in every state in this country that has veterans memorials with crosses and Stars of David and religious imagery? They're all going to have to be next. If a cross in the middle of the desert is offensive and we can't allow it, then all these other memorials are next.

But let me tell you the good news. When this battle was waged, when these attacks came, who took the point? Who took the lead? The American Legion did. You did. *(Applause)* And on October 7th it's you that will be before the U.S. Supreme Court, and I with you. But I need your help. We need the entire country standing together on this, by the time this reaches the U.S. Supreme Court. People need to know. A lot of people don't even know this case is happening. So I want to ask you to do something. Write this down. donttearmedown.com. Give this to your kids, to your grandkids, to your neighbors, to your friends. This is your case about your memorials. We need to spread the word. We need the entire country standing together in just a month and a half from now, and people need to know about this attack. These attacks on veterans memorials is a disgrace. Let's bury them six feet under. Thank you. God bless you. God bless our troops, and God bless the United States of America. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: Our next guest was an anchor and reporter at WRDW, the CBS affiliate in Augusta, Georgia. She won numerous reporting awards, including the Edward R. Murrow Investigative Reporting Award. She is now the executive director of the Central Savannah River Area Wounded Warrior Care Project, a fully funded organization leading the effort to expand the Augusta area's capacity to care for our service members returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. Would you please join me in welcoming Laurie Ott of the Wounded Warrior Care Project. *(Applause)*

Address: Ms. Laurie Ott
CSRA Wounded Warrior Care Project

Good morning. Okay. Where's Virginia? *(Cheers)* Hi, I was born in Norfolk. Where's Delaware? *(Cheers)* Right here. Lived for a short time there. Where's Pennsylvania? *(Cheers)* Scranton, PA, lived there too. You can tell I'm from a military family. We moved around just a little bit. Thirteen times in 11 years. Where's Maryland? *(Cheers)* Eastern shore of Maryland. I grew up on the eastern shore of Maryland; went to school in Washington, D.C. My first broadcast job was in Montana. I see you folks right there. KTVH Helena, Montana, we all went to hell in a hand basket. *(Laughter)* We're going to have fun this morning; aren't we? Okay. I'm here to share with you some great news. Of course now I live in the great state of Georgia. Are you awake back there Georgia? *(Cheers)* Awake over here too.

Well, it is truly a privilege and a pleasure to be with you all this morning. My thanks go out to Commander Rehbein, Adjutant Wheeler, distinguished guests, delegates, thank you so much for asking me to be here with you all, to share with you what we are doing in Georgia, specifically what we're doing in Augusta, Georgia.

It's interesting, when you say Augusta, Georgia, most folks know us one week a year when the world's attention, the world's eyes, the world's broadcasters are with us for one week a year for a little tournament we have every April called the Masters Golf Tournament. I know you've seen it on television, and we're proud of that tournament. But we're also very proud of the mission already underway in Augusta and in Georgia to care for service members coming from back from Iraq and Afghanistan. It's a huge mission. Part of my mission, what I want to do here this morning is empower you all with the facts about Georgia, and specifically Augusta. What we have and what we see as the path forward for increasing collaboration and cooperation and communication, and coordinating these resources so that our service members and our veterans and their family members have the best outcomes possible. Are you with me? *(Applause)*

Okay. Well, also I would like to thank Mr. Charlie Knox and Commander Butch Adams from Georgia, and Commander Fred Zamora from Post 205 in Augusta, Georgia, because I know without them I would not be standing in front of you today. So my thanks also to you gentlemen.

How on earth did I go from broadcast television to doing what I do now? Well, it's an interesting story. I'll give you the *Readers Digest* version. And by the way, I have a speech that I've prepared but I'm not going to read it, I'm just going to tell you how it happened. If anybody wants the speech, I would be happy to email it to you or fax it, if they want to see the speech as it's written.

I did a lot of really interesting stories as a broadcast journalist. I got to cover James Brown at the Super Bowl. I got to be in the green room with James Brown at the Super Bowl. Let me tell you, that is an interesting experience. I also got to go with the Pentagon

to Bosnia to cover the peacekeeping mission in Bosnia. I met a lot of Georgia Guardsmen and Reservists there. It's interesting how when you show up with a Channel 12 microphone flag in Bosnia in the middle of Tuzla-Main, Base Eagle Main, somebody screamed out my name, somebody from Georgia knew we were there.

I also had the opportunity to go up after 9/11 and deliver Augusta's Prayer and Care Crusade check of a million dollars to the Twin Towers Fund. Most folks don't know it, but Augusta, Georgia was the first community in America to put money into Rudy Giuliani's Twin Towers Fund for the victims of 9/11 and for their families.

But no story touched me as much as an assignment I got in March of 2007 when I was sent to the Fisher House on Fort Gordon in Augusta to do a story. My executive producer sent me out. He said, "I'd like you to go out and do a story about the Fisher House." And my husband and I had actually contributed to the Fisher House but I had never set foot inside of it, and when I did, I was introduced to a young woman, a 23 year old Specialist in the Army who had lost her leg in an IED blast in Iraq. And I sat down and I interviewed this young Specialist and her mother. And she told me about what happened to her in Iraq, how she was the seventh truck in a seven truck convoy; how she had been blown up; the bomb had gone off right under the cab of her truck; she had died twice on the helicopter to Balad; she went from Balad to Landstuhl, Germany; she went from Landstuhl, Germany to a military treatment facility in Washington, D.C. It just so happens that this military treatment facility was Walter Reed, and this was two weeks after that series of *Washington Post* reports on what was happening at Walter Reed, which really showed an overload of patients. Mold in Building 18 was the focus of all those broadcast stories. But let me tell you, we could fix that with some mildew root. What it really pointed out was the bureaucratic battlefield that our warriors and their families face upon return. But the battlefields in Iraq and Afghanistan are nothing compared to the bureaucratic battlefield they face when they get home, which is unacceptable. *(Applause)*

So I was interviewing this 23 year old Specialist, and she was telling me about Walter Reed, and she was telling me that the inpatient care was awesome and incredible. The doctors, the nurses, her orthopedic surgeon, everything was fantastic until it came time for her to get outpatient care. At that time their PT clinic, their physical therapy clinic was crowded, and she could only get squeezed in for one session of PT a day, and she never learned to use her prosthetic leg. A 23 year old woman never learning to use her prosthetic leg in the 11 months that she was at that military treatment facility.

This is a young woman from Camden, South Carolina who was offered the chance to transfer to Augusta, Georgia to the active duty rehab unit that's located inside our VA Medical Center. And I'm going to go back to that in a minute. But I want to tell you this is the nation's only active duty rehab unit located inside a VA. I'm going to tell you how it's important; how it got started and what's significant about it, and why we deserve an expanded mission there.

But she got transferred to Augusta. First of all she wasn't afraid to come south; isn't that nice? She wasn't afraid to come to a VA; even nicer, and at this point in the interview her mother pipes up that she arrived on a walker, a 23 year old young woman on a walker. And then they said within three weeks of being in Augusta at our active duty rehab unit, she was off her walker and on her prosthetic leg full time. *(Applause)*

Did anybody get a little chill bump there or a little hmm feeling when I said that? Maybe. I got that feeling when I was sitting there interviewing her. And I said I've got to

go over and find out what this active duty rehab unit is doing; how it's doing it; and why it works for this young warrior. And I'm here to tell you that that Specialist is not the only warrior who's gotten the gold standard of care in Augusta, Georgia at this unit. We treated 640 soldiers, Marines, sailors, airmen and coastguardsmen in this VA DoD collaborative unit.

And I'm here to tell you how it was developed. In 2004 two people got together, and this is a real testament to servant leadership, two people got together and said, "How could we work collaboratively, how could we work together to meet the needs of people returning from Iraq and Afghanistan?" And those two people were the Commanding General of Eisenhower VA Medical Center and a service line executive at the Charlie Norwood VA Medical Center, that's our VA in Augusta. And they got together, two human beings, and talked. Six weeks later they had a plan to roll out the active duty rehab unit. Six weeks later they accepted their first patient in February of 2004. One of those folks you may know, General Eric Schoomaker, now our Army Surgeon General. The other is now the late Rose Trincher. Dr. Rose Trincher was the service line executive. But it is an example of what can happen when two large agencies, large bureaucracies get together on a local level and decide to A, see the needs, and then B, meet the needs.

This unit was designed in 2004. Dr. Trincher designed it with a number of beds, some of those beds have gone unused, we're starting to get more patients in, which is wonderful because when you're talking about service members from the Southeastern United States, where are the Southern Bloc grits breakfast folks? Talking about the Southern Bloc. *(Response from delegates.)* Okay. So we want to get folks closer to home to heal, right? Isn't that intuitive? Doesn't that make sense? So we submit to you that Georgia is perfectly geographically located to treat our service members from the Southeastern United States much closer to home.

Now this was the genesis of the project that I head up. We asked Senator Isakson to bring a field hearing of the Senate VA Committee, which he did. There we heard testimony from a warrior who was slated for amputation at a different military treatment facility. This is a Special Forces soldier who was ambushed in Afghanistan, and in Landstuhl the decision was made to send him to a military treatment facility for the amputation of at least one arm, possibly two. Someone in Landstuhl, Germany stopped that transfer and said, "We've got Colonel Paul Cutting at Eisenhower Army Medical Center"—and isn't that a great name for a hand surgeon—"Colonel Paul Cutting in Augusta, Georgia, at Eisenhower Army Medical Center, let's send this Special Forces soldier there and let's see what happens."Well, I'm here to tell you that last year I ate dinner next to this Master Sergeant and he was cutting his steak with both of these [indicating hands]. He went through dozens and dozens of surgery at Eisenhower Army Medical Center, and then he went through almost three years of rehab in our active duty rehab unit, and he has these [indicating hands] as a result of it.

Okay. So this is a DoD VA collaboration. This is an example of partnership and collaboration and relationship. That's the basis for this project, looking at where there are partnerships and collaborative opportunities and how to expand on them, and how to bring our community in, because sometimes it's a little hard to get into those agencies; how to bring our community in and how to do what we can to assist them in their mission and how to expand and increase partnerships and collaborations that serve those folks coming back from Iraq and Afghanistan, and our veterans and their families. As a result, we've been able to communicate and channel community philanthropic spirit. And in this

tough economy we've raised nearly 1.8 million dollars for our second Fisher House. It's going to be a 20 suite Fisher House. It's going to be state of the art. It's going to be right there on the campus of the active duty rehab unit where Uptown VA Medical Center is. And we're excited because you know folks heal much faster when their families are bedside. We know this. This makes sense.

This is actually how I got hooked up with The American Legion in the first place. That's how I met Commander Zamora as he came over and wanted to attach my teeny tiny wagon to The American Legion to figure out how we could channel the community philanthropic spirit to get this Fisher House done. That was a little bit more than a year ago and we are now done.

So it's the Fisher House. But what else is it? Well, when folks go into combat, I don't have to tell you all this, sometimes there can be an issue in community or family reintegration. Sometimes it can be a little hard to reconnect after combat. So what we did, the CSRA Wounded Warrior Care Project started collaborative marriage enrichment workshops with the Army chaplains on Fort Gordon in our Warrior Transition Battalion, and also the Charlie Norwood VA Medical Center chaplains. And I found a federal magistrate in Augusta who lost his leg in 1968 in Vietnam, and he came by and he gave a full explanation of why his first marriage failed and why his second marriage does not. And it was like story time at the library. He has them eating out of the palm of his hand. And he made a connection, one generation of veteran to the newest generation of veteran, about what skills are needed to stay connected to a spouse. Since then, our Charlie Norwood VA Medical Center chaplains have trained 35 chaplains and chaplain's assistants from across the country in this marriage enrichment curriculum. So the marriage enrichment workshops in Augusta, Georgia have gone viral. You will see them in your states very soon.

The other thing is that the President of the United States is going to see this marriage enrichment work very shortly also. We found out last week that the VA Central Office is coming down to video tape the next retreat, which is over Labor Day weekend, and they're going to be interviewing these couples about what the marriage retreat and what the support group means for them, and I have been told that this will make it in a video for President Obama. So it's our hope that these marriage enrichment workshops delivering relationship skills and communication skills after combat will make it into every state in the Union.

So, we've done marriage enrichment workshops. What else have we done? Well, in our gap analysis we're looking at the process of transition. And you all know better than anybody, going from active duty status through the MEB/PEB process, through your medical board process to becoming a civilian, to becoming a veteran, that there are a lot of gaps along the way. There are a lot of cracks to fall into. So what we've done is we formed a transition roundtable. We invite the entire community along with our Army Warrior Transition Battalion where we have 400 wounded warriors on Fort Gordon, and they're also overseeing command and control of our active duty rehab unit. The Charlie Norwood VA, the Department of Labor, The American Legion, who so nicely brings with them folks like staffers from Senator Isakson's office and Senator Chambliss' office, and other organizations. And we're looking at the process of transition where the gaps are and how to fill the gaps.

Results of that are a job fair. We did a collaborative job fair with the Army and the Department of Labor, focused and dedicated to soldiers with traumatic brain injury, so

that they could go to the job fair ahead of anybody else and meet with 50 employers. They got their resumes done. They got interview skills. And at least one of them got a job offer. So employment is important.

Also as a result of this we've been working with the Army Corps of Engineers. They contacted us after the NBC Nightly News did a little story on Augusta. I got a phone call after we were on the NBC Nightly News with Brian Williams, if anybody saw it, it was done by Colonel Jack Jacobs, Medal of Honor recipient, who you all may know. And Colonel Jacobs came down and did a story about this unique unit in Augusta, Georgia, and he said, "This should be a model for the nation." And he should know, he is a product of the military health care system. And my phone rang after the story aired, and it was someone in archeological curation in St. Louis, Missouri, wanting to know if he could bring a funded job program to employ veterans in this program to curate our national patrimony from the Army Corps of Engineers. And I said absolutely.

So starting in October we have a million dollar job program that's starting. It's our hope that it gets adopted as a national program. We're one of the pilot sites for this. But think about it. What's one of the most important things, if you're not going to be in the 82nd Airborne anymore, what are you going to do? What are you going to do if the truck driver job you had before you went to Iraq or Afghanistan has now been downsized and not there for you when you come back as a Guardsman or Reservist? So we think this employment and training program is a key to helping folks in transition.

In addition, we have a technology initiative that we started with the National Cristina Foundation. This group takes refurbished technology and puts it in the hands of folks with disabilities. They hadn't done a whole lot of work with veterans, and we got connected up with them and we got a grant for 125 computers which we're going to use in a certification process and we're going to give the veterans who get certified, laptops and computers. I am ecstatic to report to you that Georgia, the Georgia American Legion will be one of our pilot sites for this technology initiative, and we're going to put computers in the posts of The American Legion in the Department of Georgia. *(Applause)* And hats off to your leadership, Mr. Charlie Knox and Commander Butch Adams and others who have been spearheading this effort. It's going to make a tremendous difference. There are a lot of different ways to get access to benefits, lots of different ways to get access to programs. We see The American Legion as uniquely qualified to be doing this outreach, connecting up this generation of service members and their families, with the benefits and services and camaraderie they didn't even know was there. It's really about closing the gaps, closing the loops.

Something else we've done, is we've formed a research consortium for traumatic brain injury. And this brings our Army hospital; our VA Medical Center; our Medical College of Georgia; the Savannah River National Lab, which is the Department of Energy site over in South Carolina. Where are my friends from South Carolina? And also a telemedicine group on Fort Gordon. And they are collaboratively going after $600 million of VA TBI, traumatic brain injury research funding that was announced last year. They've already submitted a $1.3 million proposal. We've got more in the pipeline. So what is this really? It's really bringing people around the table, getting them to communicate, cooperate, and collaborate for the benefit of the service members and veterans and family members we should be serving.

And ultimately when you look at it, this is really everybody's job. I've had all kinds of meetings with all kinds of people in this process, and I've been told time and time

again that the Department of Defense can't reintegrate people into communities. That the VA is there but they need help with outreach. And really that's everybody's job. It's everybody's job to communicate and reach out to this generation of service member and veteran and their families; to get them connected; to embrace them with employment opportunities; to embrace them with training opportunities; to embrace them with relationship, marriage, and family help when they need it. The Fisher House is a wonderful thing that brings family bedside. It's getting back into community where some wheels fall off. So I'm here to tell you the good news about the partnerships and collaborations that we've started in Augusta, Georgia; how the American Legion Department of Georgia is intricately involved in our initiatives.

But I'm also here to thank you all and use you all as sounding boards. As you see these marriage enrichment workshops coming to your states, one of the chaplains from Indiana stood up at the workshop when he was getting trained in Augusta, and he said, "Well, this is wonderful for Augusta, but what about Indianapolis?" And I said, "You need to connect with your Indianapolis American Legion; you need to get connected up with your posts because those are your sounding boards. Those are the folks that are going to help you reach out and read this generation of service member."

It's really very simple. We submit that our wounded warriors and our veterans and their family members deserve excellence in return for their service. And we aim to see that they get it. Thank you all. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: The USO was founded in 1941 by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt to integrate the efforts of multiple agencies supporting U.S. troops in World War II, and continues to lift the spirits of our service members and their families in more than 130 centers around the world. On a personal note regarding those centers, as a parent, putting one of your children on a plane halfway around the world to join a Navy squadron, knowing that they are very self reliant and they can make it, but having the reassurance that that USO center is out there if trouble develops to be there to help, that reassurance is very important, and those centers perform an invaluable service.

With us today is the CEO and president of the United Services Organization. A 1975 graduate of the U. S. Military Academy at West Point, he earned Airborne and Ranger qualifications as a U. S. Army infantry officer. He holds a masters in economics from the University of Missouri Kansas City, and a masters in public administration from the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard. Please give a warm welcome to Sloan Gibson. *(Applause)*

Address: Sloan Gibson
President, United Services Organization

Your USO is changing. It's changing because the needs of our troops and their families are changing. Among the troops who need us most these days are in the most remote locations, forward deployed in small units in the most austere and dangerous conditions. We reached them through our USOs In A Box, transportable USO centers that can be deployed on trucks or helicopters to let troops at a forward operating base watch a movie or get on the internet or call home to connect with loved ones. We reach them with USO To Go, delivering the things they asked for. Video games, sports equipment, portable DVD players and DVDs, snack foods. We reach them with our

Mobile Electronic Gaming Systems. Picture a large rugged picnic cooler like container with electronic games and a DVD player and a high definition projector inside. You help us reach them by supporting our care package program, nearly two million individual messages of support handed out at airport and mobilization points as troops deploy.

Think about this: We have what may be the most married military today at any time since the Civil War, and the cycle of multiple deployments is putting these families under incredible stress. We shorten the distance to home with a private telephone network. In Kuwait and Iraq and Afghanistan troops can connect on the internet, and they have made more than a half million free phone calls home just since April. Working with United Through Reading we make it possible for parents to read books on video for their children, and then we mail the video and the brand new book home to the family. We'll do 50,000 of these recordings this year alone, keeping moms, dads, and children connected.

Because deployments are hard on families left behind, we teamed up with Sesame Workshop. Last year Elmo and his friends took their live show, created just for military families, to more than 40 bases in the U.S., helping kids deal with their parents' deployment. When I had the opportunity to see the show in person, as soon as it started I made my way to the front of the auditorium so that I could look back up at the audience. What I saw was sheer delight in the faces of those children and the parents that were there, too. And in a quiet moment when Elmo asked the kids in the audience are you ever sad when mom or dad are away, this little chorus of voices responded, "Yeah." Then I knew we had something very special there. So in just a few weeks the Sesame gang begins their round the world USO tour to Europe, to the Pacific and the Far East, and then back here to the States, making a difference for our military families.

The American Legion knows that more troops are surviving injuries on the battlefield than ever before. That's great news. But there are challenges. Men and women are returning whose lives and the lives of their families are turned upside down. Your USO is reaching out to them. We want to make a difference, and with your help we're doing just that. The Legion has helped our wounded warriors at the Army hospital in Landstuhl, Germany. We're there too. Your USO Warrior Center there provides a place for troops recovering from their injuries. You were there with us through Operation Comfort Warriors. You have seen their needs, their families' needs, as recovery from wounds and injuries take place. You're there when and where you need to be, and I thank you for that.

You stand with us in the war zones too. Commander, I know you were there when we took Operation Proper Exit to Iraq just a couple of weeks ago. Six troopers, all amputees, went back to where they had been wounded; back to achieve some closure around their traumatic experience. They were able to leave this time under their own power. You saw the healing, and you brought that message back.

Your USO will work with you to support troops and their families wherever they serve because they serve us all. We'll join you in your ongoing efforts to support mental health counseling for troops who need it, without stigma, without threat to their career. We join you in letting the nation know that we cannot sit by while brave warriors struggle with serious emotional problems. Each of us has the responsibility and obligation to find ways to prevent suicide in the military.

Finally, I want to thank members of the Legion and the Auxiliary who continue to help us as donors and as volunteers at our centers around the world. You're there to greet

troops in Dallas and Atlanta as they come home on R&R, and you're there to extend your gratitude to those going back to war. You give the most precious gift of all, your time, at centers from Florida to Washington State.

We need your help even more because your USO is growing. We continue to open new centers in the U.S. Just this past year at Fort Drum, Fort Carson, Fort Bragg, and Fort Benning. Within the next few months we'll open centers at Fort Riley, Kansas, a second center at Fort Bliss, Texas, a center at Columbia Airport in South Carolina and Richmond, Virginia. We just renovated centers in St. Louis and in Houston. And at Dover Air Force Base we are renovating both of our existing centers there, and building an additional center to create a special place for families of the fallen who come to Dover to witness the final return of their loved ones.

You may not know that your USO at Dover has supported every dignified transfer for the past 20 years. With more families attending dignified transfers now we're working with the Air Force and the other services to assist these families at every step of the way as they go from their home to Dover and back. Wherever they are along that route, we want to be there for them.

At each of these centers you stand with us to remind troops that America supports them. Overseas we're opening or renovating centers. Daegu and Osan, Korea; Futenma in Okinawa; Grafenwoehr, Germany; Baghdad and Basra, Iraq; Bagram in Kandahar, Afghanistan. And we've renovated all three of our centers in Kuwait. Where we can't open centers we'll place USOs In A Box at forward operating bases in Afghanistan or other remote locations like Djibouti. Through your support we let our troops know that America supports them.

Your USO is changing, because the needs of our troops and families are changing, and because their service and their sacrifice demand that we give them our very best. We could not deliver this message of support without you right there besides us. Thank you all, thank you for all you do, and thank you for the honor and the privilege of being here with you today. Thank you. *(Applause)*

...At this time a short video was shown to the Convention delegates.

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: Ladies and gentlemen, the video you just saw only reinforces the wisdom of Resolution No. 94, unanimously passed by delegates at our National Convention in Phoenix last year. The American Legion is committed to assembling and maintaining a strong national missile defense.

With us today is one of the gentlemen responsible for the documentary *33 Minutes*. He is a leading expert in defense and homeland security for the Heritage Foundation. He is a retired U. S. Army Lieutenant Colonel, and if you watch the cable news shows you have probably seen him several times before. Please join me in welcoming Doctor James Jay Carafano from the Heritage Foundation. *(Applause)*

Address: Dr. James Jay Carafano, Senior Research Fellow
Defense and Homeland Security, The Heritage Foundation

Well, the first order of business is I have to recognize the two most important people in the entire room, and they are two delegates from the State of Florida, two veterans of the Korean War, and they are my mom and my dad. *(Applause)*

And what I'm about to talk to you about for me is a very personal and deeply emotional issue. In my 25 years in the Army I spent a good portion of my career building nuclear weapons, testing them, planning attacks that would kill millions of people. And I went to bed every night understanding the consequences of what I was doing. And I understood it was important to do, but it was important protecting our nation and preserving freedom in the world. But like everyone, you always have a dream for your generation. Every generation of Americans hopes that they are going to do something in their lifetime to make a difference in the world whether it's to birth a nation or heal a nation after a civil war, or win World War II. And I heard the vision of Ronald Reagan when he first introduced the idea of missile defense, and I could see in my lifetime where the men and women in uniform wouldn't have to do what I do. They wouldn't have to go to bed every night worrying about the thought of a holocaust. And Reagan proved that there is virtually no other instrument available to the human race to limit the threat of nuclear war or nuclear destruction than robust missile defense systems.

The story I have to tell you today only has three facts to it. The threat hasn't changed, the need hasn't changed; the program has changed significantly, dramatically in the last six months. A program that has been built up over ten years through Republican and Democratic presidents, and administrations and Congresses controlled by Republicans and Democrats, approved and funded by the Pentagon every year.

The threat hasn't changed. Well, what do I mean? The threat is Iran and North Korea developing long range ballistic missile and nuclear weapon programs. And if anything, that threat has dramatically accelerated. In the last six months North Korea has conducted more long range missile tests than its entire history. 70 percent of the long range missile tests conducted by North Korea have happened in the last six months, and they have conducted a nuclear weapons test. And Iran has successfully put a satellite in orbit. And if you know anything about physics at all, the technologies that you need to successfully orbit a satellite are exactly—they are precisely the same technologies that you need to deliver a long range nuclear weapon. And we have just seen a report this week that within three or four years, faster than we believed, Iran will have a long range missile, and potentially a nuclear weapon to put on it.

And it is not just the North Korean and the Iranian programs that we have to worry about. Every successful North Korean test, every successful time Iran advances its programs, that is advertising. Both these countries have an interest in marketing these weapons, the most desirable weapons on the face of the planet earth. And every time they make a success, they are developing new customers that are going to buy these things. And none of these countries live in happy neighborhoods. And I can tell you this: Not one expert in the world believes that the neighbors of Iran and North Korea are going to stand by and watch those countries get nuclear weapons and not get their own nuclear weapons to respond to them. We are literally on the verge of a new nuclear arms race, where within a decade we could see dozens of nuclear powers all armed with long range weapons, all armed with nuclear weapons, facing off against each other. This is actually a more terrifying world than we envisioned during the Cold War.

So the threat hasn't changed. The threat is continuing to march on. The need hasn't changed. The need is to defend freedom. That includes our allies overseas, our bases overseas, and it also includes defending the United States of America, every single American, from the threat of ballistic missile attack. And not just today, not just a year from now, not just during my administration or during my term in Congress, but for

decades and decades to come, until the scourge of nuclear ballistic missiles are something that people read about in the history books. The threat hasn't changed, the need hasn't changed. Well, what has changed?

The program that we have to defend us has changed in last six months, and it has changed dramatically. We actually made this film over a year ago before presidential elections, and really to just remind Americans that we were on a path to building the kinds of defenses that we need. What we have seen in the last six months is pretty remarkable. The Pentagon plans a 15 percent cut to the ballistic missile program. Now, ballistic missile spending is less than two percent of the entire defense budget, so obviously it has nothing to do with saving money. But a 15 percent is pretty dramatic. If you don't think it is, I want you to take your home budgets, all right, and cut 15 percent and pay your bills next month. See how you do.

And what is most disturbing is what is being cut, because what is being cut are systems that directly defend the United States. Let me say that again: What is being cut are the systems that are directly responsible for defending the homeland against missile attack, and the future systems that would limit and frustrate the proliferation of missiles. So we all believe the words that we want proven and cost-effective missile defense, but if you actually look at what is being done, it's actually the opposite of that. We had 30 missiles protecting the United States based in Alaska and California. We were going to go to 44. The decision was we're not. We're going to have 30. Thirty is plenty. Now, what they didn't tell you is not only are they not going to get an additional dozen missiles, but a third of the silos that our missiles are based in are wearing out, and there was no money in the budget to pay for that. So we might have 30 missiles, but ladies and gentlemen we weren't going to have 30 missiles to defend America. So if this program had gone through as projected, next year we would have one third less missiles than we have to defend the United States than we have today.

We were going to build a missile defense system in Western Europe. That decision has been put on hold. We're going to replace that with something else. Well, ladies and gentlemen, there is no practical alternative to putting a missile defense system in Western Europe that can protect both all of Europe, including our allies and major bases in Western Europe, and provide additional protection to the United States against Iran. So that was going to be done with proven technologies, proven missiles and proven radars, and we're going to replace it with something else. Well, the experts will tell you and the Pentagon will actually admit, there is no proven cost-effective alternative. And if Iran does indeed have a program in three to four years, there will be no defense against those missiles.

We also cut all the future programs that were going to attack missiles in the earliest stages of when they're fired, when they're most vulnerable. So what we have done is we have adapted a strategy that is going to provide us the minimal missile defense as possible. And here is the problem: What we have done is provide an enormous incentive to the North Koreans and the Iranians to move their programs ahead faster, because we've set a bar now that is so low that within three or four years they're going to be able to jump over it. And once they jump over it we will be playing catch up. And we live in a world today where we don't have a "just in time" industrial base anymore. When we eliminate these missile programs, the scientists and the engineers and the factories that build them, they are going to be gone. And if next year we decide that we got it wrong

and we really needed more robust missile defenses, it will take us four or five or six years to rebuild that capability.

We are standing at the threshold of having been able to see Reagan's dream of a world in which the United States and its friends and allies, and freedom were protected against ballistic missiles. And we are standing on the threshold within the next year of watching that dream disappear.

So I leave you with two things that you can do. This is a full length documentary on missile defense. There have been screenings shown around the country. There have only been about 200 screenings. By next fall there will be 700 screenings. That's about 200 more than Al Gore's movie got. And a lot of people ask me, they say, well, why don't you just put it on HBO—as if HBO would ever show it; right? You know, why don't you just put it on television, why don't you just put it on Netflix? Well, there is a difference. When you watch a movie in a room with other people, those other people are your fellow citizens and your neighbors, and you feel compelled to talk about and act on that issue. This is our version of the tea party. So the first thing we want you to do is to organize a screening of the film, attend a screening of the film, encourage people to get together and talk about this issue.

The answer to this is going to come from America; it's not going to come from Washington. Washington and the Pentagon have already said what they're going to do. They're going to eliminate these programs. If that's going to be stopped, the American people have to be heard. If the American people are going to be heard, they have to be informed. And they—they have to decide how they are going to do this.

So the second thing you can do is there is a petition that calls for fully funding defense and missile defense. There are 100,000 signatures already in just a couple of weeks. It was started by Newt Gingrich and Mitt Romney and a couple of other interested folks in Washington. That's pretty significant when you think we have been doing some work on health care, which you may have heard some people are concerned about that. But 86,000 people looked at our health care stuff; 100,000 people signed on to the defense spending pledge. And that's an issue that has gotten virtually no press, no interest.

So Americans really do care. So you can get to both of these things by going to the website heritage.org. So when you go to heritage.org there are two buttons in the corner. One will take you to *33 Minutes*. It will give you all the information about the film—it's an hour long full length documentary—how you can attend a screening, how you can organize a screening, how you can get information about missile defense, how you can share that information with others. So it's a one stop resource to find out about how you can use *33 Minutes* to organize your community to speak out on this issue. And there is another button on there that you can sign the petition. You can sign the petition online, and you can share that with other folks and get them to sign it online too. So I leave you with a great mission, but I also give you two instruments to do something about that.

Thomas Jefferson said, "The price of freedom is eternal vigilance," and that's never been more true than it is today. For all of your sacrifices and all your commitments, and all of the wonderful things that you have done for this nation in and out of uniform—tough. Your mission doesn't end. I ask you to join with me in waking up and alerting Americans to this really important issue, and share with them the instruments that we have to let Washington know what we think about defending this nation against the holocaust. Thank you, ladies and gentlemen. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: The Chair recognizes Harold Barnett of Georgia, 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)
Dale Barnett, Georgia, Chairman

Forty-two members of the Credentials and Internal Affairs Committee Section III (Membership), considered no resolutions.

Ken Dittenber (MI) nominated Harold "Dale" Barnett (GA), seconded by Don Schulenberg (OK) as Chairman. Motion carried. John Pellegrini (MT) nominated Gerald Goetzinger (SD) as Secretary. This was seconded by Kenneth Mueller (TX). Motion carried.

Delegation made a motion that the Chairman and Secretary be authorized to sign the report of the Committee and that the 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 Delegation. Motion carried.

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN BARNETT: As a duly elected delegate to this Convention I recommend the approval of this report.

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: You've heard the motion is there a second? ...*Second.* Having heard the motion and the second, discussion? Hearing none, all those in favor of the motion signify by sign of aye. Those opposed, say no. Motion is carried. The report of Credentials and Internal Affairs-Membership is adopted.

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: And that brings us to the time for the membership awards. The departments and the individuals who will be joining us on stage took membership to another level in 2009. Membership is the single most important element to our strength. That strength has been made stronger by the efforts of these departments and individuals that are about to be recognized. You've heard me say several times, just again today, just now, membership leads to strength. But strength leads to those resources that we needed so badly in some of those fights, those resources that we had because of the membership strength of this organization.

Partnerships with the United States Recruiting Command, Active and Reserve Military Components, Freedom Team Salute, and with programs and activities such as The American Legion Riders, Team Johnson Racing, Heroes to Hometowns, Operation Comfort Warriors, Community Covenant and many others have expanded the opportunity for The American Legion to reach out to all veterans and their families.

Couple that with our continued commitment of service to veterans, their families and our communities, and you can clearly see why The American Legion's growth potential is nearly unlimited. Each year brings new challenges, but with the help of those being recognized today and those of you in the audience, we can have a successful membership program. It is an exciting time.

And it is now my pleasure to present a number of membership awards. I would ask that National Vice Commander Jim Davis assume the duties at the podium for the reading of the winners, and as each winner is recognized that the National Vice Commander responsible for that area join me as we congratulate them.

Presentation: Department Membership Awards
James W. Davis, West Virginia, National Vice Commander

We all know there are places where we develop and start a new post. Places where The American Legion does not have a presence in the community. This past year, one department recognized this need and took post development and revitalization efforts to a new level. The Department of Arizona started seven new posts this year. A plaque is presented to the Department Commander Henry Branch, Department Adjutant John Aldecoa, and Department Membership Chairman Jeri Strande for these efforts. Please give them a round of applause for their efforts. *(Applause)*

The O. L. Bodenhamer Trophy is presented to the department that led The American Legion in traditional membership on the report date of June 14. This department just missed being 100 percent. They obtained 99.55 percent of their goal by Flag Day. They were the first department to reach 100 percent of their membership goal before the delegate strength date based on traditional membership. The department that is the recipient of the O. L. Bodenhamer trophy is the also the winner of the General Henri Gouraud Trophy. This trophy is awarded for being the first department in category five to reach its membership goal. Ladies and gentlemen, please give a round of applause to the Department of Maine. The presentation is to the Department Commander John Doyle, Membership Chairman Andrew Olson, and Past Department Adjutant Ron Sailor.

This next department finished number one overall by the delegate strength membership report. They are also a recipient of the General Henri Gouraud Trophy because they were the first department to exceed their membership goal in category six.
Please join me in welcoming the Department of Puerto Rico. This presentation is to the Department Commander Luis A. Figueroa-Ramirez, the Department Membership Chairman Alberto Rodriguez, and Department Adjutant Michael Quiles. Congratulations, and thank you for all your efforts. *(Applause)*

Our next presentation is the District Commander's Race to the Top award. As always, this competition was a tough one that came down to just one one-hundredth of a percentage point in each category. Out of the five categories there were four winners. Please welcome these District Commanders:

Category IV, which is districts from 5,000 to 7,499 members, Lynn Rollins, Department of Georgia.

Category III, 3,000 to 4,999 members, Rick Hoglund, Department of Georgia.

Category II, which is from 1,500 to 2,999, fellow Marine Randy Brown, Department of North Carolina.

Category I districts consist of 15 to 1,499 members. Our Category I winner, Ralph Dial, Department of Nevada, passed away before winning this award. His wife, Bernadine Dial, is here to accept the award for all of his hard work in 2008-2009.

Those District Commanders were presented with a new Legion cap, a golf shirt and a shadowbox. We sincerely appreciate their hard work and dedication. Thank you.

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: The Consolidated Post Report is a summary of what The American Legion posts have accomplished in their communities. It is an opportunity to tell the story of your post in an easy to fill out form. Just as important, we are required by our charter, given by Congress, to report annually on the work of The American Legion. For the past 17 years the average response rate has been around 50 percent. That means that only half of the posts have been reporting their activities. When I testified before Congress in September, the data from these reports was

used as part of my testimony. Our response rate this year stayed nearly the same as 2008 at 59 percent, with 8,309 posts reporting out of 14,151. As you can see, there is much room for improvement.

Those department commanders that met the challenge of a 75 percent response rate were Arizona, California, Georgia, and Maryland. I think they all deserve your applause, a large round of applause. *(Applause)*

I have asked those departments that exceeded the challenge to join me on stage today for special recognition. Will National Vice Commander Harley Ray assume the duties at the podium for the reading of the winners?

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER RAY: At this time I will present these plaques to the following Department Commanders: Thomas Mattice, Department of Idaho; Mike Wood, Department of Mexico; Elmer Palmer, Department of Montana; William Crosier, Jr., Department of Nebraska; Leslie Clevinger, Department of Virginia; Richard Langenbach, Department of Washington; David Hall, Department of West Virginia; James Reigel, Department of Wisconsin; and Stephen Rennells, Department of Wyoming. *(Applause)*

Presentation: National Emergency Fund Awards
David K. Rehbein, Iowa, National Commander

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: The National Emergency Fund is perhaps one of the most visible ways we demonstrate our pride and purpose. We accomplish this through our commitment to our veterans, to our fellow members in those times of natural disaster. During the challenge year, based on the dates that the national commander is in office, The American Legion gave out $72,170 in grant monies to Legion family members for the disasters experienced during that year. At that same time we raised over $265,000. It is great to know that when a Legion member needs help, the Legion family will step up and give without reservation. And it is because of your continued giving that we are able to sustain this fund. I think all of us need to give a rousing round of applause to those donors, and I would ask you to join me in that round of applause. *(Applause)*

Those department commanders who were the top fund raisers in their respective categories determined by membership size will receive a plaque. We have six of those department commanders being recognized today. At this time we will present their plaques, and I would ask National Vice Commander Jim LaCoursiere to assume the duties at the podium for reading the winners.

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER LACOURSIERE: The recipients of the awards: Edward Bertrand, Department of New York; Gail Murdock, Department of Maryland; Fae Casper, Department of Georgia; Archie Boyette, Department of Louisiana; Ricardo Hidalgo, Department of New Mexico; and Stephen Rennells, Department of Wyoming.

Congratulations to each and every one of you for your hard work. Please don't stop the fundraising efforts because we never know where disasters will strike again. Remember that each and every dollar in donations to the National Emergency Fund stays in the National Emergency Fund.

This year we also introduced the National Emergency Fund Gold, Silver, and Bronze awards to showcase the exemplified spirit of mutual helpfulness by providing assistance and support in their communities after a natural disaster took place. Six posts submitted entries this year, and the top three winners: Gold, Post 240, Chapman, Kansas. This post was instrumental in the recovery process following a half mile wide tornado

that tore a path through the small town. This post immediately opened for comfort and served more than 9,000 meals to victims and volunteers. Department Commander K. T. Gregg is accepting the award on behalf of Post 240. *(Applause)*

Silver Award: Post 285, Parkersburg, Iowa. Following a devastating storm in May 2008, it acted as a structure for emergency crews and agencies, even though the post home itself had been destroyed. Department Commander Bruce Feuerbach is accepting this award on behalf of Post 285. *(Applause)*

The Bronze Award: Post 490, South Houston, Texas. After Hurricane Ike struck, Post 490 worked with FEMA to set up a mobile assistance center at the post for hurricane victims, mostly from Galveston. The post also coordinated out of area donations to other areas that were in dire straits. Department Commander James McNair is accepting the award on behalf of Post 490. *(Applause)*

The other three posts received certificates via their department for presentation at their conventions, and they are Post 37, Fernley, Nevada; Post 61, Yellville, Arkansas; and Post 17, Paragould, Arkansas. Thank you all for all your hard work in reaching out to our Legion family members and your respective communities during natural disasters.

At this time I would like to ask that those departments that would like to present checks for the National Emergency Fund come forward and make your presentations now.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (TX): Commander, on behalf of the membership of my post in Odessa, Texas, it is my honor to present $5,000 to the National Emergency Fund.

DELEGATE SULLIVAN (NV): Every year for 23 years the Department of Montana, represented by John Pelegrini, the Department of Idaho from Morris Bentley, and me, Tiny Sullivan from Nevada, we have what we call a fun day. We have done it for 23 years, and it's a good thing, and this year for the NEF we raised $1,000.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (MO): On behalf of the great State of Missouri and the Legionnaires there, I would like to present a check to you for $4,335.56.

DELEGATE HEDRICK (NC): Mr. Commander, on behalf of the Southern Bloc Caucus this morning, at our grits gathering we had some fines and some donations, and we were able to come up with $7,000 in about 30 minutes. So on behalf of the Southern Bloc Caucus, and Ray Hedrick is my Vice Chairman, I would like to give $3,500 to the National Emergency Fund. And because you took the donations yesterday we could not have time, but I would like to give $3,500 to the Legacy Fund on behalf of the Southern Caucus. We turned the cash money in, so all we have is the paper. National already has the money.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (NC): Mr. Commander, on behalf of the Department of North Carolina, at our delegation party we had fun, but we did the business of The American Legion. We collected donations, and we would like to give you cash money for the National Emergency Fund in the amount of $1,000.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN CONWAY (MN): Commander, on behalf of the great State of Minnesota, and in addition to our individual post donations, we want to present you with another check for the NEF for $1,000.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (CT): Commander, the Department of Connecticut, with what we have sent in already we would like to present a check to you, an additional amount of $4,000.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (IA): Commander, we sent in earlier donations as a result of our Department Commander Bruce Feuerbach's project, but on behalf of the

Department of Iowa and my fellow Sons of The American Legion, we would like to present another check for $400. And also from Ames Post Number 37—I think you're familiar with that one? An additional $145 that came in from them.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN McCALL (NH): Hello, Commander. Well, since you couldn't get to come up to New Hampshire, I happened to be in the neighborhood, so I thought I'd stop by. And give you this little donation of $1,800.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (DC): Commander, on behalf of the Department of the District of Columbia, we're going to give you this additional check of $900, which brings our total to $2,000.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (OH): Commander, on behalf of the Department of Ohio we have a check here for $10,000 for the National Emergency Relief Fund.

DEPARTMENT COMMANDER SANDELL (PA): Commander, on behalf of the great Department of Pennsylvania, the whole American Legion Family, in addition to what we have sent in I present a check to you in the amount of $8,500. They don't trust me with those little checks; they give me a big one. The commander has granted me permission to make another presentation. In my term as department commander of Pennsylvania I learned that the national organization wanted us to partner with them to collect money for the Flight 93 Memorial in Shanksville, Pennsylvania, and I'm very happy to report to you that we through the generosity of the Department of Pennsylvania Legion Family, we collected $13,000, and I would like to present that at this time.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (NY): Commander, I realize you just gave us a plaque for meeting our goal for the NEF, but that was my project this year, and I have an additional donation from the Department of New York for $50,000.

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER LACOURSIERE: Commander, on behalf of your five Vice Commanders and all of your department commanders this year, we would like to present a small token of our thank you for your leadership for us this year. We appreciate everything you have done, and this is what we would like to do for you, sir, so you'll remember us.

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: I will. Thanks to that you were all treated up there on the big screens with the commander standing here with a blank look on his face because he didn't know what was going on. And then standing here with an overwhelmed look on his face. And, thanks, because I was not expecting something like that, and I want each of those commanders and vice commanders to know how much I appreciate that award.

The National Emergency Fund. No, I'm going to start at the other side. Additional contributions to the Legacy Fund, $3,500. To the Flight 93 Memorial, $13,000. And to the National Emergency Fund, the total of those donations, $92,080.56. And thank you to all those donors. *(Applause)*

Presentation: National Recruiter of the Year
David K. Rehbein, Iowa, National Commander

The last award, but by far from the least award, is the award that is presented to the top Membership Recruiter of the Year. That honor this year goes to a Legionnaire who signed up 503 new members into The American Legion. This is his first year as Recruiter of the Year, but he has been in this competition several years, finishing second and third. This year it is my pleasure to welcome to the stage The American Legion's Recruiter of

the Year, a dedicated Legionnaire, Mr. R. V. Martin, Post 112, Department of Mississippi. Please welcome him to the stage. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER SIMMONS: R. V., this is but a small token of our appreciation for the job you have done. Without a doubt you are one outstanding recruiter who shares a passion for supporting veterans. Commander Rehbein is presenting you with a new Legion cap, a shadowbox plaque, a National Top Recruiter Ring, and a golf shirt, signifying your earning the title of National Recruiter of the Year for 2008-2009. Congratulations, R. V., 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 or your department who is up to the challenge of dethroning you. R. V., are you up to the challenge? And the answer is yes. And let me say congratulations from the Southeast Region and The American Legion organization. R. V., the podium is yours.

MR. MARTIN: I'll tell you what, this is a great honor for me. Last year I said if I can be number two, I'm going to try to be number one. And the wife took on my job of washing dishes and vacuuming the house, and told me to take a little more time in recruiting. Now, so I did that. But now I'm going to have to get back and do a lot of washing dishes and everything, but I would like to thank the members of The American Legion of Mississippi, especially the Commander, Steve Sweet, Johnny Brace of Ashton, and Ron Roberts, our membership chairman. Now, they are the ones that really pushed and helped me, and the rest of the members of our Legion of Mississippi. And my wife, like I say, she helps a lot. But if you'll get out there and you push, push, and beg and beg, and don't give up, you can be up here. And I thank you very much. Thank you.

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: Before we go to the next item of business, there is an issue that has come up within the last few days regarding a booklet that appears on the VA's website that deals with end of life planning, but is also being characterized as the "death book." The American Legion has put together a press release that we are issuing today on that subject, and I want you as the delegates of this National Convention to be aware of the contents of that press release in case you are approached by members of the media, because this is the position of The American Legion. And I will read you the press release.

The National Commander of The American Legion says the so-called "death book" posted on the Department of Veterans Affairs website may be well-intentioned, but needs to be reconsidered.

"We share a mission with the VA to work always in the best interests of our military veterans, "said the Legion's National Commander, "and we are certain that the Department of Veterans Affairs made this controversial publication available with the best of intentions.

"However," the Commander continued, "elements of the booklet *Your Life, Your Choices*—in our opinion—can be easily misconstrued and appear insensitive. Somewhat like the improperly vetted Department of Homeland Security report to which we objected strongly some months ago, the release of this publication demonstrates poor planning, no matter how well intentioned it was."

The controversial booklet, *Your Life, Your Choices* has been dubbed "the death book" by some commentators due to its subject matter and method of presentation in advising veterans on end-of-life decision-making. "While The American Legion does not believe this publication is in any way designed to influence veterans to end their lives

prematurely," said the National Commander, "we can understand how some might interpret it that way, At best, it is an awkward attempt to help."

Your Life, Your Choices is not an official publication of the Department of Veterans Affairs, but it has been made available in printed and electronic formats by the VA.

That's the position we released this morning to the news media of this country, that it is an awkward publication. It may be well-intentioned, but it certainly could be done better. And we hope that if you are approached by the media that you will take that same position and communicate that to any media members that may approach you.

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: At this point the Chair recognizes Daniel Dellinger of Virginia, 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
Daniel M. Dellinger, Virginia, 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 23, 2009, in Rooms 102 and 103, Level 1, Kentucky International Convention Center, Louisville, Kentucky 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), Deputy Director for Economic Commission, acted as temporary secretary and called the roll. A quorum being present, nominations were received for permanent chairman. Daniel M. Dellinger (VA), Chairman of the Standing National Economic Commission, was unanimously elected Chairman of the Convention Committees.

With unanimous consent, the Chairman appointed Jean C. La Fontaine, as Committee Secretary; Albert M. Robotti (NJ), Chairman of the Employment and Veterans Preference Committee and David Desmond (NC), Secretary; Richard T. Lee (CA), Chairman of the Other Economic Matters Committee and Kenneth Connors (NY), 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 Daniel M. Dellinger (VA), Chairman of the Economic Commission and was composed of the following persons: James Fratolillo (MA); Dennis Tipsword (IL); Albert M. Robotti (NJ); and William Christoffersen (UT).

The 18 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	14
Consolidated with Resolutions Approved	2
Referred to the Standing Commission	1
Received and Recorded	1
Rejected	0

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

A report of action taken on the 18 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. 6: Support Full Funding and Staffing for the Veterans Employment and Training Services (VETS) Programs
Origin: Texas
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economics (Employment and Veterans Preference)
(Consolidated with Resolution No. 14 (SD) and Resolution No. 65 (MA))

WHEREAS, Within the Department of Labor (DOL), annual discretionary appropriations, the Assistant Secretary for Veterans' Employment and Training Services (VETS) receives funding for the administration of various employment programs; and

WHEREAS, VETS provides funding and oversight of the Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP), the Local Veterans' Employment Representatives (LVERs), Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program, and the National Veterans' Employment and Training Institute (NVTI); and

WHEREAS, Title 38, United States Code (USC), section 4102A(b) (5) requires that the Secretary shall: "make available for use in each State by grant…such funds as may be necessary to support"; and

WHEREAS, Title 38, USC, sections 4103 A(a) and 4104 (a) also establishes: requirements for employment by states of sufficient numbers of DVOP Specialists and LVERs; and

WHEREAS, Historically, Congress has failed to fully staff the statutory level of 3600 DVOP and LVER positions by failing to sufficiently fund these programs over the past 15 years, effectively cutting the staff authorized by over 40 percent; and

WHEREAS, Meaningful employment is a proven effective approach to effectively ease the transition of veterans to civilian life; and

WHEREAS, The goal of VETS through the DVOP/LVER program is assisting all eligible veterans in obtaining meaningful employment through proactive assistance and aggressive training; and

WHEREAS, It is estimated that there are 2,962 full service and 1,190 affiliated One Stop Career Centers operating during FY 2009 and only 2,002 DVOP/LVER staff positions actually funded; and

WHEREAS, It is estimated that in order to effectively fund this program and ensure that veterans' staff are available in all Workforce Centers, that a minimum of $300 million in funds are needed; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Louisville, Kentucky, August 25, 26, 27, 2009, That The American Legion seeks full funding in the amount of $300 million for the DVOP/LVER program and staffing for the Veterans' Employment and Training Service and its effective programs.

Resolution No. 7: Support Transfer of the Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) and the Local Veterans' Employment Representative (LVERs) Program to the Supervision and Control of the Veterans Employment and Training Services (VETS)
Origin: Texas
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economics (Employment and Veterans Preference)

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 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, P.L. 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 veterans; and

WHEREAS, These changes in Title 38 have resulted in systemic misuse of DVOP LVER staff by the state workforce systems nationwide causing a decline in services to veterans at a time when those services are desperately needed for the Iraq and Afghanistan veterans now entering an unfriendly labor market; and

WHEREAS, The Veterans Employment and Training Service has the reputation and 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 Louisville, Kentucky, August 25, 26, 27, 2009, That The American Legion seeks legislation that will transfer the Disabled Veterans Outreach Program and the Local Veterans Employment Representative program to the supervision and control of the Veterans Employment and Training Services in order to ensure that the individuals employed for the purpose of serving veterans are not used for other programs.

Resolution No. 8: Transition Assistance Program Employment Workshops for National Guard and Reserve Members
Origin: Texas
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economics (Employment and Veterans Preference)
(As amended)

WHEREAS, Public Law 101-510, codified in sections 1141-1150 of Title 10, United States Code, authorized comprehensive transition assistance benefits and services for separating service members and their spouses and required that Transition Assistance Program (TAP) Employment Workshops be established and maintained; and

WHEREAS, TAP Employment Workshops are available for the service members prior to separating from active duty; and

WHEREAS, Many of the forces engaged in Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom are members of the National Guard and Reserves; and

WHEREAS, Members of the National Guard and Reserves are not afforded the opportunity to attend a TAP Employment Workshop prior to separation from active duty; and

WHEREAS, Members of the National Guard and Reserves must take time away from their civilian jobs and travel to an active duty site at their own expense to attend a TAP Employment Workshop on a space-available basis; and

WHEREAS, It is altogether fitting and proper that such programs of employment assistance for National Guard and Reserves members be provided at no expense to them; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Louisville, Kentucky, August 25, 26, 27, 2009, That The American Legion seeks legislation that will provide every National Guard and Reserves member who is activated for 12 months or longer a period of active duty of five days, within ninety days of separation, in order to attend a Transition Assistance Program employment workshop.

Resolution No. 13: Support Legislation to Amend 38 USC, to Prohibit Discrimination and Acts of Reprisals by Employers Against Veterans that seek Treatment for their Service-Connected Disabilities
Origin: South Dakota
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economics (Employment and Veterans Preference)
(As amended)

WHEREAS, This great organization was based upon comradeship born of wartime service and dedicated to fair and equitable treatment of all veterans; and

WHEREAS, Many of this Nation's men and women have answered the call to serve in the United States Armed Forces; and

WHEREAS, Congress, through the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA), provides protection from employment discrimination for men and women who perform military duty; and

WHEREAS, USERRA requires that employers release any employees to perform military duty; and

WHEREAS, Many of the men and women serving in the United States Armed Forces (Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, Coast Guard as well as activated National Guard and Reserves) sustained service-connected disabilities; and

WHEREAS, Under USERRA, employers are required to "make reasonable efforts to accommodate a person's disability so that the person can perform the position that would have held if the person had remained continuously employed"; and

WHEREAS, The employers, however, are not specifically required by law to allow veterans with service-connected disabilities to be absent from the workplace to receive the necessary medical treatment for these disabilities; and

WHEREAS, The necessary medical care can be provided through the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) at the VA medical centers as well as a private provider for service-connected veterans; and

WHEREAS, Legislation has been introduced that would amend Title 38, United States Code, (USC) to prohibit discrimination and acts of reprisal against persons who receive treatment for illnesses, injuries, and disabilities incurred in or aggravated by service in the uniformed services; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Louisville, Kentucky, August 25, 26, 27, 2009, That The American Legion supports legislation to amend Title 38, USC, to prohibit discrimination and acts of reprisals by employers against our veterans that seek treatment for their service-connected disabilities.

Resolution No. 66: Support Veterans Preference in Public Employment
Origin: Massachusetts
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economics (Employment and Veterans Preference)
(As amended)

WHEREAS, Our Federal government specially selected as mentally, morally, and physically fit, certain members from its society, specially trained this group, subjected them to stringent rules and regulations, removed them from home, family and employment, asked of them a special sacrifice, required some of them to suffer wounds they will live with forever; and

WHEREAS, A grateful nation through its representative in the Congress of the United States and State Legislatures has in recognition of that special service and loss of employment opportunity while defending the country in time of need, extended a long history of employing the returning veterans by enacting the Veterans Preference Act; and

WHEREAS, The term "veteran" includes every category of socioeconomics, gender, age, religion, ethnic group, race, and creed; and

WHEREAS, Absence from the highly competitive job market due to military service creates an unfair and unequal burden on veterans in competing for employment with non-veteran peers upon completion of military service; and

WHEREAS, The Veterans Preference Law accomplished the legislative purpose of honoring veterans and provides a small advantage in competing for Federal and State government jobs; and

WHEREAS, Veterans' Preference requires a veteran must be fully qualified for the position sought; and

WHEREAS, There are reported incidents of hiring officials in both the Federal and State government agencies who have ignored Veterans Preference in selecting new employees; and

WHEREAS, There have been Federal and State legislative efforts to repeal or avoid application of Veterans' Preference in hiring practices; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Louisville Kentucky, August 25, 26, 27, 2009, That The American Legion deplores each and every attempt to degrade, dilute, or modify the historical precedence of giving job eligibility preference to those who are taken from their communities to serve their country in time of war; and, be it further

RESOLVED, Urge all law makers at every level of government to oppose any and all efforts to repeal or circumvent Veterans' Preference in government hiring practices; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, Urge all executives at every level of government to enforce Veterans' Preference in their respective government agencies.

Resolution No. 72: Reaffirm Support for Service Members Occupational Conversion and Training Act (SMOCTA)
Origin: Massachusetts
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economics (Employment and Veterans Preference)
(As amended)

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

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

WHEREAS, The SMOCTA program provides financial incentives to employers who hire and provide training to eligible veterans; and

WHEREAS, To be eligible for participation in the SMOCTA program, the veteran must meet at least one of the following criteria:

- 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
- Be entitled to compensation (or would be entitled to compensation but for the receipt of military retired pay) for a VA service-connected disability rating of 30 percent or more; or
- Be unemployed and have been unemployed for at least eight (8) of the last 15 work weeks before filing an application; and

WHEREAS, The veterans eligible for job training under SMOCTA are precisely those individuals who need the most assistance in making a successful transition to the civilian work force; and

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

WHEREAS, DOD provides funding for SMOCTA while the VA and DOL are responsible for administering the program; and

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

WHEREAS, This country's unemployment problem is being exacerbated by the drastic downsizing of the military; and

WHEREAS, SMOCTA can help to alleviate the employment problems faced by many veterans who are being separated from the military; and

WHEREAS, There is pending legislation to reauthorize SMOCTA; and

WHEREAS, SMOCTA has been changed to the Military Occupational Specialty Transition (MOST) program, but the language and intent of the program still applies; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Louisville Kentucky, August 25, 26, 27, 2009, That The American Legion supports legislation to reauthorize the SMOCTA (now MOST) program until the employment picture improves and the downsizing of the military is completed; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion seeks $60 million for SMOCTA (now MOST) so that it can achieve what it was designed to do.

Resolution No. 73: Full Funding and Staffing for the Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS) and its Program
Origin: Massachusetts
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economics (Employment and Veterans Preference)
(As amended)

WHEREAS, Chapter 41, Title 38, United States Code (USC), provides for a veterans' employment counseling and training program to be administered by the Assistant Secretary of Labor for Veterans' Employment and Training Service within the Department of Labor; and

WHEREAS, Chapter 41 provides for the appointment of a State Director and Assistant Director for Veterans' Employment and Training Service; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Louisville Kentucky, August 25, 26, 27, 2009, to hereby go on record requesting that the Secretary of Labor shall submit to Congress an adequate budget for the operation of the Veterans' Employment and Training Service, including funds for the National Staff, State Director, Assistant Directors and Program Assistants/Secretaries for the States; and that such budget shall also include funds for the LVER and DVOP positions, which should be equitably distributed; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the Secretary of Labor require fiscal accountability to ensure those funds for the Veterans' Employment and Training Service and for the State Employment Service agencies are used for veterans' services or returned to the Department of Labor; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That copies of this resolution shall be forwarded to the Secretary of Labor.

Committee on Other Economic Matters
Approved

Resolution No. 26: Veterans Preference for Housing in the Department of Housing and Urban Development
Origin: Maine
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Other Economic Matters
(As amended)

WHEREAS, The American Legion was chartered in 1919 as a patriotic, war-time veterans organization; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion has established as one of its Four Pillars, taking care of Veterans; and

WHEREAS, The availability and provision of accessible, affordable, quality housing, both owned and rented, constitute a vital aspect of what is needed for handicapped, senior, retired and impoverished veterans and younger returning warriors, as well as their dependents to live better lives; and

WHEREAS, The original GI Bill of Rights, with the support of this organization after World War II, had as one of its primary objectives, the construction and provision of affordable housing for returning veterans and their dependents; and

WHEREAS, The current Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) programs are flooded by the rising tide of applicants, including veterans of earlier conflicts, as well as needy and handicapped veterans of current wars; and

WHEREAS, Current HUD programs, while providing affordable housing for low income families, seniors and the handicapped, are prohibited by law from discriminating in favor of veterans as a separate entity; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Louisville, Kentucky, August 25, 26, 27, 2009, That The American Legion urge HUD to provide affordable housing to qualified and honorably discharged veterans and their dependents; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That HUD fund the planning, construction and subsidization of rental housing specifically for veterans and their dependents and to create a separate component for veterans and their dependents under Section 8 of the Housing Act, as well as a similar component under the Low Income Housing Tax Credit program.

Resolution No. 67: Support Reasonable Set-Asides of Federal procurements and contracts for Businesses Owned and Operated by Veterans
Origin: Massachusetts
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Other Economic Matters
(As amended)

WHEREAS, Assistance to 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 veterans have always included assistance in creating and operating veteran-owned small businesses; and

WHEREAS, Set-asides are used to assist small businesses in receiving Federal contracts which enables these small businesses to gain needed experience, and most importantly increase their profitability; and

WHEREAS, Set-asides is a mechanism that allows small businesses to compete with Prime Contractors for Federal dollars; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Louisville Kentucky, August 25, 26, 27, 2009, That The American Legion encourages Congress to require a reasonable amount of set-asides 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. 69: Support Efforts of the Small Business Administration (SBA) Office of Veterans Affairs
Origin: Massachusetts
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Other Economic Matters
(As amended)

WHEREAS, Assistance to 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 veterans have always included assistance in creating and operating Veteran-Owned Small Businesses; and

WHEREAS, With the large number of service members leaving active duty, to include National Guard and Reserve components, transitioning to the civilian workforce; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Louisville Kentucky, August 25, 26, 27, 2009, That The American Legion supports the efforts of the Small Business Administration (SBA), Office of Veterans Business Development in it initiatives to provide outreach to military personnel who will be affected by the downsizing of the military; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion support legislation that would permit the Office of Veterans Business Development of the SBA to enter into contracts, grants, and cooperative agreements to further its outreach goals.

Resolution No. 85: Support and Strengthen the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act
Origin: Connecticut
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Other Economic Matters

WHEREAS, The American Legion has been the premiere veterans advocacy organization since its inception in 1919; and

WHEREAS, Such advocacy resulted in the creation and passage of the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (SCRA) and the original GI Bill, codifying into Federal law benefits appropriated to active and former members of the United States military as a result of their honorable service during a time of war; and

WHEREAS, Both the GI Bill and SCRA have been legislatively updated on occasion by the United States Congress to reflect societal changes and rising costs of providing said benefits; and

WHEREAS, It is the intention of the SCRA to protect and make whole service members of the United States military called to active duty by duly authorized and issued orders; and

WHEREAS, Such protections currently include mitigation against termination and suspension fees and surcharges attributable to individual cellular phone contracts and leases; and

WHEREAS, Such protection is not extended to include the necessary termination of a contract under Family or Group plans, nor to the necessary cancellation of reservations for air or train transportation, resulting in unnecessary, unintended and costly costs incurred by service members who are obeying the tasking placed upon them by duly authorized orders; and

WHEREAS, Such costs coincide with negative credit reports which further exacerbate the ability of the service member to perform his or her duty, and impacts the ability of the individual or family to realize the American Dream and own a home by punitive credit rates; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Louisville, Kentucky, August 25, 26, 27, 2009, That Congress be urged to amend the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (SCRA) to include protections for members of the Armed Forces acting under duly authorized and issued orders to include, but not limited to, deployment and TDY/TAD orders against fees, fines and the resulting negative credit reports by cancellation or termination of cellular contracts in whole or in part and cancellation of ticketed travel on U.S. airlines or train transportation.

Resolution No. 95: Veterans Home Loans
Origin: Oregon
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Other Economic Matters
(As amended)

WHEREAS, Legislation to amend the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Tax Code to delete the requirement that State Veterans Home Loans may only be made to those veterans who are within twenty-five years of date of discharge is pending in Congress; and

WHEREAS, This change in the IRS Tax Code would allow thousands of veterans to become eligible for a State Veterans Home Loan; and

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Louisville, Kentucky, August 25, 26, 27, 2009, That The American Legion supports amending the IRS Tax Code to delete the requirement that State Veterans Home Loans may only be made to those veterans who are within twenty-five years of date of discharge.

Resolution No. 101: Surviving Spouse Mortgage Eligibility
Origin: Illinois
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Other Economic Matters

WHEREAS, The American Legion is a national organization of veterans who have dedicated themselves to the service of the community, state and nation; and

WHEREAS, Veterans who meet certain criteria are eligible for the VA home loan program for as long as they live and in certain circumstances may use this benefit several times; and

WHEREAS, Once the veteran expires this benefit does not pass onto the surviving spouse except in those situations where the veteran died of a service-related condition or died in service; and

WHEREAS, Veterans are usually the primary income provider for the household and contribute the majority of payments to mortgages for the family; and

WHEREAS, Once the veteran dies the mortgage payments must continue to be paid and the burden falls on the surviving spouse; and

WHEREAS, The surviving spouse may have to downsize and/or move to a different area to obtain a more affordable dwelling; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Louisville, Kentucky, August 25, 26, 27, 2009, That The American Legion shall sponsor and support legislation to allow the surviving spouse of a veteran who was determined to be eligible for the VA loan program to use this same entitlement for a one time guarantee of a new mortgage and that this eligibility be good for up to fifteen years after the veteran dies or the surviving spouse remarries.

Resolution No. 111: Support Title 32 Active Guard Reserve (AGR) for Post 9/11 GI Bill Benefits
Origin: Convention Committee on Other Economic Matters
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Other Economic Matters

WHEREAS, The American Legion first draft the GI Bill of Rights which was enacted by Congress in 1944 for all veterans called to active-duty irrespective as to where they served—overseas or statewide; and

WHEREAS, Similar GI Bill benefits were extended to veterans of the Korean and Vietnam Wars based on honorable military service irrespective of duty location; and

WHEREAS, When education benefits were updated and improved in the 1984 Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB), its primary focus was on active-duty service members in support of the all-volunteer military; and

WHEREAS, Congress and the Department of Defense then developed a significantly modified version of the Montgomery GI Bill for the Select Reserve which provided minimal educational benefits primarily as a recruitment and retention tool; and

WHEREAS, Reserve component forces were primarily a strategic force until August 2, 1990; and

WHEREAS, The role of the Reserve Component forces has dramatically evolved since the official start of the Persian Gulf War on August 2, 1990; and

WHEREAS, Many AGR personnel were called to active-duty via title 32, United States Code (USC) in support of the Southwest Asian War, the attacks on America on September 11, 2001, Operation Overwatch, Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom; and

WHEREAS, AGR personnel were also activated under title 32, USC, during this same time period in support of natural disasters, such as Hurricanes Katrina and Rita; and

WHEREAS, Repeatedly the AGR personnel have answered the nation's call to arms each and every time and deployed where directed by the Department of Defense or the Governor of their respective state; and

WHEREAS, Today, Reserve forces are operational forces that fight side-by-side with active duty forces, contributing their unique skills and abilities to the modern battlefield; and

WHEREAS, Last year there were almost 30,000 Army National Guard and 13,500 Air National Guard service members served on Title 32; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Louisville, Kentucky, August 25, 26, 27, 2009, That The American Legion supports legislation that would include all AGR members of the United States Armed Forces Federalized under Title 32, USC, be eligible for educational benefits under Chapter 33, Title 38, USC based on their honorable military service consistent with the terms of that Chapter.

Referred to the Standing Commission on Economics

Resolution No. 74 (MA)**: Support Establishment of the Veterans' Business Development and Outreach Program**

Received and Recorded

Resolution No. 71 (MA)**: Support the Small Business Loan Program in the VA**

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN DELLINGER: Mr. Commander, I, Daniel M. Dellinger of Virginia, as a duly elected and registered delegate to this Convention, move for the adoption of this report, respectfully submitted.

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER DAVIS: Do I hear a second? ...*Second.* Discussion? All those in favor indicate by the usual sign. All opposed? The report of the Economic Convention Committee is adopted.

Presentation: Employer of the Year Awards for Hiring Veterans
James W. Davis, West Virginia, National Vice Commander

It is time to extend special recognition to the three employers for their outstanding record of making job available to veterans. That special recognition comes in the form of The American Legion Employer of the Year Award. We recognize these three organizations as 2008 Employers of Year. One award is for companies employing 50 or less people; another for companies employing from 51 to 200, and the third for companies with more than 200 workers. Each is nominated by a post and advances through their departments and national competition levels.

The award in the 50 employees or less category goes to Millennium Security Services, LLC of Roswell, Georgia. Accepting the award is Mr. Michael Mizell, President. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: The award reads: "The American Legion National Award for Outstanding Employer of Veterans for 2008. Presented to Millennium Security Services, LLC for an exceptional record in the employment of veterans. Presented at the 91st National Convention, Louisville, Kentucky."

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER DAVIS: The American Legion National Award for outstanding employer of veterans for 2008 presented to Millennium Service, LLC for their excellent record of employing veterans. Presented at the 91st Annual National Convention, Louisville, Kentucky.

The award in the 51 to 200 category goes to Industrial Maintenance Services, Incorporated of Escanaba, Michigan. Accepting the award Mr. Jim Vernon, Project Estimator. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: The award reads: "The American Legion National Award for Outstanding Employer of Veterans 2008. Presented to Industrial Maintenance Services,

Inc. for an exceptional record in the employment of veterans. Presented at the 91st Annual National Convention, Louisville, Kentucky."

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER DAVIS: In the large employer category of 200 plus employees, the award goes to Lear Siegler, (LSI) EG&G, a Division of URS Corporation of Germantown, Maryland.

Accepting on behalf of the company is Ms. Marian Hyder, Vice President of Staffing, and Mr. Kenneth Reese, Staffing Manager. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: The award reads: "The American Legion National Award for Outstanding Employer of Veterans 2008 is presented to Lear Siegler (LSI) EG&G, a Division of URS Corporation, for an exceptional record in the employment of veterans. Presented at the 91st Annual National Convention, Louisville, Kentucky."

MS. MARIAN HYDER: Thank you to The American Legion for this prestigious award. We are honored to accept this award on behalf of EG&G Lear Siegler Services. I'm proud of our long history and success in hiring veterans. Of the 6,700 plus positions we filled in 2008, 48 percent of our new hires were veterans. Of our total employee population of 14,000 employees, 45 percent are veterans.

Veterans are represented at all levels in our organization. I'm also proud to say that 50 percent of our recruiting staff are veterans. Several are former military recruiters including Ken Reese who's here with me today.

We partner with the military in numerous ways. A few examples include the Army Partnership for Youth Success, or the PAYS Program; the Wounded Warrior Program. I'm proud to say we just recently hired our first wounded warrior. The Army Reserve Partnership Initiative, and we work very closely with the Military Transition Offices around the world, and the VET Services Offices around the United States. The men and women we hire from the military have the leadership, integrity, discipline, and training that have contributed to our success over the last 50 years. Again, thank you to The American Legion for this award. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER DAVIS: We would like to call up the other two award winners for a few words of encouragement.

MR. VERNON: I thought I was going to be able to get away without saying anything. I would like to thank everybody, and as a veteran myself I don't think you could have picked a better man than John to give this award to. He truly exemplifies professionalism in our industry. So thanks again.

MR. MIZELL: First let me say a great thank you to the team that makes this thing possible, starting with The American Legion and what it does for our service members all over the world.

A special thanks to a gentleman who works very hard, very diligently every hour of every day, and that gentleman is not here today, but his name is Mike Cotler. Mike Cotler is the Department of Labor veteran rep that's on my speed dial right behind 911. I can't tell you how many times I've gotten some late afternoon calls that somebody just quit, and I called Mike. And just to show you, I called him on Tuesday afternoon two weeks ago at two o'clock. At four o'clock he had three candidates waiting in his office for me to go interview. And I hired one of them.

Mike does an outstanding job and I couldn't do it without him. Also, without the great state of Georgia, The American Legion family that's there, all that you do for allowing me to reach out and touch you and find our members that are out there that are looking for employment. And that's my commitment to you as a small business owner

here today. Every time there's an opportunity, I have to let people know that if they don't hire vets, they're missing out on the greatest opportunity that they could ever be part of because they have an asset that's been trained beyond their imagination.

I remember when I first retired from the military and I put out my resume, and they said I don't need a soldier, that set me sort of on a mission to let those business owners know, yeah, you do need a soldier because let me tell you some of the things we do other than drive trucks and dig ditches. There is no greater workforce with a greater work ethic than you'll find in the men and women that have worn the uniform of this great nation, and they do it because they love it, and they give it everything that they have.

So my commitment to you is that over the coming years I hope to see you but in larger categories when I bring on more and more veterans to do the work that we have to do. God bless you all. *(Applause)*

Presentation: American Legion Local Veterans Employee Representative of the Year Award
David K. Rehbein, Iowa, National Commander

Another employment award that I'm honored to present goes to the top Local Veterans Employment Representative in the nation. The award honors individuals who have done so well this placing veterans in jobs.

The Employment Service Award to the Local Veterans Employment Representative for 2008 goes to Michael Dembowski of Binghamton, New York. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: The award reads: "The American Legion National Award for Outstanding Local Veterans Employment Representative of the Year 2008 is presented to Michael Dembowski for your outstanding service to veterans of the State of New York."

MR. DEMBOWSKI: Needless to say I'm honored. Thank you very much. But I do have a favor to ask of all of you. If you know of anyone out there, any returning vet, any vet for that matter that has not availed himself of our services, please send them our way. If you send them my way they're going to get a hundred percent effort on my behalf. And I think I could speak for just about every DVOP and LVER in the United States, they will do the same. We're on every home page for every Department of Labor in the United States. Thank you very much. Thank you for your service. *(Applause)*

Presentation: Disabled Veterans Outreach Program of the Year Award
David K. Rehbein, Iowa, National Commander

Mr. Demboski referred to another group of individuals that The American Legion is very proud of. They are the men and women who work on behalf of disabled veterans seeking employment.

And I am very happy to present the Disabled Veterans Outreach Program of the Year Award to Mr. Steve Lord of Meridian, Idaho. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: The award reads: "The American Legion National Award for Outstanding Disabled Veterans Outreach Program of the Year 2008 is presented to Steve Lord for your outstanding service to the veterans of the State of Idaho."

MR. LORD: Good afternoon American Legion, and thank you for your service. I would also like to thank The American Legion for this honor and this recognition. I would like to accept it on behalf of my coworkers from the Department of Labor back in Idaho, all of our partner agencies, the service organizations, especially The American

Legion, and all of the DVOPS that are out there around the country providing priority of service to our disabled veteran community. Again, thank you for this award and thank you for continuing to serve those who served. Thank you. *(Applause)*

Presentation: Outstanding Employer of Disabled Veterans Award
Harley W. Ray, Oregon, National Vice 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 increasing their employment opportunities.

Here to accept the award is Mr. John Antar, Contract Manager for Black Hills Service, Incorporated. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: The award reads: "The American Legion National Award for Outstanding Employer of Disabled Veterans, 2008, is presented to Black Hills Service, Inc., for an exceptional record in the employment of veterans. Presented at the 91st Annual National Convention, Louisville, Kentucky."

MR. ANTAR: Thank you American Legion, commander, special guests. Black Hills Services is actually a subsidiary of Black Hills Workshop in Rapid City, South Dakota. We currently employ approximately 268 personnel of disabilities, of which we've got 54 of them are actual disabled vets. We provide employment in numerous areas. We provide employment in retail services, commissary services, custodial, and we're looking at other endeavors around the local community. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER RAY: On behalf of every veteran in America, I extend to you our congratulations and say those all those words all workers love to hear, "Thank you for a job well done." We're certain you'll keep hiring veterans. Please tell other businesses about the reliability and work ethic of veterans. Thank you and congratulations. *(Applause)*

Presentation: Employment Service Office of the Year
Harley W. Ray, Oregon, National Vice 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 (Southside) Career Center of Jacksonville, Florida. Accepting the award is Ms. Anna Brost-Gibson. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: The award reads: "The American Legion National Award for Outstanding Employment Service Office of the Year, 2008, is presented to WorkSource (Southside) Career Center for outstanding service to the veterans of the State of Florida".

MS. BROST-GIBSON: Thank you very much. We talk about servicing vets and giving vets jobs, and that's what these gentlemen do right here. Thank you very much.

Presentation: Homeless Veterans Outreach Award
Harley W. Ray, Oregon, National Vice Commander

The charge of The American Legion is to provide service to veterans and to their families. That service includes helping our homeless as they try re-entering society as

productive, self-supporting citizens. I thank God that we have agencies across America that initiates programs that 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 of Idaho. Accepting the award is Ms. Brandia Young, of the Homeless Veterans Task Force. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: The award reads: "The American Legion National 2008 Homeless Veterans Outreach Award is presented to The American Legion Family Department of Idaho for the year 2008, for exceptional efforts toward the elimination of homelessness among veterans in the State of Idaho. Presented at the 91st Annual National Convention, Louisville, Kentucky."

MS. YOUNG: Commander, delegates, distinguished guests and fellow Legionnaires, my friends. It is indeed a privilege to stand before you today. I applaud The American Legion's recognition of the issues that face homeless veterans in our country today. The collaboration among The American Legion and community partners will continue to be a critical factor in addressing the challenges faced by our homeless comrades. I'm humbled to accept this award on behalf of all those who've worked so hard in the State of Idaho. To be recognized for our efforts is a supreme honor. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: I'm going to break in here for just a moment to hear from a speaker that you probably have heard that I have met before. The American Legion some weeks back took issue with a Homeland Security report that we believe mischaracterized veterans. Our next guest addressed our concerns, and she made it right. She is extremely supportive of veterans employment issues and has been very responsive to The American Legion.

Before becoming Secretary of Homeland Security, she served as the governor of Arizona, and was named 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 our borders from illegal entry. Would you please join me in giving a warm American Legion welcome to the Secretary of Homeland Security and my friend, Janet Napolitano. *(Standing applause)*

Address: The Honorable Janet Napolitano
Secretary, Department of Homeland Security

Thank you very much. Good afternoon to everybody. I am very honored and privileged to be with The American Legion here today to have a chance to talk with you about some of the Homeland Security challenges confronting our country.

I want to say that I have such a deep respect for the Legion, and a very long relationship with the Legion. In fact, I actually got my start in politics from the Legion, and to be precise, the Legion Auxiliary because I was sent to Girls State in New Mexico when I was in high school. *(Applause)* There you go. You're now looking at the 1974 lieutenant governor of New Mexico Girls State, and that was my first political office.

And then of course as a two term governor of Arizona I had the opportunity to sign bills that extended benefits to veterans and their families. We worked with The American Legion in Arizona, and I can't see the signs out there, but I hope there's some Arizonans here. Where are you? There you go. You're escaping the heat. Nice to see you. Kind of.

But anyway we signed bills that not only extended benefits for veterans and their families, but particularly to ensure benefits for our new veterans returning from Iraq, Afghanistan, and to make sure that they receive the assistance they required. We actually helped create the first program in the country with the National Guard prior to deployment and their return in terms of making sure they got appropriate support. We established the Military Family Relief Fund to provide financial assistance to the family members of our military men and women who were killed or wounded in the line of duty. So we had a very, very active veterans presence in Arizona. The American Legion was an important part of that, an important part of our Veterans Advisory Council, and I have, as I said, for a long time been a big fan of The American Legion.

As was mentioned by the commander, we did have, and that's why it was unfortunate to say the least that perhaps some of your first exposure to me was through the report on the so-called "right-wing extremist report." I met with your Commander immediately after that; talked about it; told him that it was an ill-informed and unwise product that had been poorly produced, and that we needed to go forward. *(Applause)*

So, on the theme of moving forward and what we can do together, let me, if I might, speak to that today with our time together.

First of all, I think for many of you, it's important to understand the very, very close relationship between the military, military veterans, and the Department of Homeland Security. We have, as you know, or may know, one of the branches of the military within our department. The Coast Guard is part of the Department of Homeland Security and a very, very important part indeed.

Our department is one of the largest in the federal government. We are actually the third largest department now in the federal government, and almost 25 percent of our civilian work force are themselves veterans. So we have actively duty Coast Guard and we have a large percentage of veterans in our civilian work force. And let me just say this: We have made the commitment, I have made the commitment at the Department of Homeland Security, that by the year 2012 we will be employing 50,000 or more veterans at our department. *(Applause)* Now, that requires some outreach, because you can't just announce a number and assume you're going to get there. So we have reconvened for the department, a Veterans Advisory Forum so that we get the insight, the experience, and perspective of veterans.

We are increasing our participation in Operation Warfighter, which you may have heard from, but that is a program where we work with service members who are on medical leave, to help them explore their employment interests, help them with things like constructing their resumes, job skill development, and help them gain valuable federal job experience. Today, through that program we have now 2,100 service disabled veterans that we are employing at the Department of Homeland Security. *(Applause)*

But wait, there's more. Because just last month, and this was an idea that we hatched in my meeting with your commander, we held our first ever job fair for veterans that we put together. We had 745 veterans and their spouses attend. It was supervised by the deputy secretary of Homeland Security, the number two person in the department, Jane Lute, who is herself a United States Army veteran, and pleased to report that many of the individuals who attended that job fair we are able to actively assist in getting employment or improving their current employment situation.

We are also working with the veteran owned small business community and the service disabled veteran owned small businesses community to look at like contracts we

provide or we award for work to be done to make sure that they know about those contract competitions and are able to get into that area of our department. So let me report on that. Last year, veteran owned small businesses received $931 million in contracts from the Department of Homeland Security. And we are committed to doing even more this year. So, it's about contracts, it's about jobs, it's about a very, very close relationship.

Now, that is something that we are doing on the job and employment front. Another area that you may not know about within the Department of Homeland Security is that we actually have within our department the division that provides what's called Citizenship and Immigration Services, and not only do we enforce our nation's immigration laws to keep out those illegally entering our country, but we also naturalize or make citizens of those who are following the legal path to citizenship that our laws provide. Since September 11th, we have really emphasized those who are serving in our military fighting in Iraq, fighting in Afghanistan who have not yet become citizens, to go through that process so that as they are serving our country, they are simultaneously becoming citizens of our country. And I'm pleased to report that since that time we literally have made citizens of tens thousands of active duty of the military so they can continue to serve their country and have that honor of being a citizen of the United States.

One of the most amazing ceremonies I've been privileged to attend as the secretary was at the White House when we had members of the military from all the branches, there with their families from countries all over the world, and they had been fighting for us for the last years, and the President of the United States was administering to them the oath of citizenship at an historic place and at an historic time. And to look into their eyes and to see their families and their faces really reaffirmed for me, and I hope for all of us, the importance of citizenship and the high values we place on being a citizen of the United States.

Now, as we move forward, there are other things that we need to do together and this is why I continue to need your support. You have already done much for your country. You have served. You continue to serve in your local communities in a variety of ways. But our country continues to need you and our department needs you. Since I became secretary I have been asking all Americans to play a more active role in our country's security. And the Legion is in a unique position to help. We have to work together to maintain a constant state of preparedness, and we need to be prepared rather than be in a constant state of fear.

And so that we are always thinking about preparation, and we have to do this because we cannot put our country under a glass dome, and while we work to mitigate all the time the risks of an attack again on our soil, there are no guarantees that such an attack would not recur. And of course we know the other hazards that can and do occur. Those of you who from Kentucky really know this year because you've been hard hit by ice storms, floods and the like. So we always have to be prepared and ready.

We have a website ready.gov, not very difficult to remember. Ready.gov. And we're asking people to go there to help prepare themselves, their families for emergencies of any type. And also to think about if you are a business or a business owner, about preparation as well. This can be very straight forward and simple things. CPR training. You know, lives are saved every day by people who know how to do CPR. This is part of our own shared responsibility for security. Last week, everybody on my headquarters staff took a refresher course. This is something that you and your posts I hope will

consider doing, so that everybody is up to speed and knows some of those basic techniques. Lives will be saved when you to this.

We are asking all of them, everybody to consider involvement with your local Citizen Corps. The Citizen Corps is being rejuvenated under FEMA and its new Administrator, Craig Fugate, to help when natural hazards natural emergencies occur. And again, the Legion and its Auxiliary, you've been supporters in the past of the Citizen Corps and so I'm asking you to reenergize that participation and that partnership with us.

We need your help with the coming flu situation. And let me explain it with you for just a moment, if I might. Last spring we learned of a new strain of flu, Swine Flu, H1N1 is what we call it. And it's a different strain which means that the seasonal flu vaccine that was already in process and being manufactured did not include this type of flu within it. And so there was a certain amount of lethality or death associated with this flu. At the beginning we did not know how severe it was going to be, so we were very careful to make sure that we reported daily to the American people what we knew and did not know about this new strain of flu. Now we know more because we've seen it in our country, and we've also seen it circulate during flu season in the southern hemisphere. And we know that it never actually disappeared from the United States. Disappeared from the media perhaps, but not from the country. We know that school age youth up to and including college age youth are particularly susceptible. Older people by and large not. We seem to have developed some immunity to this as we've grown older, except if you have a chronic underlying health condition that would make getting this flu dangerous, like getting seasonal flu would be dangerous.

We also know that as fast as they're moving to get vaccine for this flu, this new flu, we will not have vaccine available before it really hits us again. And so what we're looking at is as school starts, a number of people getting sick, school age children in particular. We are encouraging people, and again, this is where you can help, by encouraging people to wash their hands all the time; cough into your sleeve; if your child is sick keep your child home from school; if your grandchild is sick, keep your grandchild home from school; if you are sick, don't go into work; if you're an employer, think about what absenteeism is going to do and be understanding if people need to be absent. We will not be able to keep this flu from our shores, it is already here, but our goal of course is to slow the rate of transmission and to do all that we can to reduce the number of people who actually get this flu before vaccine becomes available.

For those of you who have not gotten a seasonal flu shot or don't intend to get a seasonal flu shot, we're asking you to go ahead and get one this year, and do it early, so that when the H1N1 vaccine becomes available, we're able to use our health care resources for the administration of that vaccine. So you should be getting a seasonal flu vaccine. If you haven't been, we would encourage everyone to do so, get it early in the season so that as H1N1 becomes available we can focus our nurses, our doctors, and everybody on getting that vaccine out. And we will be focusing there again on those who are particularly susceptible.

I mention this only because this is yet another area of where The American Legion can be helpful. You can be helpful in talking with your members; making sure that the people are getting their appropriate vaccines; making sure they have read up on H1N1, and know that we will get through this flu epidemic as our country has gotten through these epidemics before. But we do it more by preparation than by fear. And if that's a message I can leave with you, it is that at our department right now that is what we are

talking with groups like yours about, preparation and making sure that we are doing all that we can do.

I know that The American Legion is a longstanding organization in our country, and an important one. And I know that we will continue our vital partnership on the jobs front, on the contracts front, and on the preparation front, not just this year, but for years to come. You have served your country. Your country needed you at that time. Your country needs you now. The country is in a situation where all our hands, all our arms, need to be linked together in service to the great nation that we are privileged to be in.

Thank you for what you have done for the country, and thank you for what you are about to do. Good afternoon. *(Standing applause)*

Presentation: Employer of Older Workers Award
David K. Rehbein, Iowa, National Commander

At this point we'll return to the awards. The American Legion strongly believes that older workers are a valuable economic resource of proven skills, stability, and experience. We also encourage employers to hire and retain older workers in the work force. The purpose of the Employer of Older Workers Award is to recognize employers for their outstanding record in hiring and retaining older workers.

Accepting the award this year is Brent Maule, President of Maule Air, Incorporated, of Moultrie, Georgia. Mr. Maule. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: The award reads: "The American Legion National Award for Outstanding Employer of Older Workers, 2008, is presented to Maule Air, Incorporated for an exceptional record in the employment of older persons. Presented at the 91st Annual National Convention, Louisville, Kentucky."

MR. MAULE: Thanks to The American Legion and everyone for this award. It's an honor to be here with you in fellowship with all of you, our nation's heroes. Thank you for your service and your sacrifice to make our nation safe and secure. Thank you for your service in our military and for your continued service in America's work force. American industry is a crucial key to keeping our nation strong.

The Maule family and Maule Air, Incorporated have a longstanding legacy of creating employment opportunities for older workers and younger workers alike. In fact, our company's co-founder, June Maule turns a youthful ninety-three in February.

Our older workers bring knowledge and experience that can only be acquired through hard work over time. They bring dedication and loyalty and the determination to keep moving forward, even in difficult times such as we face today. Our older workers can draw from prior experiences to provide fresh and innovative ways to solve problems which they see as opportunities to rise above the challenge and succeed. Many of our employees throughout the years have faced difficulties unknown to many in today's work force.

I think about Leonard Burke, a combat engineer who helped storm the beaches of Normandy, and how at the age of 89 was one of top inspectors of aircraft parts. I remember Dan Spader who flew The Hump and then later came to become chief test pilot at our company, testing every aircraft before it was delivered to the customers. And I grew up talking with Alice Grimstead, a real life Rosie the Riveter, who used her experience building war planes in World War II to cover hundreds of Maule aircraft.

There are so many other stories like that, that I could share, but they're too numerous to mention right now, but each person is an indispensable member of our team.

On behalf of the Maule family and the employees of Maule Air, Incorporated, it's with great honor and appreciation that I accept this award. Thank you and God bless you.

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: The Chair recognizes Joe Cauoette 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

Forty-two members of your Convention Committee on Americanism met at 8:30 a.m. on Sunday, August 23, 2009, in the Galt House Hotel, Clements Room, Second Floor, Suite "East" Tower, Louisville, Kentucky to discuss matters of Americanism-related resolutions assigned to the committee.

The committee organized by electing Joseph Caouette (NH), Chairman; Darell Bishop (OH), Vice Chairman; and Charles Tucker (GA), as the Secretary.

The committee discussed six 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 James Heath (TX) and seconded by Theodore Howarth (NJ) 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.

Six resolutions were considered with 0 being approved, 0 approved as consolidated, and 6 referred to the standing commission on Americanism.

Referred to the Standing Commission on Americanism

Resolution No. 68 (MA)**: Government Agencies and Others to Purchase American Made American Flags**
Resolution 39 (OH)**: Government Agencies and Others to Purchase American Made American Flags**
Resolution 46 (CA)**: American Legion Soccer Program**
Resolution No. 24 (MT)**: Boy Scouts of America Venturing/Sea Scout Award**
Resolution No. 78 (WA)**: Revision of Boy Scouts of America Health and Medical Record**
Resolution 30 (ID)**: Oppose Social Security Benefits for Illegal Immigrants**

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN CAOUETTE: As a duly elected and registered delegate from the Department of the New Hampshire, I move for the adoption of this report.

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: You've heard the motion is there a second? ...*Second.* Discussion? All those in favor signify by the sign of aye. Opposed? The motion is carried. The report of Americanism is adopted.

And having completed the adoption of that Americanism report, it is appropriate to announce the winners of two prestigious Americanism awards.

Presentation: The Frank N. Belgrano, Jr. Trophy and The Ralph T. O'Neil Education Trophy
David K. Rehbein, Iowa, National Commander

The Frank N. Belgrano, Jr., Trophy is given annually to the department rendering the most outstanding service during the 12 month period beginning August 1st, to the Boy Scouts of America. This year's winner of the Frank Belgrano Trophy is the Department of North Carolina. *(Applause)* They will be receiving that award.

Again, the other, the Ralph T. O'Neil Education Trophy given to the department within the United States documenting the greatest activity in operating The American Legion School Medal Program. The winning department shows what can be accomplished by an active, involved American Legion in the education of the children.

The winner of the Ralph T. O'Neil Education Trophy for this year is the Department of Vermont. *(Applause)*

Presentation: William Randolph Hearst Americanism Trophy
David K. Rehbein, Iowa, National Commander

And now joining me on stage to present the next award is Mr. Bob Danzig, the former CEO of Hearst Newspapers. Bob grew up in foster homes and began his career as a 16 year old office boy at the Albany Times Union. Seventeen years later he was the publisher of the newspaper. Seven years after that he became the CEO of Hearst, where he served in that capacity for 20 years.

The William Randolph Hearst Americanism Trophy, which Bob will present, is one of the most impressive awards that The American Legion presents during 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 were devoted to Americanism activities during the Legion program year.
Ladies and gentlemen, it is my privilege to introduce Mr. Bob Danzig.

MR. DANZIG: The first thing I want to do is to point to the big trophy, which I'm not going to handle, which goes to the Department of Virginia. *(Applause)*

It took three guys to walk away with that. It took us 20 years to catch up with this award because it was not until 20 years after the Legion was founded that the first William Randolph Hearst recognition award was given. So we've been doing this for 70 years. And for 20 years when I was the CEO of our company I always had a conflict during this conference, so I always had to send a designated colleague to do this. And this year I was able to come myself, which thrilled me for a couple of reasons.

First is I'm a Navy veteran. The second is, I'm a member of the Legion in New Jersey, you guys are right down there. And thirdly it gave me just a minute to express gratitude to you. We have 285 businesses. We have 29,000 employee colleagues, and all of our businesses are in the United States of America. And all of our businesses are free to be what they can be. And we know what gives them that freedom. You give us that freedom. So I just want to stand here today and express gratitude for your service and for the preservation of our nation's freedom. Thank you very much. *(Applause)*

DEPARTMENT COMMANDER CLEVINGER: We accept this award, a tremendous award, on behalf of the Department of Virginia and our 217 Posts.

Americanism is the key to our programs and reporting. At this time I would like to introduce our Americanism Chairman John Kokernak for just a few words.

MR. KOKERNAK: It is truly an honor to accept this trophy. I know all the work that my fellow Legionnaires are doing out there around the country and around the world. I accept this on behalf of our 217 posts that are out there every day doing Americanism programs out there in our communities, and they're also reporting it, and that is the part that I am very thankful for, for them to give me those reports that allow me to submit this report to national. Thank you very much. *(Applause)*

Presentation: 2009 National Education Award
David K. Rehbein, Iowa, National Commander

The American Legion's 2009 National Education Award goes to Sesame Street Workshop in recognition and appreciation for its Talk, Listen, Connect multi-media initiative, including the prime time special *Coming Home: Military Families Cope With Change. Coming Home* provides support for military families with children who are experiencing the effects of deployment, multiple deployments, and combat related injuries. If you have not seen this excellent Sesame Street program, please find it. Please see it. Please show it in your communities. Make it available to those military families. Accepting the award is Miranda Barry, Sesame Street Workshop's Executive Vice President for Content. *(Applause)*

MS. BARRY: Thank you all so much for this honor. Most of you probably know Elmo and Big Bird and Oscar the Grouch, the characters that you see every day on Sesame Street, but you may not know that Sesame Workshop is a not-for-profit organization that engages in many outreach activities to the larger community. We, for instance, just in the past two years have been working with Secretary Napolitano's agency on creating an emergency preparedness program that is available at ready.gov that helps families understand what they need to do to be ready in case of an emergency.

We are working with the Department of Agriculture and the WIC Program which is distributing our Healthy Habits for Life materials to low income families to help them understand how they can provide better nutrition for their children, even with very limited financial resources. But of all these programs, I have to say none have meant more to us at the Workshop than the Talk, Listen and Connect Project which we've been involved with over the past couple of years.

It started when our CEO, riding a train to work, read that there are 750,000 children under the age of five who had one or both parents deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan. This was about three years ago. It's the largest number since the Second World War. And he came into the office, Gary does that sort of thing, he came into the office and he said, "We have to do something for these families." And so began an odyssey where we have had the privilege with working with some of the most outstanding people that I've ever had the honor to meet in the military, because as the saying goes, when a service member is deployed, it is his family who serves.

We started with a project dealing with deployment and homecoming and helping families understand what to expect when one of the parents, or in some cases both, are sent overseas, and how to reintegrate into the family. Last year we did the *Coming Home: Military Families Cope With Change* in which we were able to address not only physical injuries, but also so called invisible injuries, and to encourage service members to take advantage of the services that are available to them. And we are now working on an

extraordinary project to help families, both military and civilian, deal with the loss of a parent.

So, I want to thank you all for your service to America, and those service members who have come to us and thanked us for showing that the greater American community really cares about service members and their families. And to thank you very much for honoring Sesame Workshop in this way and to encourage you to look online for Talk, Listen, Connect. Thank you so much. *(Applause)*

Presentation: 2009 National Law Enforcement Officer of the Year
David K. Rehbein, Iowa, National Commander

One of the greatest pleasures of serving in this office is the opportunity to recognize all these great people doing all these wonderful things, and I hope that you will take them to heart. We have another award that we present annually. Because we are an organization anchored in the belief that we must maintain law and order, we annually select an individual as the police officer of the year. We are about to do that. The next order of business is to honor a member of the law enforcement community for setting an example in community service.

Our 2009 Law Enforcement Officer of the Year joined the Manchester, New Hampshire Police Department in 1999. Officer Christopher Biron was assigned to the Manchester Police Canine Unit in 2002. He and his canine partner, Anika, were awarded fourth place in the over-all category at the United States Police Canine Association Field Trial Regional Competition. He conducts presentations to elementary school children as part of the Officer Friendly Program. Ladies and gentlemen, please give a warm round of applause and welcome to Officer Christopher R. Biron. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: The award reads: "Certificate of Commendation, presented to Officer Christopher R. Biron, Manchester Police Department, Manchester, New Hampshire, for outstanding achievement in having been selected as The American Legion National Law Enforcement Officer of the Year and New England Regional winner for 2009. You are clearly a winner and personify "America's Finest." We wish you continued success in your career. Awarded this 26th day of August, 2009, at the 91st Annual National Convention in Louisville, Kentucky."

OFFICER BIRON: First of all, I would like to thank you for allowing me the opportunity to be up here and receive this award. It means a lot to me to be recognized by you folks, the veterans. Although I didn't choose to go into military service, my grandfather is a Navy World War II veteran. He passed on some years ago. And my father was also a member of the National Guard, as well as uncles who have been in the service, so I have always had a deep pride for our military, you guys going and doing what you do, which allowed me to choose a path and go into law enforcement at a local level. This award also means a lot to me, my wife's grandfather was an extremely active member of The American Legion back in New Hampshire in Contoocook, so I know that he's up in heaven looking at me right now smiling, along with my many family members who have passed on.

Doing what I do, I've never really asked for anyone to take note, and I was extremely impressed that of all people, a school crossing guard at one of the schools wrote a letter and forwarded it onto the Legion, and then The American Legion post back home, Post 122, which is not only veterans but also members of law enforcement, took that and ran with it. And from there it led me to this national stage. So I stand here today

humbled, shocked that someone could write so much about me, and honored to be in the presence of you folks, the veterans. So it means a lot, and I'll take that home, and it will be proudly displayed for all to see.

And again, most people ask me where is the dog. It seemed to be a big reason, a big part of what I do, and it's a great tool. But she's retired, and so she's probably at home right now on the couch curled up. But know that again I am very proud to be in front of you folks, the veterans, in receiving this award. So thank you very much. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: You may have noticed the individual in the fire department uniform. That is Officer Biron's brother. It's a family committed to public service and safety. Thank you very much, both of you gentlemen.

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: At this point the Chair recognizes Dennis Boland of Florida, chairman of the National Convention Committee on Children and 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 23, 2009 at 9:00 a.m. in the Kentucky International Convention Center, Rooms L9 & L10, Level 1. 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.

There was one (1) resolution considered by the Committee and referred to the Standing Commission on Children and Youth.

Resolution No. 25 (KS) 2009 NC: Support for Help Us Learn…Give Us Hope, Inc.

Additionally, discussion was heard on the important work of the National Commission on Children & Youth.

AREAS OF CONCERN: Our Areas of Concern for the 2009-2010 year deal with quality of life issues affecting America's children. They are: Child Health, Family Support and Child Safety. These are timely topics that impact the lives of all young people.

SPECIAL OLYMPICS: July 20, 1968, marked the beginning of a movement that has changed millions of lives. As a global year-round sports program of training and competition for persons with intellectual disabilities, Special Olympics has served as the catalyst for change: change in perceptions, change in attitudes, and change in laws regarding inclusion.

Special Olympics is an international nonprofit organization dedicated to empowering individuals with intellectual disabilities to become physically fit, productive and respected members of society through sports training and competition. Currently serving more than 3.1 million children and adults with intellectual disabilities around the world, Special Olympics offers year-round training and competition in 30 Olympic-type summer and winter sports.

Through sports, these special athletes develop improved physical fitness and motor skills, greater self-confidence and a more positive self-image. They grow mentally, socially and spiritually and, through their activities, exhibit boundless courage and enthusiasm.

The American Legion family has helped support the mission of Special Olympics for nearly four decades. Through our volunteer involvement and financial contributions, the Legion family has helped enable Special Olympics to offer sports training and competition that provides the athletes with the opportunity to showcase their skills. The American Legion family, at all levels, continues to pursue ways to assist Special Olympics in this very worthwhile endeavor.

CHILDREN'S MIRACLE NETWORK: Every child needs a place where they can receive specialized care, and The American Legion Family helps make such places possible at Children's Miracle Network hospitals. Each dollar raised by our members helps repair hearts, provide treatment, and most importantly give hope to 17 million kids. Children's Miracle Network Hospitals:

- Treat 98% of all children needing heart or lung transplants.
- Treat 88% of all children with cancer.
- Treat 76% of all children with cystic fibrosis.
- Treat 90% of all children with sickle cell anemia.
- Treat 72% of children with pediatric AIDS.
- Devote 60% of their services to children under age six and 25% to newborns.
- Train 60% of pediatricians and 80% of all pediatric specialists.

The real work to save and improve the lives of children across North America and throughout the world gets done at Children's Miracle Network hospitals. In one year, these CMN hospitals benefit more children than any other children's cause or organization. The American Legion's continued support plays a vital role a corporate sponsor in helping these hospitals treat children.

CHILDREN & YOUTH CONFERENCE: On September 18-20, 2009, the annual Children & Youth Conference will be held at the Sheraton Indianapolis City Centre Hotel in Indianapolis. This conference will educate Department representatives on current children's issues and the programs of the National Commission on Children & Youth and is designed to accomplish three objectives:

- To instruct Department Children & Youth Chairmen on the programs and activities of the National Commission on Children & Youth, to include contemporary issues impacting the child welfare field, recent legislation as it relates to the Legion's children & youth agenda, and program mechanics;
- To provide Department Children & Youth Chairmen with the tools needed to design, implement and conduct a Department Children & Youth Conference to train Post and District Chairmen; and
- To encourage Department Children & Youth Chairmen, through round table discussions and/or small groups, to participate in an exchange of ideas that focus on the physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual needs of children.

To successfully implement Children & Youth programs of The American Legion at the state and community levels demands adequate training of our volunteers. This annual conference will provide Children & Youth Chairmen with not only instruction on the Legion's children & youth programs, but outline the tools they need to conduct a similar conference within their home departments.

OPERATION: MILITARY KIDS: When National Guard and Reserve parents are mobilized, their children suddenly have unique needs. While these kids still "look the same," their lives have been turned upside down. These "new" military kids need to

connect with other youth in similar situations. They seek friends and adults who can empathize and can help them cope with their new world.

Operation: Military Kids creates community support networks for military youth when soldier parents are deployed. It delivers recreational, social and educational programs for military youth living in civilian communities. It educates the public on the impact of the deployment cycle on soldiers, families, kids and the community as a whole, and it becomes a part of the ongoing deployment support services for military children and youth.

The American Legion is proud to be associated with this project and encourages our Departments and Posts to work with and support this effort to contribute to the well being of Military Kids.

TEMPORARY FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE: Our Temporary Financial Assistance Program continues its eighty-four year tradition of service to veterans and their families. Last year the TFA program awarded over $705,756 in non-repayable grants to veterans' families.

With the help of The American Legion, 1,462 children of eligible veterans and currently activated parents were able to keep a roof over their heads, food in their stomachs and clothes on their backs. I urge each of you to make use of this landmark program to assist needy veteran's children within your communities.

FAMILY SUPPORT NETWORK: Our greatest strength, as Legion family members, has always been demonstrated most effectively by our volunteer involvement at the Post level. A prime example of this is our Family Support Network.

Last year, through our National Headquarters alone, The American Legion Family Support Network fielded 2,750 requests for assistance and information from our comrades currently serving on active duty and their families. So far this year, the Legion has averaged over 50 calls per week for assistance.

Once a request is received, the basic information is transmitted to the respective department. Departments contact the closest post and the onus is on the post to contact the family. Within days, often within hours, members of The American Legion family are on hand to assess the situation and assist the family in finding resources both locally and nationally.

Thousands of posts have responded to the call for action, providing assistance to families ranging from simple home repairs to emergency financial aid. Local posts are a vital link in connecting families to already existing resources. Our members know their communities and they know how to get things done. The American Legion Family Support Network is a key component in our mission to care for our service personnel and their families. I ask for your help in spreading the word.

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.

Referred to the Standing Commission on Children and Youth

Resolution No. 25 (KS)**: Support for Help Us Learn…Give Us Hope, Inc.**

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN BOLAND: As a duly elected and registered delegate for the Department of Florida, I move for the adoption of this report.

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: You've heard the motion is there a second? ...*Second.* Discussion? All those in favor signify by the sign of aye. Opposed? The motion is carried. The report of Children & Youth is adopted.

Presentation: Garland Murphy Award
David K. Rehbein, Iowa, National Commander

And I now have the pleasure of presenting the Garland Murphy Award to the department that raised the most money for the Child Welfare Foundation during the past program year. Ladies and gentlemen, it is a pleasure for me to present this award to the Department of Ohio. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: The award reads: "The Garland D. Murphy, Jr. Award presented by The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation to the Department of Ohio for the Program Year 2008-2009. 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 Boland, President of the Child Welfare Foundation, and the foundation's executive secretary, Bob Caudell, signs it."

Presentation: The U.S. 'Udie' Grant Legacy Award
David K. Rehbein, Iowa, National Commander

And it is also at this time my privilege to present the U.S. 'Udie' Grant Legacy Award. The 'Udie' Grant Legacy Award recognizes the efforts of The American Legion family in a department. It goes to the department that raises the most per capita for the Child Welfare Foundation during the past program year. The winner of this award, this very prestigious award, is the Department of Ohio. *(Applause)*

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 2008-2009 in recognition of outstanding support for The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation. We thank you."

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: And if we have departments, individuals, that would like to make donations to the Child Welfare Foundation, we can accept them on stage.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (NE): Commander, on behalf of the State of Nebraska I would like to donate to the Child Welfare Foundation $1,578.17.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (IA): Commander, on behalf of The American Legion Post 37, your home post, I present you a check for $125.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (SC): Commander, on behalf of The American Legion Department of South Carolina, representing the great State of South Carolina, I have two checks: One for the Children's Welfare Fund of $966, and one for the Children's Miracle Network for $1,203.

DELEGATE LEWIS (NH): Chuck Lewis, Department of New Hampshire. Mr. Commander, I was asked to present this to you on behalf of our Alternate NEC, Roland Patnode, who is a little under the weather right now. I have two checks for a combined total of $1,465.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN DAGGETT (CT): Commander, on behalf of the Department of Connecticut, we're proud to present you with a check for the Child Welfare Foundation in the amount of $1,550.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (OH): Commander, on behalf of the Department of Ohio I am proud to present a check for the Child Welfare Foundation for the total of $25,000.

DELEGATE BOLAND (FL): Commander Rehbein, as president of the National Child Welfare Foundation it is indeed a pleasure to present you with a diamond gold lapel pin from the Child Welfare Foundation Board of Directors, sir, for your dedication to The American Legion.

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: Dennis, thank you. And I will wear that proudly because it reminds me of part of what we're all about: Those kids. Thank you. Total donations to the Child Welfare Foundation: $30,684.17. Outstanding, folks. And that does not include the $1,203 to the Children's Miracle Network. That was a separate donation, and stands alone. Thank you very much. *(Applause)*

Our next presentation will be made by Bron Mogenis, Trustee for the Chapel of the Four Chaplains. And I would like to call our five national vice commanders to join me on stage for that presentation.

Presentation: Chapel of Four Chaplains Legion of Honor Bronze Medallion
Bron Mogenis, Trustee

Good afternoon. My name is Bron Mogenis, and today I'm wearing two hats. I represent the Department of the District of Columbia, and also I'm a trustee of the Chapel of Four Chaplains Foundation, which is located in Philadelphia. I had another trustee that was supposed to come to assist in this, and unfortunately he became ill, so I asked Warren Cuffee, who is a past department commander, to help out.

Just a couple of minutes about the Chapel of Four Chaplains Foundation. No tradition of American society is more precious to or characteristic of our culture, than that of voluntarily reaching out to neighbors in need. Such a selfless service is part of both our civic and our religious heritage. The Legion of Honor Award for the Chapel of Four Chaplains program publicly recognizes members of our society whose lives model the giving spirit and unconditional service to the community, nation, humanity, without regard to race, religion, or creed, as was so dramatically exemplified by the four chaplains of different religious denominations, who on February 3, 1943, onboard the sinking USAT *Dorchester*, gave away their own life jackets, their only means of survival, so that other service members could live. This was truly a heroic act. Only 132 service members from the 902 onboard survived when a German submarine torpedoed the ship. The four chaplains perished as well.

In February of 1951, years later, the Chapel of Four Chaplains, an interfaith memorial chapel, was dedicated in Philadelphia by former President Harry S. Truman. Today, as it has these many years, the Chapel of Four Chaplains serves the memory of these brave men. Thus, to continue to recognize and encourage acts of brotherhood and sacrifice among Americans of every age and station in life, the Chapel continues to award the Legion of Honor Award to individuals who have demonstrated the selfless and transformative achievement that is above and beyond that professional or organizational position the individuals hold. Over the past years this award has been presented to a number of U.S. Presidents. Harry S. Truman, Dwight D. Eisenhower, Jimmy Carter,

Ronald Reagan, George Herbert Walker Bush; a number of legislators, and such luminaries as Bob Hope, Mickey Rooney, John Glenn, James Mitchener, as well as our previous Past National Commander Martin F. Conatser and his five vice commanders.

Today it is my singular honor to present the Legion of Honor Bronze Medallions to the National Commander David K. Rehbein and his Vice Commanders, James W. Davis, Michael J. Landkamer, Harley W. Ray, Dellano T. Simmons, and James A. LaCoursiere. It is my pleasure to do this. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: The Legion of Honor Bronze Medallion from the Chapel of Four Chaplains is granted for extraordinary contributions to the well-being of others at the national or world level, to world peace, or to interfaith or interethnic understanding. The medallions are being presented by Bron Mogenis, Trustee, Chapel of the Four Chaplains, and awarded to National Commander David K. Rehbein, National Vice Commander James W. Davis, National Vice Commander Michael J. Landkamer, National Vice Commander James LaCoursiere, National Vice Commander Dellano T. Simmons, and National Vice Commander Harley W. Ray.

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: The Chair now recognizes K. Robert Lewis, Department of Connecticut, chairman of the Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and 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 23, 2009, in Room 112, Level 1, Kentucky International Convention Center, Louisville, Kentucky, and agreed on the following report, which is respectfully submitted for your consideration.

The Committee was called to order by Barry A. Searle (PA), 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 Pat Phillips (GA), as Committee Secretary; R. Mike Suter (NY), Chairman of the Claims and Rating Subcommittee and John Hickey (IN), Secretary; Terry Schow (UT), Chairman of the Hospital and Medical Services Subcommittee and Chris Harding (OK), 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 64 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—Arthur L. Smith (MA)

Region 2—Tracy L. Davis (MO)

Region 3—Robert E. Gosa (MS)

Region 4—Steve Burger (NE)

Region 5—Jeanette Rae (NV)

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 31 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	13
Consolidated with Resolutions Approved	0
Referred to the Standing Commission	3
Received and Recorded	12
Rejected	3

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

A report of action taken on the 3 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. 2: Uniform Payment Policy for Emergency Care at Non-Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Medical Center Facilities
Origin: North Carolina
Submitted by: Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
(As amended)

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Directive 2006-051, Standards for Nomenclature and Operations in VHA Facility Emergency Departments, states, "Facility Director is responsible for ensuring that: "policies for the provision of emergency care, for the transfer of patients, and for the diversion of emergency patients from the facility are developed, implemented, and monitored"; and

WHEREAS, Each VA Medical Center's Director is not required to follow a standard on the facility's Policy of "Divert" or diversion of veterans in emergency vehicles in route to VA Medical Centers and is not consistent with the assumption of total healthcare as advertised by the VA Medical Center Facilities; and

WHEREAS, In many instances nationally, veteran claimants are improperly billed for their emergency medical care; and

WHEREAS, Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs) with power of attorney over claimants' cases generally submit requests for VA Medical Center policy/Emergency Room Standard Operating Procedures, relating to VA Medical Center Diversion Policy; only to discover that the VA Medical Center does not provide such documentation; and

WHEREAS, Not providing such information is in clear violation of VA's duty to assist and inform under Title 38 United States Code (USC), Section 5103A, the Secretary shall assist such a claimant in developing the facts pertinent to the claim and such assistance shall include requesting information; and

WHEREAS, Because VA has local facility directors implementing local policies with public and private hospitals for the provision of Emergency Care diversion of patients, there are many variances that modify title 38 of the Code of Federal Regulation 17.52 to 17.56 by the time it reaches local VA Medical Centers; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Louisville, Kentucky, August 25, 26, 27, 2009, That the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) immediately adopt a more definitive policy on Emergency Care diversion that is consistently applied at every VA Medical Center; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the Emergency Care diversion policy does not result in unfair billing of a veteran transported from a VA Medical Center to a non-VA medical facility for emergency care.

Resolution No. 11: Amend Section 110, Title 38, United States Code, To Provide that Disability Evaluations Continuously In Effect at the Same Evaluation Rating Be Protected After a Period of 10 Years
Origin: South Dakota
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
(As amended)

WHEREAS, The American Legion was established in 1919 and issued a Federal charter as a wartime veterans' service organization with one of its primary purposes being Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation; and

WHEREAS, More than 2.5 million veterans currently suffer from chronic service-connected disabilities and receive compensation from the Department of Veterans Affairs for those disabilities incurred in or aggravated while serving in the United States Armed Forces; and

WHEREAS, Section 110 of title 38, United States Code, currently provides for the protection of all disability compensation evaluations that have been continuously in effect for twenty (20) or more years; and

WHEREAS, Section 1159 of title 38, United States Code, currently provides for the protection from severance of all service-connected disabilities that have been continuously in effect for ten (10) or more years; and

WHEREAS, Permanency should be conceded for all disability compensation ratings which have been in effect for ten (10) years without change in evaluation with no further examination scheduled; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Louisville, Kentucky, August 25, 26, 27, 2009, That The American Legion supports amending Section 110, title 38, United States Code, to provide that disability evaluations continuously in effect at the same evaluation rate be protected after a period of ten (10) years.

Resolution No. 12: Support Legislation to Repeal the Secretary of Veterans Affairs Authority to Impose a Deductible For Service-connected Disabled Veterans from the Amount Payable for Beneficiary Travel Pay for Medical Examination, Treatment, or Care
Origin: South Dakota
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
(As amended)

WHEREAS, This great organization was based upon comradeship born of wartime service and dedicated to fair and equitable treatment of all veterans; and

WHEREAS, The Secretary of Veterans Affairs (VA) is authorized under Title 38, United State Code, Section 111(g)(1), to pay a beneficiary travel allowance to certain service-connected veterans for VA examination, medical treatment, or care; and

WHEREAS, Public Law 110-387 required VA to reduce (and freeze) the deductible amounts to those originally specified in 38 U.S.C. § 111(c)(5); and

WHEREAS, Effective January 9, 2009, the Beneficiary Travel deductible was reduced to $3.00 per one way trip; $6.00 for a round trip; with a maximum deductible of $18.00 per calendar month; and

WHEREAS, The $18.00 is the total monthly deductible amount for travel to all VA facilities; and

WHEREAS. Regardless of the deductible amount withheld per trip, deductible requirements end after 6 one-way (3 round) trips in a calendar month; and

WHEREAS, Should a veteran be going to multiple VA facilities, and the veteran notes this when applying for Travel reimbursement, it is incumbent upon the facility providing the care and travel to contact any other VA facilities to determine if the deductible has been met; and

WHEREAS, The only exemptions to the deductible:

- Veterans traveling in conjunction with a C&P examination,
- Non veteran donors,
- Veterans requiring a special mode of transportation, and
- When it is determined that the imposition of the deductible would cause a severe financial hardship; and

WHEREAS, All other eligible veterans, including those receiving care for service connected conditions, are required to have the deductible applied; and

WHEREAS, Eligible veterans currently receive a flat rate of 41.5 cents per mile for all beneficiary travel; and

WHEREAS, Service-connected disabled veterans eligible for beneficiary travel payment should not have to help defray the cost of their travel for health care in the form of a deductible to and from a VA medical facility for medical examination or health care treatment; and

WHEREAS, It is extremely unfair for the Secretary of Veterans Affairs (VA) to impose the deductible on the service-connected disabled veterans seeking treatment for a service-connected condition and service-connected veterans rated 30 percent or more when traveling in connection with any disability; and

WHEREAS, When the rates do not cover the cost of travel, veterans without the necessary resources, are likely to delay their health care delivery until their needs become critical; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Louisville, Kentucky, August 25, 26, 27, 2009, That The American Legion supports legislation to repeal the Secretary's authority to impose a deductible for service-connected disabled veterans from the amount payable for beneficiary travel pay for medical examination, treatment, or care.

Resolution No. 29: Open-Ended Presumptive Period for Undiagnosed Illnesses for Persian Gulf War Veterans
Origin: Georgia
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
(As amended)

WHEREAS, Thousands of Persian 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 Persian Gulf War—including those serving in Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom—have also been exhibiting chronic, unexplained multiple physical symptom illnesses; and

WHEREAS, The Persian Gulf War period of war has not been officially ended by Congress; and

WHEREAS, Although there has recently been some progress in research on the long-term health effects of many of the agents and environmental hazards veterans were potentially exposed to during the Persian Gulf War, numerous symptoms experienced by sick veterans are still not well understood and 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 Persian Gulf War undiagnosed illnesses under title 38 Code of Federal Regulations Section 3.317 will expire January 1, 2012; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs has previously extended the presumptive period by regulation for five-year increments just prior to expiration; and

WHEREAS, Due to the unanswered questions remaining regarding the health of ill veterans and the ongoing nature of Persian Gulf War-related research, The American Legion, on several occasions, has requested the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to extend the presumptive period indefinitely; and

WHEREAS, The Secretary of Veterans Affairs has refused to grant such requests; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Louisville, Kentucky, August 25, 26, 27, 2009, That The American Legion supports enactment of legislation to extend indefinitely the presumptive period for service-connection of Persian Gulf War Veterans with undiagnosed illnesses.

Resolution No. 35: The American Legion Position on the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Means Test
Origin: Idaho
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
(As amended)

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA's) Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Directive 2008-083 establishes policy on Means Test and Geographic-Based Means Test Thresholds; and

WHEREAS, Public Law 107-135, the Department of Veterans Affairs Health Care Programs Enhancement Act of 2001, directed VA to implement a Geographic Means Test (GMT); and

WHEREAS, VA uses the Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD's) "low-income" geographic-based income limits as the thresholds for VA's GMT; and

WHEREAS, Congress established Priority Groups within the Department of Veterans Affairs to prioritize access to VA health care; and

WHEREAS, The Secretary of Veterans Affairs authorized suspension of new enrollment of Priority Group 8 veterans in January 2003; and

WHEREAS, Using the adjusted gross income may reclassify them as a Priority Group 7, thus allowing enrollment into VA; and

WHEREAS, Using the adjusted gross income may reclassify Priority Group 7 veterans as Priority Group 5 veterans; and

WHEREAS, The eligibility requirement for enrollment in Priority Group 5 or 7 for veterans to receive health care services provided by VHA is based on income; and

WHEREAS, The income for the Means Test is based on gross income, not adjusted gross income; and

WHEREAS, All other Federal agencies have eligibility on adjusted gross income; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention in Louisville, Kentucky, August 25, 26, 27, 2009, That The American Legion support legislation to change Department of Veterans Affairs Means Test policy to allow adjusted gross income to be used for the eligibility criteria in Priority Groups 5, 7 and 8.

Resolution No. 51: The American Legion Develop a Suicide Prevention and Outreach Referral Program
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
(As amended)

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) reported that in 2008, approximately 120 veterans committed suicide every week and the Associated Press reported 1000 suicide attempts per month by veterans under VA's care; and

WHEREAS, In response to the increased numbers of suicide, VA has opened a 24-hour National Suicide Prevention hotline, 1-800-273-TALK (8255) for veterans located at the Canandaigua VA Medical Center, as well as began providing suicide prevention counselors at each of the 154 VA Medical Centers nationwide to provide assistance in the time of crisis; and

WHEREAS, Even with the outreach conducted by VA, statistics continue to show that the number of suicides is on the rise and efforts are needed to outreach those cases falling through the cracks; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion's 2.6 million members can provide additional outreach and referral assistance to those veterans through national, state and community levels through a dedicated Suicide Prevention and Outreach Program; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Louisville, Kentucky, August 25, 26, 27, 2009, That The American Legion provide nationwide distribution of Suicide Prevention brochures; and, be it further

RESOLVED, The American Legion's Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission develop a National Suicide Prevention and Outreach Referral Program; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion National, Department, Posts and Legionnaires only serve as a referral source for veterans that need assistance to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) National Suicide Hotline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255); and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion highlight awareness of this program through The American Legion Website, Magazine, Dispatch, and Online Updates.

Resolution No. 53: The American Legion Policy on Accreditation of Representatives by the Department of Veterans Affairs
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
(As amended)

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) formally recognizes, by the process of accreditation, individuals to assist claimants on behalf of The American Legion in the preparation, presentation and prosecution of claims for VA benefits; and

WHEREAS, The Director of the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Division (VA&R) is the certifying officer for The American Legion for accreditation purposes; and

WHEREAS, Applications for accreditation endorsed by American Legion Department Adjutants are forwarded to the Director of VA&R for review, endorsement and submittal to VA for approval; and

WHEREAS, There are approximately 2,000 American Legion representatives currently accredited by VA; and

WHEREAS, Most accredited American Legion representatives are professional service officers employed by American Legion Departments or state, municipal or county governments; and

WHEREAS, Although The American Legion National Headquarters has traditionally discouraged American Legion Departments from requesting accreditation of post service officers and other volunteers, such volunteers have been accredited in the past per the request of the Department and subsequent endorsement of the National Headquarters; and

WHEREAS, Although The American Legion National Headquarters conducts two national service officer training schools each year and provides general oversight and

guidance to accredited American Legion representatives, daily oversight, supervision and training is the responsibility of the department or state entity; and

WHEREAS, Veterans' law has become increasingly complex in the last 20 years since the inception of Federal Court level review of Board of Veterans' Appeals decisions, requiring regular formal training and oversight of accredited representatives to ensure proficiency and competency; and

WHEREAS, Such training and oversight can become problematic with volunteer service officers as they do not generally work in a normal office environment, making proper oversight and supervision extremely difficult; and

WHEREAS, Malpractice and other liability issues must also be considered when accrediting volunteer representatives; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion has an extensive network of post and other volunteer service officers, most of whom are not accredited by VA for the purpose of providing representation; and

WHEREAS, Volunteer post and other service officers are individuals who are not professional service officers employed by American Legion Departments, state, county, municipal or other local governments for the purpose assisting veterans and their dependents in the preparation, presentation, and prosecution of claims for VA benefits; and

WHEREAS, Volunteer post and other service officers do not have to be accredited to provide general assistance, information and other valuable services to veterans in their communities; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Louisville, Kentucky, August 25, 26, 27, 2009, The American Legion, as a general rule, <u>NOT</u> endorse the accreditation application of volunteer service officers unless an exceptional circumstance is shown to warrant such accreditation; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That an American Legion Department Adjutant:

- **Must specifically request the accreditation of a volunteer service officer;**
- **Must clearly and concisely set forth, in writing, the exceptional circumstance justifying the accreditation;**
- **Specifically describe how the Department will provide sufficient oversight and supervision; and**
- **Specify how the Department will address any potential malpractice and other liability issues; and, be it further**

RESOLVED, That such requests be submitted to the Director of the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Division, the certifying officer for The American Legion, and that the Director of the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Division make the final determination in approving or disapproving such requests; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That any volunteer granted accreditation be required to take a "pre-accreditation" examination and complete additional training requirements each year as determined by the Director of the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Division in addition to any requirements established by the Department.

Resolution No. 105: The American Legion Support Legislation to Establish a Caregiver Program
Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The American Legion is an organization of wartime veterans who have dedicated themselves to the service of the community, state and nation; and

WHEREAS, Operations Enduring Freedom (OEF), Operations Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and the current Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) have produced over 6,800 severely injured veterans due to the types of weapons being used by the enemy, namely improvised explosive devices; and

WHEREAS, Due to advances in military medical field treatment, over 95 percent of severely injured military personnel are able to be saved and brought home, but many will require in-home type care; and

WHEREAS, These newly-wounded warriors often times have horrific service-connected medical conditions, including, but not limited to multiple amputations, paraplegia quadriplegia, complete loss of vision and/or hearing; and

WHEREAS, Many of these wounded warriors will require long-term caregiver services either while still on active duty or as veterans and although the spouse, parents, siblings or close relatives would be more than willing to give this care, most lack any formal training or certification in that area; and

WHEREAS, Even if a family member would be willing to be trained and certified in the area of care giving, many are unable to afford the cost of such training and would have to find someone to take care of the veteran while they were in training status; and

WHEREAS, Family member(s) would also have to give up their own employment to be a caregiver and in many households they are now the primary source of income and cannot afford to lose that revenue; and

WHEREAS, When a veteran requires the aid of another person in order to perform personal functions required in everyday living (such as bathing, feeding, dressing, attending to the wants of nature, adjusting prosthetic devices, or protecting himself/herself from the hazards of his/her daily environment), the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), under Title 38, Code of Federal Regulations § 3.352, provides a special monthly compensation (SMC) benefit, known as an Aid and Attendance (A&A) allowance, in addition to the monthly service-connected disability compensation; and

WHEREAS, A&A is provided to the veteran to pay for such in-home care, but it does not compensate for a family member's loss of income when the family member gives up his or her employment to become a caregiver; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Louisville, Kentucky on August 25, 26, 27, 2009, That The American Legion supports legislation that would establish a pilot program to pay the cost of training for family member caregivers to teach and certify them in the needed skills to take care of these seriously injured service members and veterans; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That during this training and certification the participant is paid a per diem allowance to assist with their living expenses; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That while the family member is in training and certification, the current respite program administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) be expanded to include service members and veterans who have someone

undergoing this training, thus allowing that person to attend school without being concerned about the veteran's care while they are gone; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That once the family member caregiver has been fully certified and trained and returns home to take care of the needs of the veteran, the caregiver shall be paid an allowance, in addition to the veteran's Aid and Attendance benefit, by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs in an amount considered reasonable based on the geographical area, amount and intensity of care; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That such an allowance will not affect in any way the payment of the veteran's Aid and Attendance benefit.

Resolution No. 106: The American Legion Support Habitat for Humanity Volunteer Opportunities
Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

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, Since 1946, The American Legion has remained a staunch supporter of the largest program in the Federal government, the Department of Veterans Affairs' Voluntary Service (VAVS) Program; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion has 6,105 volunteers that contribute over 900,000 hours annually to support veterans in Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Medical Centers, Community-Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs), Vet Centers, Fisher Houses and State Veterans Homes; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion has sought to expand the scope of its organization's volunteer programs beyond the traditional role and volunteer assignments in the VAVS Program; and

WHEREAS, Habitat for Humanity shares a common vision in providing assistance in the community by providing simple, decent shelter to those in need; and

WHEREAS, Recently, Habitat for Humanity has focused on improving its support of the military and veterans population by offering to create a Habitat for Humanity and The American Legion Joint Volunteer Toolkit for distribution to all of The American Legion posts nationwide; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion, through the Department Service Officers, can distribute Habitat for Humanity's eligibility criterion throughout states looking for veterans that would qualify for the housing program; and

WHEREAS, Additionally, The American Legion can provide volunteers for veterans' housing project sites as needed; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Louisville, Kentucky on August 25, 26, 27, 2009, That The American Legion and Habitat for Humanity create a joint volunteer toolkit to identify opportunities for American Legion Departments, Districts and Posts to assist Habitat for Humanity in building or supporting military or veterans' housing projects; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion Department Service Officers distribute eligibility criterion throughout states that are looking for veterans eligible for the housing program; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, The American Legion would track and report its volunteer hours by having Habitat for Humanity's on site volunteer coordinator sign American

Legion Volunteer Certification paperwork, which would be forwarded to the Department Adjutant and finally submitted to National Headquarters for volunteer hours and locations tracking.

Resolution No. 107: The American Legion Withdraws Support for the Commission on the Future of America's Veterans
Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, In 2006, The American Legion supported the establishment and operation of the Commission on the Future For America's Veterans, an independently funded and managed 501(c)3 entity; and

WHEREAS, The Commission on the Future for America's Veterans was formed to address the growing concern of seamless transition difficulties encountered by active-duty service members, as well as National Guard and Reserve personnel, from military to civilian life; and

WHEREAS, The Seamless Transition Program, recommended by independent assessments from the Commission on Service Members and Veterans Transition Assistance (1999) and President's Task Force to Improve Health Care Delivery for Our Nation's Veterans (2003) never resulted in substantive changes to the transition process; and

WHEREAS, The Commission on the Future for America's Veterans was tasked to analyze current conditions and recommend improvements of issues concerning veterans; and

WHEREAS, The Commission on the Future for America's Veterans was to be dissolved directly after completing said mission; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion have raised some issues of concern in regards to the Commission on the Future for America's Veterans and have competing policy goals, as well as delay on submission of the final report that was due in 2008 and is still not finalized; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Louisville, Kentucky on August 25, 26, 27, 2009, That The American Legion withdraw its support for the Commission on the Future for America's Veterans.

Resolution No. 108: The American Legion Supports Veterans of Valor Organization
Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, Founded in 2007, Veterans of Valor is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to assisting and supporting service members who have been severely wounded in combat during their recovery, rehabilitation and reintegration into civilian or military life; and

WHEREAS, To be eligible for a Veterans of Valor program, a combat wounded veteran must have a qualified medical professional (usually a physician) state in writing that the veteran will or did require at least six months of recovery or treatment time; and

WHEREAS, Veterans of Valor provides specific items, services and programs separate from, but complementary to programs of The American Legion tailored to meet the needs of those injured heroes and their families; and

WHEREAS, Veterans of Valor is committed to connecting with wounded service members on an individual basis, and providing tangible support with the goal of promoting physical, mental and emotional healing; and

WHEREAS, Veterans of Valor offers three main programs to combat-wounded veterans: Backpacks, Hero Wishes and A Night Out to provide a unique therapeutic value to the wounded service member and his or her family; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion is dedicated to improving support for active duty service members and veterans during their time of transition and rehabilitation; and

WHEREAS, This resolution was sent to the National Security Commission for comment and they were in agreement with it; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Louisville, Kentucky on August 25, 26, 27, 2009, That The American Legion supports the Organization, Veterans of Valor, and its programs to assist severely wounded combat veterans.

Resolution No. 109: The American Legion Supports the Veterans Housing Program of the Rebuilding Together Organization
Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, Founded in 1988, Rebuilding Together Inc., a Nationally Organized 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to assisting and supporting low income families and in particular service members and veterans who have been severely wounded in combat during their recovery, rehabilitation and reintegration into civilian or military life; and

WHEREAS, Rebuilding Together Inc. offers a Veteran's Housing Program for combat-wounded and injured, and veterans in severe economic distress: In particular, home repairs and modifications for safety and accessibility issues impacting the wounded service member and his or her family; and

WHEREAS, To be eligible for a Rebuilding Together Program, a combat wounded or injured veteran must have qualified medical documentation on the injury and must show economic distress; and

WHEREAS, Rebuilding Together Inc. provides specific items, services and programs separate from, but complementary to programs of The American Legion, tailored to meet the needs of those injured heroes and their families; and

WHEREAS, Rebuilding Together Inc. is committed to connecting with wounded service members on an individual basis, and providing tangible support with the goal of promoting physical, mental and emotional healing; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion is dedicated to improving support for active duty service members and veterans during their time of transition and rehabilitation; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Louisville, Kentucky on August 25, 26, 27, 2009, That The American Legion supports the Veteran's Housing Program of Rebuilding Together Inc. and its efforts to assist severely wounded, injured and economically distressed veterans.

Resolution No. 110: The American Legion Supports the Operation Homefront Organization
Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, Founded in 2002, Operation Homefront is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that provides emergency and morale assistance for deployed service members, the families they leave behind and for wounded warriors when they return home; and

WHEREAS, With more than 4,500 volunteers and 30 chapters, Operation Homefront works with military families during deployments on a case-by-case basis to resolve issues ranging from home and auto repair to urgent financial assistance; and

WHEREAS, Operation Homefront provides assistance to active duty and activated Guard and Reserve families and primarily serve the families of service members in the rank of E-6 and below; and

WHEREAS, To be eligible for an Operation Homefront program, a service member submits a short financial application, proof of military service and additional documentation as requested to obtain assistance; and

WHEREAS, Operation Homefront also hosts special events throughout the year which includes the 9/11 Freedom Walk that The American Legion has supported in previous years nationwide by staffing a booth at the events to distribute veteran benefits information, assisting with veterans claims and benefits and participate in the walk; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion is dedicated to assisting and supporting service members as well as promoting civic engagement to honor the family members of victims who died in the 9/11 terrorist attacks; and

WHEREAS, Operation Homefront provides specific assistance, services and programs separate from, but complementary to programs of The American Legion tailored to meet the needs of those injured heroes and their families; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Louisville, Kentucky on August 25, 26, 27, 2009, That The American Legion supports the Operation Homefront Organization; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion National Veterans and Affairs Rehabilitation Division distribute information on locations of 9/11 Freedom Walks nationwide to the Department Adjutants for further dissemination to districts and posts to garner support for the event; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion Department Adjutants submit a list of number of volunteers, hours and locations to the National VA&R Division for tracking and reporting of the 9/11 Freedom Walk Event.

Received and Recorded

Resolution No. 9 (SD)**: Increase the Burial Allowance Payable in the Case of Death Due to Service-connected Disability and Provide for Automatic Adjustments**

Resolution No. 10 (SD)**: Oppose Lump-Sum Payments by the Department of Veterans Affairs to Service-connected Disabled Veterans**

Resolution No. 36 (ID)**: The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Adjust their Mileage Reimbursement based on the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Mileage Rate**

Resolution No. 57 (NY)**: Establishment of Presumption of Exposure to Agent Orange for Veterans with Service in Territorial Waters of Vietnam**
Resolution No. 58 (NY)**: Support Congressional Funding for Construction of United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims Courthouse**
Resolution No. 62 (MA)**: The American Legion Policy on State Veterans Homes**
Resolution No. 63 (MA)**: The American Legion Support Legislation to Increase Annual Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Construction Appropriations**
Resolution No. 64 (MA)**: Support The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Presumptive Medical Care for Persian Gulf War Veterans**
Resolution No. 98 (IL)**: Support The Extension of the Time Period to File an Appeal to the United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims**
Resolution No. 102 (IL)**: The American Legion Support Increase in Burial Allowances**
Resolution No. 103 (IL)**: Extend Time Limit to Apply for Service-Disabled Veterans Insurance**
Resolution No. 104 (AR)**: The American Legion Policy on Agent Orange**

Referred to the Standing Commission on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

Resolution No. 27 (WY)**: Support of Admission to State Veterans Homes for any Parent Whose Child Perished While Serving on Active Duty in the Armed Forces of The United States**
Resolution No. 47 (CA)**: The American Legion Oppose The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Transferring Veteran Assets for Use of Non-Veteran Purposes**
Resolution No. 84 (WA)**: Funding for Veterans Service Office at Auburn, Washington**

Rejected

Resolution No. 19 (CO)**: Support for the 2010 National Veterans Wheelchair Games**
Resolution No. 83 (NJ)**: In-State Licensure of Veterans Administration Healthcare Providers**
Resolution No. 99 (IL)**: The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Grant Automatic Waiver of Overpayments of $300 or Less**

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Mr. Commander, as a duly elected delegate to this Convention, I, K. Robert Lewis, move for the adoption of this report.

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: You've heard the motion is there a second? ...*Second.* Discussion? All those in favor signify by the sign of aye. Opposed? The motion is carried. The report of the Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Convention Committee is adopted.

Presentation: William F. Lenker National Service Trophy
David K. Rehbein, Iowa, National Commander

And with that adoption it's appropriate and it's 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 2008-2009 program year the William F. Lenker National Service Trophy is awarded to the Department of Minnesota. Congratulations. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: For the next item of business the Chair recognizes Larry J. Besson of Illinois, Chairman of the National Convention Committee on Credentials and Internal Affairs, for the purpose of making a report.

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-seven members of the Credentials and Internal Affairs Committee, Section II, elected Larry J. Besson of Illinois as Permanent Chairman, and Larry D. Sheets of Florida as Permanent Secretary, and considered twenty-six resolutions, twenty-five of which originated with Departments of The American Legion and one which was created by the committee. Of these, four were approved; two approved and consolidated; two approved as consolidated and amended; eight were referred; five were received and recorded and five were rejected.

Approved

Resolution No. 1: 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 91st National Convention has been held in Louisville, Kentucky, August 25-27, 2009; and

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

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Louisville, Kentucky, August 25, 26, 27, 2009, That we express our deep appreciation to the Department of Kentucky, Governor of the Commonwealth of Kentucky Steve Beshear; Mayor Jerry Abramson; the city of Louisville, Kentucky, including the Fire Department, Police Department, and other Public Safety Officials, and to the 2009 National Convention Corporation Officers, Silas M. Noel, 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. 48: Support American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Credentials and Other Internal Matters (Section II)

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 American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial shall be a fitting tribute to the brave men and women who sustained severe injuries and life-long disabilities in the course of defending of the United States; and

WHEREAS, The memorial shall command a two-acre site between Washington Avenue SW (Canal Street), C Street SW and Second Street SW, the memorial will be within full view of the United States Capitol, adjacent to the National Mall, and across from Independence Avenue and the United States Botanic Garden; and

WHEREAS, Congress passed legislation authorizing the creation of the American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial in Washington, D.C. and President Clinton signed the legislation into law in 2000; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Louisville, Kentucky, August 25, 26, 27, 2009, That The American Legion supports the creation of the American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. without financial obligation to The American Legion National Headquarters.

Resolution No. 79: POW/MIA Forever Stamp
Origin: Florida
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Credentials and Other Internal Matters (Section II)

WHEREAS, The American Legion is an organization of wartime veterans, who have dedicated themselves to Service to Community, State; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion is an organization that recognizes the sacrifices that individuals on active duty provide to their Nation; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion has been in the forefront of recognizing and honoring the POW/MIA's; and

WHEREAS, There is a significant number of POW/MIA's from all wars who are yet to be accounted for; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion through resolution 288 supports Prisoners Of War and Missing In Action, and that a recognition of them is part of the official opening of all American Legion ceremonies; and

WHEREAS, It would be fit, right and proper to recognize and honor those who have been sent in harms' way and are either Prisoner Of War or have a status of Missing In Action; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Louisville, Kentucky, August 25, 26, 27, 2009, That The American Legion shall apply to the US Postmaster in regard to a "Forever Stamp," so all Prisoners Of War and Missing In Action are forever remembered and never forgotten.

Resolution No. 94: National D-Day Memorial in Bedford, Virginia
Origin: Virginia
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Credentials and Other Internal Matters (Section II)

WHEREAS, The American Legion associates itself to preserve the memories and incidents of our associations in the Great Wars; and

WHEREAS, Congress designated Bedford, Virginia as the site of the nation's National D-Day Memorial in 1996 in recognition of the 19 Virginia Army National Guard members from Bedford who died in the first wave that landed on Omaha Beach on June 6, 1944; and

WHEREAS, With a 1944 population of 3,200 people, Bedford is believed to have suffered the highest per-capita loss of life of any American community on D-Day; and

WHEREAS, The D-Day Memorial was dedicated on June 6, 2001, and since then, the Memorial has attracted over one-million visitors—50 percent of them visiting from out of state—and more than 10,000 students participate in the Memorial's educational programs each year; and

WHEREAS, The non-profit National D-Day Memorial Foundation recently announced that it does not have enough money to sustain operations through the end of the year; and

WHEREAS, Legal hurdles from previous mismanagement of the Foundation have now been resolved; and

WHEREAS, It is in the best interest of our nation to preserve a monument honoring the culminating moment in safeguarding and transmitting to posterity the principles of Justice, Freedom and Democracy; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Louisville, Kentucky, August 25, 26, 27, 2009, That the Congress of the United States be called upon to pass legislation to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to study the suitability and feasibility of designating the National D-Day memorial in Bedford, Virginia as a unit of the National Park System.

Resolution No. 88: Purple Heart Forever Stamp
Origin: Minnesota
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Credentials and Other Internal Matters (Section II)
(As amended)
(Consolidated with Resolution No. 44 (CA))

WHEREAS, The Order of the Purple Heart for Military Merit, commonly known as the Purple Heart, was directed by General George Washington on August 7, 1782 and revived by Order of Secretary of War Douglas MacArthur on February 22, 1932 in celebration of the 200th anniversary of George Washington's birth; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion was chartered by congress in 1919 aas a patriotic, war-time veterans organization devoted to mutual helpfulness and the continual recognition of all veterans; and

WHEREAS, The U.S. Postal Service first issued the 37 cent Purple Heart Definitive Stamp in May 2003 to remind all americans of how our military personnel have suffered in the name of freedom; and

WHEREAS, Scores of American Legion organizations have unofficially adopted the Purple Heart Stamp as their stamp of choice for all First Class mailings; and

WHEREAS, The current 42 cent "definitive" stamp will become obsolete for the fourth time with the next postal rate increase; and

WHEREAS, The U.S. Postal Service has a program allowing the issuance of "Forever Stamp" that have no denomination thereby allowing them to be forever for First Class mail; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Louisville, Kentucky, August 25, 26, 27, 2009, That we endorse the creation of a forever stamp by the Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee of the U.S. Postal Service to commemorate the recipients of the Purple Heart.

Resolution No. 90: Increase Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Mileage Rate for Charitable Miles to Equal the Mileage Rate Approved for Medical or Moving Purposes
Origin: Missouri
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Credentials and Other Internal Matters (Section II)
(As amended)
(Consolidated with Resolution No. 100 (IL))

WHEREAS**,** The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) on November 27, 2007 (IR-2007-192) issued the 2008 optional standard mileage rates used to calculate the deductible costs of operating an automobile for business, charitable, medical or moving purposes; and

WHEREAS**,** Beginning January 1, 2008, the standard mileage rates for the use of a car (including vans, pickups, or panel trucks) will be: 50.5 cents per mile for business miles driven; 19 cents per mile driven for medical or moving purposes; and 14 cents per mile driven in service of charitable organizations; and

WHEREAS, The new rate for business miles compares to a rate of 48.5 cents per mile for 2007; the new rate for medical and moving purposes compares to 20 cents in 2007; the rate for miles driven in service of charitable organizations has remained the same; and

WHEREAS**,** The standard mileage rate for business is based on an annual study of fixed and variable costs of operating an automobile; the standard rate for medical and moving purposes is based on the variable costs determined by the same study; Runzheimer International, an independent Contractor, conducted the study for the IRS; and

WHEREAS, The mileage rate for charitable miles is set by law; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Louisville, Kentucky, August 25, 26, 27 2009 supports an increase in Mileage Rate for Charitable miles and that such mileage rate at least equal to the mileage rate approved for Medical or Moving Purposes.

Referred to the Standing Commission on Internal Affairs

Resolution No. 16 (CO)**: 100th Anniversary Commemorative American Legion Coin**
Resolution No. 17 (CO)**: Battle of Attu Memorial**
Resolution No. 28 (GA)**: 100th Anniversary Commemorative American Legion Coin**
Resolution No. 38 (UT)**: Support Operation Give**
Resolution No. 80 (FL)**: 100th Anniversary Commemorative American Legion Coin**
Resolution No. 92 (MO)**: Designate Liberty Memorial in Kansas City, Missouri as the National World War I Memorial**

Referred to the Standing Commission on National Convention

Resolution No. 18 (CO)**: City of Denver Offers to Host the 2016 National Convention**
Resolution No. 77 (WA)**: City of Seattle Offers to Host the 2016 National Convention**

Received and Recorded

Resolution No. 15 (SD)**: Endorsement of Eugene Schumacher for National Vice Commander**
Resolution No. 37 (ID)**: Endorsement of Mark J. Cohen for National Vice Commander of the SAL**
Resolution No. 61 (PA)**: Endorsement of James H. Hales, Jr. for National Vice Commander**
Resolution No. 75 (MX)**: Re-Establish May 30th as the Official Memorial Day**
Resolution No. 89 (MO)**: The American Legion Day**

Rejected

Resolution No. 43 (CA)**: Veterans Remembered Flag**
Resolution No. 54 (CA)**: Seek Legislation to Ensure Priority of Occupancy in Veterans and War Memorial Buildings Be Given to Veterans Organizations Chartered By Congress**
Resolution No. 76 (MX)**: Change Name of Department of Mexico to Department of Latin America**
Resolution No. 81 (FL)**: Killed in Action (KIA) Flag**
Resolution No. 87 (MN)**: Establish "Serving Those Who Have Served" as the Official Song of The American Legion**

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 the adoption of this report.

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: You've heard the motion is there a second? ...*Second.* Discussion? All those in favor signify by the sign of aye. Opposed? The motion is carried. The report of Credentials and Internal Affairs is adopted.

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN BESSON: Mr. Commander, may I ask that Jerick Johnson be brought to the podium for a presentation?

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: You may, sir. Mr. Johnson?

JERICK JOHNSON: Thank you, everybody. My name is Jerick Johnson. I am The American Legion race car driver from the NASCAR Nationwide Series, as well as the

ASA series. I would just like to start by saying thank you to the Department of Kentucky and the rest of The American Legion members that have been here at the National Convention. The hospitality has been wonderful, and we have felt really appreciated while we have been here.

American Legion Racing is a program of The American Legion. Like many programs, we are endorsed by The American Legion but supported by you The American Legion members. Through your donations, through merchandise sales and through sponsorships we have been racing across America this year trying to show race fans and all Americans who The American Legion is, what The American Legion does for our veterans and our troops, and most of all recruit the next generation of American Legion veterans.

We have different programs that we support as well. One of them is called Operation Freedom Car, which the race team has endorsed and put incentives for you, the members, to donate to our program. What this is is we send a small hygiene care product called Four In One, which is a shampoo, conditioner, body wash and shaving cream all in one. It comes in a small bottle. It has been very highly liked by our troops in Iraq and Afghanistan. We send this to them for every donation that American Legion members give us to do the Operation Freedom Car. And for those who donate $100 or more, you might have seen the show car in the exhibit hall this weekend. They have their name, post, or district or whatever it may be, placed on the hood or the trunk of the race car. And there are a lot of names on that car, and I was very proud of that this year. So thank you guys for that.

2009 has been a great season. Like I said, through donations, merchandise and sponsors we go racing. This year we had brought a sponsor along with us, the David Law Firm out of the greater Houston area. They are a company that deals with asbestos related cancers. We put out a schedule this year for those of you that have been asking for a schedule for a long time. This year we actually were able to put out a schedule so that people could come to the race track and American Legion members could cheer their Freedom Car on. And we're a little ways through it, but we have a few races left, including Gateway in St. Louis, Newton, which is Iowa Speedway, and for those of you that haven't been able to make the race but would like to see one on TV, we have Memphis Motorsport Park yet the weekend before Veterans Day weekend on November 7th. That's going to be live on Fox Sports, so you'll be able to watch your car on TV. And that Iowa race, I assume that our National Commander Rehbein will be there. So we'll see him there.

The David Law Firm that has sponsored us this year has helped many veterans. It has the same goals as The American Legion and Team Johnson has, is to help our veterans. You might have seen them on the back cover of The American Legion Magazine. They have had a longstanding relationship, and it worked out very well for the race team to put our race car out on the track this year. Their main goal is just to inform everybody about mesothelioma and other lung cancers that have been caused by asbestos. If you're a service officer or would like to bring information to a service officer, please check us out on Legionracing.org to get information about them and help us go racing. They have also signed on for next year as well, so we are busy working on a schedule for 2010 so we can get it out to all the Legionnaires so you can come to the race and cheer on your freedom car.

Again, thank you very much also to the City of Louisville. I have been corrected many times—it's not "Louie-ville, it's Loua-ville." So a thank you for everybody and The American Legion members for all your support. In this American sport, racing, where there is a flyover and a prayer before every race, I'm honored to be able to drive The American Legion car as an SAL member, and my dad an American Legion member. So just thank you very much. I'm very proud of what I do, and appreciate it. Let's go racing. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: You heard what Jerick said about getting names on the car. Jerick, that will get it started.

JERICK JOHNSON: That would put your name on the car.

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: Well, then you have to reach out here and take the money. *(Laughter and applause)* And I trust that you have some place that others that are so inclined could drop off their donation?

JERICK JOHNSON: Absolutely. If they need any information, Legionracing.org is our website for The American Legion Race Team, and it has all the information, addresses, and phone numbers. We have people there at our shop working on race cars all day long ready to take phone calls. Or if you want to mail, that's fine too. So thank you and we appreciate it. Thank you, Commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: Or if they want to give it to you here --

JERICK JOHNSON: Or here.

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: Where are you going to be?

JERICK JOHNSON: I will be outside for about the next hour or so before I take off.

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: You heard. And regarding Iowa Speedway, it just turns out that about 24 hours from now my schedule is going to get a lot looser. *(Laughter)* So, yes, you can count on seeing me at the Iowa Speedway.

JERICK JOHNSON: Thank you, Commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: Thank you, Jerick.

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: The Chair recognizes the Honorable Vincent Gaughan, of Illinois, chairman of the Convention Committee on Constitutional Amendments, for the purpose of making a report.

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

To the 91st National Convention of The American Legion, Louisville, Kentucky August 23, 24, 25, 2009,

The Committee on Constitutional Amendments met at 9:00 a.m., Sunday, August 23, 2009 in the Kentucky International Convention Center, Room 116, Level 1. Committee Liaison Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr. (MD) called the roll and announced that 39 members of the Constitutional Amendments Committee were present. The following report was authorized by the members and is hereby submitted to this Convention.

The meeting was opened by 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 Charemon Dunham (SD) that all members of the Standing Committee on Constitution and By-Laws who were present at the meeting, but not actual delegates to the Convention Committee be seated with voice but no vote. The motion was carried 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. 4 (PI) was considered. The Chair announced that this resolution was out of order because it does not provide the language to amend the corporate charter or Article XIII, Section 2 (Eligibility for the American Legion Auxiliary) upon which the National Convention could vote.

Art Besa (OK) made a motion, seconded by Kenneth Knight (VA) that the committee adopt the Chair's ruling on Resolution No. 4 (PI). Motion was carried unanimously.

Resolution No. 5 (PI) was next considered.

The Chair ruled Resolution No. 5 (PI) out of order because it does not provide the language to be voted on by the National Convention and does not reference Article X, Section 3 of the National Constitution.

Robert Flynn (IN) made a motion, seconded by Trish Thompson (AZ) that the committee adopt the Chair's ruling on Resolution No. 5 (PI). Motion carried unanimously.

Resolution No. 91 (MO) was next considered.

The Chair ruled Resolution No. 91 (MO) in order. This resolution would change the Preamble to the National Constitution by changing the reference from "Great Wars" to "all Great Wars." The change impliedly raises the question of what is a great war. The Preamble, when read with the eligibility section of The American Legion Constitution already clearly defines great wars. Hence, it is counterproductive and unnecessary. There is also the question of unintended consequences of money being diverted from American Legion programs to pay for reprinting and redistribution.

Charles G. Mills (NY) made a motion to reject Resolution 91 (MO), seconded by Frank A. Porter (MD). Motion carried unanimously.

The Chair then asked for a motion that the Chairman and Secretary be permitted to sign the report to the Convention on behalf of the members of the Convention Committee. Ron Roberts (MS) made the motion and it was seconded by James Gresty (TN). The motion carried.

Doug Goodwin (MO) made a motion to recess, subject to the call of the Chairman. The motion was seconded by John Graham (NH).

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.

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN GAUGHAN: Mr. Commander, as a delegate to the 91st National Convention of The American Legion, I move that this report be adopted.

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: You've heard the motion is there a second? ...*Second.* Discussion? All those in favor signify by the sign of aye. Opposed? The motion is carried. The report of Constitutional Amendments is adopted.

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: The national adjutant informs me that there are no announcements. We are aware that we are finishing about 20 minutes ahead of schedule. The national adjutant has also informed me that this is strictly due to the fact that he is a new adjutant, and next year we will stay closer to the schedule. There are some additional monetary contributions. I will always delay the meeting to receive money.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (MN): On behalf of the great Department of Minnesota, in addition to all the individual donations from our individuals and individual posts, we want to give an additional $1,000 to Operation Comfort Warriors.

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: We will be receiving additional contributions to Operation Comfort Warriors following the National Security Report tomorrow. With there being no further business to come before this day's session join me in a salute to the Colors. Hand salute. Two!

...The Delegates rose and saluted the Colors.

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: The time is 2:34 p.m. This Convention will stand in recess until 9:00 a.m. tomorrow morning.

...At 2:34 p.m., the Convention recessed to reconvene the following day, Thursday, August 27, 2009.

THIRD DAY

Thursday, August 27, 2009

...At 9:00 a.m. the delegates assembled for the third day of the 91st Annual National Convention, and the following proceedings were conducted.

Call to Order
David K. Rehbein, Iowa, National Commander

The Convention will come to order. Please join me in rendering honors to the flag of our country. Hand salute.

...At this time the delegates stood and rendered a right-hand salute to the Colors.

I now call on National Chaplain Reverend Lawrence Vollink, Department of Michigan, for the invocation. Please uncover.

Invocation
Rev. Lawrence 'Larry' Vollink, Michigan, National Chaplain

Lord God, we praise you today for Your leading, for Your wisdom, for Your presence with all things good. We have been renewed in our spirits so that we can continue on from this day, thank you, Lord. Thank you for music that inspires our souls. Today we invoke Your blessings again open this gathering this morning. We ask for open hearts to learn what we might be called to do in the near future through these sessions. Bless our technical people who are able to assist us to make this program continue to be good. And as always, Lord, we ask that You would give us faith to know that you are protecting every soldier and trooper, that You truly care about them as we do. Help see them through in all that they do, so that we too today can enjoy this meeting, realizing that You love them and You love us. Thank you. Amen.

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: Please remain uncovered. This morning I've asked National Historian Chuck Zelinsky, to lead us in the Pledge of Allegiance.

...The delegates stood and recited the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

The 91st Annual National Convention is now back in session.

Presentation: The American Legion Fourth Estate Award
David K. Rehbein, Iowa, National Commander

We begin this morning by recognizing outstanding achievement in journalism, achievement that had a positive impact on a community. The American Legion Fourth Estate Award is a difficult award to earn. It is a testament to the demanding nature of the competition, and to the quality of the entries. This year's award goes to *USA Today*. We have a short video presentation from their award winning series *The Smokestack Effect*.

...At this time the delegated viewed a video entitled "The Smokestack Effect."

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: Two of the reporters responsible for the report that you just saw vignettes of concerning the toxic air, are with us today. Accepting The American Legion Fourth Estate Award this morning are Blake Morrison and Brad Heath. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: The award reads: "Fourth Estate Award for outstanding achievement in the field of journalism is presented to USA Today *for the investigative series that uncovered environmental health risks to America's school children. Presented at the 91st National Convention, August 27, 2009, Louisville, Kentucky."*

MR. MORRISON: I just wanted to say thank you very much on behalf of my colleague Brad Heath, and our Editor, Linda Matthews who couldn't be here today. We spent eight months working on this project, and in the world of daily journalism, that's a long time, but it certainly pales in comparison of the commitment that The American Legion has shown for generations to America's children. And what makes us I guess so humbled and honored to receive this award, is simply that, that it comes from a group that has tirelessly shown a commitment to the welfare of America's children. And on behalf of *USA Today* I just want to thank you all for that. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: Gentlemen, while that large trophy that we presented goes to *USA Today*, we want each of you to have your own to place on your desk, to keep in your home, to keep track of the esteem with which we hold you. And thank you for doing that story. Thank you for caring about America's school children.

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: Our next guest represents an organization that performs free home repairs and house modifications for veterans. Rebuilding Together was created to meet the growing needs of veterans from past and present wars. Our guest this morning is fully aware of these needs, since she's the mother of a young soldier who was critically wounded in Iraq. Please give a warm welcome to Lorrie Knight-Major. *(Applause)*

Greetings: Lorrie Knight-Major
Rebuilding Together

Good morning Legionnaires and guests. I am honored to be here today. I would like to thank Commander Rehbein and National Adjutant Daniel Wheeler, for providing me with this opportunity to speak before you today. I will share my experiences with Rebuilding Together, the organization that helped me to bring my soldier home from the rehab hospital, which is why I am an advocate today.

I am very proud to be in this room with all of you. Since the founding of The American Legion on March 15, 1919, you have honored your pledge to your local communities to take care of veterans and their families. This concept was so important to you that you made it one of your four pillars of service, and have that tradition going with the Heroes to Hometowns program. For that, I applaud you.

Thanks to The American Legion for drafting its resolution, the GI Bill of Rights, World War II veterans were able to come back to a grateful country. When Congress enacted the Serviceman's Readjustment Act of 1944, it made it possible for them to acquire hospitalization, higher education, find jobs, and buy homes for their families. Many of those who fought for this nation in World War II did so again during the Korean War. These veterans faced some of the harshest fighting conditions, but you were not forgotten by The American Legion when it fought to ensure that you also had a GI Bill. To this day, Korean War veterans remind this nation of the sacrifices made to keep our families and our communities safe and strong.

And to the Vietnam veterans gathered here today, you are the mentors to the generations that have followed you. The lessons you have taught this nation about

honoring its military sacrifices should never be forgotten. Therefore, I want to stand before you today on behalf of my generation and say to all of you, thank you for rebuilding this great nation. And I promise to do my part to ensure that you will not be forgotten. So thank you.

So who am I? My name is Lorrie Knight-Major. I am the mother of an Operation Iraqi Freedom soldier who was severely wounded by an explosion in Ramadi defending our nation's freedom. So I stand beside you, not only as a mother, but also as a daughter, a great granddaughter, and a sister of enlisted U.S. Army service men who have all seen combat since the Civil War. *(Applause)*

But I can tell you that there isn't anything that prepares a parent or a spouse for a phone call from the United States Army, Marines, Navy, Air Force or Coast Guard while your soldier is deployed in a war zone. Because in your heart, you know that that phone call is for one of three reasons: Your soldier is missing in action; has been killed, or has been severely wounded. On November 10, 2006, I received such a phone call.

My son, Sergeant Ryan Major, was critically wounded as a result of an improvised explosive device while on a mission with his unit in Ramadi. As a result of the blast, Ryan sustained multiple massive injuries to include the amputation of both his legs; both arms were broken with multiple fractures and burns; fingers amputated off of each hand; severe right pelvic fracture with fragmentation into his abdomen; extensive abdominal wounds and a traumatic brain injury. For the first two months after Ryan's injuries we were not certain if he would survive. He was in a coma fighting for his life. He was battling serious infections, and underwent surgeries daily.

Once we crossed those bridges, and it was very likely that he would survive, I started to plan for his return home. The surgeons told me that he would be in a wheelchair, and because of the wheelchair I knew that major structural changes were necessary to accommodate him at home. Two separate architects came out and examined our home, and they both determined that he needed an elevator, a stair-lift wasn't feasible. We know that the VA provides a housing grant for severely injured soldiers. In 2006 it was for $50,000. Presently it's at $60,000. For the modifications that we needed to our home, it wasn't enough money. The grant would have only covered the elevator, which would have gotten Ryan into the main level of the house. As you can imagine, this was a very stressful time for me. I didn't know where the money would come from to pay for this project.

I contacted numerous nonprofit organizations for assistance, but only one responded to my call and called me back, Rebuilding Together. And immediately they committed to the project. This was a pivotal moment in my life, because it provided me with my first glimmer of hope of bringing my soldier home. The renovations that were done by Rebuilding Together to our home included an elevator; the conversion of our first floor family room into Ryan's bedroom with an accessible bathroom; a new deck addition; a new separate air conditioning and heating system for his bedroom, and the in ground generator. The value of these renovations is estimated at $150,000, which thanks to Rebuilding Together didn't cost our family anything.

I have so many blessing to be thankful for. Firstly to God above for saving my son against enormous odds, and for bringing so many caring people into our lives. Ryan's quest for a more productive life has been made possible because of the generosity, compassion, and efforts of many individuals and nonprofit organizations. I am reminded

of an ancient African proverb, "That it takes a village to raise a child," because it takes a community to bring a soldier home.

Thanks to all the support that we have received, Ryan is embracing his challenges and is moving forward with his life. This past year he completed both the New York Marathon and the Boston Marathon on a hand crank bike. He skied in Aspen, Colorado; he kayaked on a Colorado River, and presently he is driving his own car.

Since 1988, Rebuilding Together has been committed to preserving homeownership for low income homeowners across the country. Once the Global War on Terror began, it recognized the tremendous needs of returning injured veterans who needed significant home modifications and renovations before they could return home. Rebuilding Together further realized that veterans of past wars needed home modifications so that they could stay and live in their own homes. So it established a veterans housing program in response to the specific housing needs of all disabled veterans.

The veterans housing program seeks to address the needs of veterans at no cost to the veteran or the homeowner. I am so proud to say that two weeks ago we moved our 500th veteran and his family into their new accessible home at no cost to those homeowners. These five hundred projects were accomplished by hundreds of volunteers who worked thousands of hours. Through this program, Rebuilding Together has installed ramps; repaired and replaced roofs; installed accessible bathrooms; widened doorways; installed grab bars; added new additions; renovated kitchens; tore down and rebuilt portions of dilapidated houses; replaced heating units and updating plumbing and electrical fixtures, bringing those homes up to code. Additionally, something I'm very proud of, that earlier this year, Rebuilding Together Veterans Housing Program completed nearly $200,000 in renovations to the Eddie Beard Veterans Homeless Shelter in Chicago, Illinois, which serves hundreds of veterans every year.

Together, you built this country into the strongest nation on earth. Together, you spread a sense of pride, fostered by The American Legion across every state. And together, you preserve the American dream for military families in your communities by ensuring that their earned veterans benefits were awarded for their services rendered. It is with that knowledge that Legionnaires not only served this country on foreign soil, but then came home and served their communities all across this nation, and that in some places the Legion post is the center of town. I hope that together we can unite and rebuild the dreams of disabled veterans in the communities that you already serve. Together we can guarantee your fellow disabled veterans and neighbors that they can have a home that they can live in safely, and function in independently.

The majority of you in this room come from American Legion posts from around the country. I understand that your resources are few, your finances are limited, but it is your passion in your heart that drives this phenomenal organization, which is why I believe that at the community level we can team up and improve the living conditions for so many of our nation's disabled veterans.

So what is it that I'm asking you to do? Through organizing volunteers and fundraising, each post can sponsor a veteran's house in their community, and have it adapted to the specific needs the veteran requires to live independently and to become an active lifetime member of The American Legion. Through a designated American Legion veterans housing fund, each project, and we do hope that there will be many, will be branded as The American Legion build, and will receive local recognition in newspapers,

television, and radio broadcasts. Imagine for a second, hundreds of American Legion builds across this country for our veterans.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to share my experience with bringing my soldier home. Please join me in helping Rebuilding Together to bring the many other soldiers home. On behalf of Rebuilding Together, I want to say to all of you, thank you. Please visit rebuildingtogether.org for more information. My colleague, Susan Hawfield and I will be available during the break and during the lunch hour to answer all of your questions. Please now turn your attention to the screen for a short video. *(Applause)*

...At this time the delegates viewed a video.

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: The Chair now recognizes Michael Helm of the Department of Nebraska, chairman of the 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, 2009, 39 delegates and alternates assigned to the Convention Committee on Foreign Relations met in the Kentucky International Convention Center, Louisville, Kentucky. Mr. Michael D. Helm (NE) was elected Chairman and Melvin "Doc" Simon 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 13 resolutions were assigned to the Convention Committee on Foreign Relations. Following this initial meeting an Ad Hoc Administration Convention Committee met in room 209, Level 2, Kentucky International 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) 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. 20: Support for Increased Personnel and Funding
Origin: New Jersey
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations
(Consolidated with Resolution No. 93 (NE))
(As amended)

WHEREAS, The American Legion has long been committed to achieving the fullest possible accounting for U.S. personnel still held captive, missing and unaccounted for from all of our nation's wars; and

WHEREAS, Personnel and funding for the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) have not been increased at a level commensurate with the expanded requirement to obtain answers on Americans unaccounted for from the Vietnam War and earlier wars and conflicts; and

WHEREAS, It is the responsibility of the U.S. 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 U.S. 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 at Louisville, Kentucky, August 25, 26, 27, 2009, That we remain steadfast in our commitment to the goal of achieving the fullest possible accounting for all U.S. military and designated civilian personnel missing from our nation's wars; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion call 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.

Resolution No. 21: U.S. Navy Construction Project for POW/MIA
Origin: New Jersey
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations

WHEREAS, The American Legion has long been deeply committed to achieving the fullest possible accounting for U.S. personnel still held captive, missing and unaccounted for from all of our nation's wars; and

WHEREAS, It is the responsibility of the U.S. 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 mission to recover and identify all possible US personnel unaccounted for from the Vietnam War and earlier wars and conflicts; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion believes it imperative to retain the current structure of JPAC as a Command under US Pacific Command in which the Central Identification Laboratory is an integral part, not to again be separated; and

WHEREAS, The U.S. 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, In National Convention assembled at Louisville, Kentucky, August 25, 26, 27, 2009, That The American Legion support and commend Admiral Timothy Keating, Commander, US Pacific Command, for his commitment to construction of a new JPAC headquarters, including a state-of-the-art laboratory, no later than FY 11, to be completed in FY 12; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge the US Congress 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 renew its longstanding commitment to the goal of achieving the fullest possible accounting for all U.S. military and designated civilian personnel missing from our nation's wars.

Resolution No. 33: Support Secure Borders and War Against Drugs
Origin: Idaho
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations
(As amended)

WHEREAS, The borders that separate the United States, Canada and Mexico are relatively open; and

WHEREAS, There is rising concerns among US Officials about the deteriorating security situation which allows significant smuggling of drugs, illegal immigrants and other contraband across our borders; and

WHEREAS, The violence on the Mexican border has caused a change in smuggling from that area to other parts of our borders such as Canada and our sea coast; and

WHEREAS, The Mexican government while attempting to control the problem is not able to counter the cartels due to being out-manned and out-gunned; and

WHEREAS, The United States has the capability to provide assistance to the Mexican government that would allow them to reestablish control and eliminate the drug cartels; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention in Louisville, Kentucky, August 25, 26, 27, 2009, That The American Legion support the President's and Congress's efforts to provide assistance and aid to the Canadian and Mexican governments to secure the borders separating the United States, Canada, and Mexico from trafficking illegal drugs across those borders.

Resolution No. 55: POW/MIA Flag Flying
Origin: California
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations
(As amended)

WHEREAS, The American Legion, on September 1, 1966, formed a special group to take the lead on the POW/MIA issue; and

WHEREAS, In 1982, the POW/MIA Flag became the only flag other than Stars and Stripes to fly over the White House in Washington D.C.; and

WHEREAS, On August 10, 1990, Congress passed U.S. Public Law 101-355, designating the POW/MIA Flag: "The symbol of our Nation's concern and commitment to resolving as fully as possible the fates of Americans still prisoners, missing and unaccounted for in Southeast Asia"; and

WHEREAS, Congress designated the third Friday of September as National POW/MIA Recognition Day and ordered prominent display of the POW/MIA Flag on this day and five other national observances; and

WHEREAS, The 1998 Defense Authorization Act (Public Law 105-85) mandates that on the POW/MIA Recognition Day and on five other National observances the POW/MIA flag is to be flown over the White House, the U.S. Capital, the Korean and Vietnam Veterans War Memorials, V.A. Medical Centers and National Cemeteries, and every U.S. Post Office; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion's prime purpose is to keep the POW/MIA issue at the forefront of the American people until all POW/MIA's are accounted for; and

WHEREAS, It is important that this resolution come before the 2009 National Convention assembled in Louisville, Kentucky, prior to the official POW/MIA Recognition Day and any further delay would take another two years for implementation; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Louisville, Kentucky, August 25, 26, 27, 2009, That the POW/MIA flag should be flown, when possible, at all National American Legion Conventions.

Resolution No. 118: Support Environmental Treaty
Origin: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations
(As amended)

WHEREAS, In May 2001, the White House asked the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) to conduct research on climate change.; and

WHEREAS, NAS immediately responded, "Changes observed over the last several decades are likely mostly due to human activities"; and

WHEREAS, In 2008, NAS followed up its initial report with this statement, "Additional evidence collected over the past several years has increased confidence in this conclusion"; and

WHEREAS, The American Association of Petroleum Geologists do not support the idea that there is a link between climate change and human activity; and

WHEREAS, The following scientific organizations support the theory that the burning of fossil fuels are contributing to climate change/global warming: The National Academy of Sciences; The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA); American Institute of Physics; American Chemical Society; and Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC); and

WHEREAS, Surface warming from the greenhouse effect is weaker in the southern hemisphere than in the northern hemisphere; consequently, the North Pole has warmed dramatically, even as the South Pole has experienced a small cooling trend due to stronger stratospheric ozone depletion in Antarctica, i.e. this is the reason why the term climate change has replaced global warming; and

WHEREAS, IPCC estimates that the combined effects of ice melting and sea-water expansion from ocean warming are projected to cause the global mean sea-level to rise between 0.1 and 0.9 meters in the next 100 years; potentially causing the displacement of millions of people resulting in a huge refugee problem affecting countries worldwide along with negatively impacting water resources, agriculture, ecosystems and human health are also likely if fossil fuel trends remain unchanged; and

WHEREAS, A major company producing fossil fuels has gone on record stating, "The risks to society from increases in CO2 emissions could prove to be significant; it is prudent to develop and implement strategies that address the risks"; and

WHEREAS, The United States needs to take the lead in this effort if China and India are expected to be involved; and

WHEREAS, The United States refusal to ratify international environmental treaties, such as the Kyoto Protocol, has negatively impacted U.S. Foreign Relations; especially with the countries of the European Union and other developed nations; and

WHEREAS, The United States based its refusal of the Kyoto Protocol on inconsistent provisions within the protocol that unfairly burdened the United States with stricter prohibitions than other developed nations including China, Russia, and India; and

WHEREAS, A world operating on different sets of rules and costs associated with carbon dioxide emissions could have disruptive implications for trade, security, competitiveness and U.S. economic growth; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Louisville, Kentucky, August 25, 26, 27, 2009, That The American Legion urges the President and Congress to establish a worldwide plan to significantly reduce carbon-based emissions using a model similar to the Montreal Protocol of 1988 which 191 countries, including the United States, agreed to limit the harmful production of chlorofluorocarbons (CFC) to include equal standards and enforcement applying to all participating countries; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges the President and the Congress to reduce demand for fossil fuels through improved efficiency, diversified energy suppliers and fuel choices, and manage geopolitics in resource-rich areas that currently account for the majority of the United States' fuel imports; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges the President and the Congress to take the lead within the international community to establish common principals for energy security and sustainability.

Resolution No. 120: "Smart Power" Support
Origin: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations
(As amended)

WHEREAS, "Smart Power" is a term in international relations defined as "the ability to combine Hard Power (military and economic) and Soft Power (foreign aid and human rights promotion)"; and

WHEREAS, "Smart Power" involves the strategic use of diplomacy, persuasion, capacity building, and the projection of power and influence in ways that are cost-effective and have political and social legitimacy—essentially the engagement of both military force and all forms of diplomacy including United States foreign operations,

such as judicial assistance, legal aid, security, law and order, education, economic advisement, engineering, infrastructure development, environmental training, and agricultural programs; and

WHEREAS, These coordinated efforts are aimed to leverage actions contributing to improving the capacity for a focused and results-oriented diplomatic United States strategy; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion is dedicated to promoting peace and good will on earth; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion is dedicated to safe guarding the principles of justice, freedom, and democracy; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Louisville, Kentucky, August 25, 26, 27, 2009, That The American Legion urges the President and Congress to continue to pursue "Smart Power" strategy concerning foreign policy and international programs for the purpose of protecting United States national interests and internationally improving its strategic posture; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion applauds the President and the Congress for modifying foreign policy by returning to an emphasis on strengthening established alliances and cultivating new allies with the aim of improving security and defense of the United States and free societies around the world.

Resolution No. 121: Expand Foreign Service Officer Corps
Origin: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations
(As amended)

WHEREAS, Foreign Service Officers have the mission to assist developing countries in the national interest of the United States; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion maintains fervent support for the appropriate resources to promote and protect U.S. vital national interests world-wide; and

WHEREAS, Foreign Service Officers remain as the primary force in bringing foreign policy objectives to fruition by act as the essential link between strategic interests and U.S. Aid and International Development programs that achieve those interests; and

WHEREAS, in the current climate of international relations and the importance of reconstruction following U.S. combat operations, the Foreign Service Officer Corps needs to be increased to meet the ever growing challenges against American vital interests; and

WHEREAS, Due to the fact that the work of the Foreign Service Officer Corps often takes place in hostile and desolate environments, qualified military veterans should be given veterans' preference in the staffing of such positions; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Louisville, Kentucky, August 25, 26, 27, 2009, That The American Legion urges the President, Congress, and the Department of State to significantly increase the number of Foreign Service Officers in its ranks; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges the President, Congress, and the Department of State to implement a veterans' preference policy with the aim of recruiting more veterans into the Foreign Officer Corps whose experience may be an essential enhancement of the nation's diplomatic mission.

Far Eastern and Asian Affairs

Approved

Resolution No. 3: Taiwan Straits Dialogue
Origin: Alaska
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations
(As amended)

WHEREAS, The Republic of China is a long-time ally, friend, and a major trading partner of The United States of America; and

WHEREAS, The Republic of China, has closely cooperated with the United States against Japanese Imperialism during the World War II and in the fight against Communism during the Cold War; and

WHEREAS, It is in the best interest of all parties on both sides of the Taiwan Strait to promote peaceful resolutions of political differences; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion, in National Convention assembled in Louisville, Kentucky, August 25, 26, 27, 2009, 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 engage in peaceful dialogue and avoid any actions by either side to change the status quo, which would lead to military conflict.

Received and Recorded

Resolution No. 22 (NJ)**: Use of United States Naval Vessels for POW/MIA Accounting Efforts in Vietnam**

Referred to the Standing Commission on Foreign Relations

Resolution No. 119: The American Legion's Policy on the United Nation

Rejected

Resolution No. 32 (ID)**: Off-Shore Limits**
Resolution No. 34 (ID)**: Mexican Border and War on Drugs**

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN HELM: Mr. Commander, as a delegate to this Convention from the Department of Nebraska, I move the adoption of this entire report.

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: You've heard the motion is there a second? ...*Second.* Discussion? All those in favor vote by the normal sign of aye. Opposed? The motion is carried. The report of Foreign Relations is adopted.

Following the next report we will be receiving donations for Operation Comfort Warriors. Those departments and individuals that have donations to make, if they would begin assembling behind the stage that would expedite the process. The Chair recognizes Fang Wong of the Department 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 23, 2009, 235 delegates and alternates assigned to the Convention Committee on National Security met initially in Rooms 210-211, Second Level, at the Kentucky International 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
Leroy Thorton, Maryland, 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
Charles E. Kruger, Minnesota, Chairman
Larry Eary, Texas, Secretary
Law and Order
George E. Wehrli, Florida, Chairman
Harvey Daggett, Connecticut, Secretary
Merchant Marine
Chuck Moreland, Florida, Chairman
Charles Powell, Virginia, Secretary
Military Affairs
Leo F. Malloy, Massachusetts, Chairman
Marie Rhyne, Virginia, Secretary
Naval Affairs
William B. Goede, Minnesota, Chairman
James Casey, New York, Secretary

At 11:30 a.m., Sunday, August 23, 2009, the delegates and alternates assigned to the Convention Committee on National Security reconvened in Rooms 210-211, Second Level, at the Kentucky International Convention Center. Reports of all Convention Committees were read and their recommended actions on resolutions considered. A total of 22 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.

At 11:50 a.m., Tuesday, August 25, 2009, in the Conference Theater, First Level, at the Kentucky International Convention Center, delegates assigned to the Convention Committee on National Security reconvened to reconsider the disposition of Resolution 113 “Designation of National World War I Memorial”. A quorum being present, the Convention Committee adopted a different disposition for the resolution.

General Security Ad Hoc Committee
Douglas C. Haggan, France, Chairman

Approved

Resolution No. 41: Support for Armed Forces Blood Donor Program and Blood Drives
Origin: Ohio
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The Armed Services Blood Program (ASBP) is the Department of Defense's exclusive blood collection agency; and

WHEREAS, The ASBP is the only organization that collects and supplies blood and blood products for the men and women of our Armed Forces; and

WHEREAS, Since its founding in 1919 The American Legion has had a history of supporting our troops through one of our four pillars, National Security; and

WHEREAS, In 2007 the Department of Defense changed its 55-year old policy of allowing only active duty military, dependents, and federal workers on a base to donate to the program; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense now allows civilians to donate in an ASBP blood drive as well; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Louisville, Kentucky, August 25, 26, 27, 2009, That the American Legion declare its full support of the Armed Services Blood Program; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the American Legion encourage all Posts and Departments to organize and sponsor ASBP blood drives when and where possible; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That all members of The American Legion be encouraged to donate blood, volunteer at ASBP blood drives, or simply watch a friend's children so they can donate.

Resolution No. 50: Full Funding for the Military
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security
(As amended)

WHEREAS, A major American Legion goal has been to sustain future years' defense budgets at levels required to meet missions and readiness needs; and

WHEREAS, In the past 60 years, defense budgets have averaged 5.7 percent of Gross Domestic Product in peacetime years alone; The American Legion strongly agrees with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who had indicated that continuing planned military manpower increases, replacing and upgrading weapons and equipment worn out by years of war, and treating the military and veterans fairly will require budgets of at least 4 percent of GDP whether troop levels in Iraq significantly decline or not; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Louisville, Kentucky, August 25, 26, 27, 2009, That The American Legion continue to urge Congress to fully fund our Armed Forces and to resist any peace dividend proposals to divert essential funds from defense programs to meet other needs or

any initiative aimed at reducing essential manpower growth, or essential weapons program or upgrades.

Resolution No. 52: Defense Against Electromagnetic Pulse Attack
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, In defiance of the United States and international community, both North Korea and Iran conducted tests for missiles capable of delivering nuclear warheads in April and May of this year respectively; and

WHEREAS, President Obama's proposed 2010 defense budget cuts missile defense by $1.2 billion in missile defense and does not provide for any funds for the European missile defense shield that could provide an added layer of protection to the U.S. from potential enemy missiles; and

WHEREAS, Islamic violent extremists and rogue nations continue to plot against the West and seek to destroy the U.S.; and

WHEREAS, The Congressionally sanctioned Commission to Assess the Threat to the U.S. from Electromagnetic Pulse (EMP) has clearly defined the vulnerabilities in America's homeland defense posture to include potential catastrophic damage to U.S. infrastructure, telecommunications, banking, energy, transportation, food, water, emergency services, space systems and government agencies; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Louisville, Kentucky, August 25, 26, 27, 2009, That The American Legion urges the United States Government to fully fund, develop, and deploy a national ballistic missile defense system designed to intercept EMP attacks; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges the United States Government to swiftly commission the further development and installation of electronic equipment and components resistant to EMP to quickly provide significant protection and limit damage to high-value generation and transmission assets as well as emergency generation and re-start capability; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges the United States Government to expeditiously develop an EMP response plan to include necessary back-up systems and corresponding supply of electronic parts and equipment vital to a successful American defense and response of in the event of such an attack in accordance with the 2008 report published by the Commission to Assess the Threat to the U.S. from Electromagnetic Pulse.

Resolution No. 60: Reconsideration of Closing Guantanamo Bay Detention Facility
Origin: New York
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The Guantanamo Detention facility is vital to the security of our Country and its citizens and should remain open in order to house enemy combatants that are charged with terrorists activities; and

WHEREAS, These enemy combatants must not be relocated or transferred to any detention facility or prison on the mainland of the United States; and

WHEREAS, The closing of Guantanamo Bay could mean releasing deadly Islamic terrorist overseas who could continue in their attempt to destroy America and its citizens; and

WHEREAS, A recent visit to the detention facility in Cuba by six (6) members of the House of Representatives reported the enemy combatants are being treated well and in compliance with the Geneva Conventions; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Louisville, Kentucky, August 25, 26, 27, 2009, That, in-as-much-as we are at war with Islamic terrorism and the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay is a major front in that war, we hereby call upon President Obama to reverse his decision to close the Guantanamo Bay facility in Cuba; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That we recommend and encourage all citizens of the United States to contact President Obama and their Congressional Representatives requesting that President Obama reconsider his previous decision.

Received and Recorded

Resolution No. 70 (MA)**: Support for Blood Banks**

Rejected

Resolution No. 59 (NY)**: The American Legion Support for the CIA in the Global War on Terror**

Conservation of Natural Resources
E.C. Toppin, South Carolina, Chairman

Approved

Resolution No. 112: Enhancing Energy Security by Encouraging the Use of All North American Energy Resources
Origin: Convention Committee on National Security
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, North America has abundant supplies of oil and natural gas both onshore and offshore; and

WHEREAS, While energy demand will continue to increase in the coming decades, the Federal government should encourage the use of all forms of energy as it continues to construct the framework of America's energy future; and

WHEREAS, Barriers and disincentives to energy production such as punitive taxes, moratoria of production on Federal lands, and repealing oil and gas leases only leads to increased reliance on foreign supplies; and

WHEREAS, Canada is the largest foreign supplier of energy to the United States, including 20% of U.S. oil imports; and

WHEREAS, Oil derived from Canadian oil sands now comprises more than 10% of all oil imported by the United States and projected increases in production from this source would greatly enhance North America's energy security; and

WHEREAS**,** Section 526 of the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007 attempts to prohibit U.S. federal agencies from purchasing liquid transportation fuels that are derived from the oil sands resources of Canada; and

WHEREAS, Such a prohibition will reduce the supply of liquid fuels readily accessible to the United States at a time when America's domestic sources of petroleum

are in decline and when America's imports from unreliable foreign sources have increased; and

WHEREAS, The U.S. military, now engaged in two wars, is the largest single purchaser of transportation fuels in the country; and

WHEREAS, The U.S. military and federal government agencies have difficulty complying with the regulation due to the lack of the means for determining the content of the fuels they purchase; and

WHEREAS, Section 526 contradicts and conflicts with Section 369 of the Energy Policy Act of 2005, which identifies oil sands as important strategic resources, mandates their development in an environmentally responsible manner in collaboration with the governments of Canada and Alberta, and directs the U.S. Department of Defense to support such a development program with long-term purchase contracts; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Louisville Kentucky, August 25, 26, 27, 2009, That Section 526 of the "Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007" should be repealed and that the prohibition on the use of oil sands-derived petroleum products by federal agencies should be rescinded.

Aerospace Committee
Michael E. Harris, Virginia, Chairman

Approved

Resolution No. 23: Nuclear Warhead Modernization
Origin: Montana
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The need for viable nuclear deterrent capability gained new recognition during the events of 2008 with the concentration of nuclear capable bombers and ICBMs in the new Global Strike Command which will allow dedicated attention to the nuclear mission; and

WHEREAS, The changes to top USAF leadership dictated by the Department of Defense clearly reemphasized the importance of nuclear deterrence to our nation's strategic planning and recognized that nuclear capabilities have been allowed to erode resulting in an increased level of risk; and

WHEREAS, The Secretary of Defense has confirmed that the USAF and USN will provide the main strategic deterrent in the years ahead; and

WHEREAS, The Secretary of Defense has stated in his article "A BALANCED STRATEGY," printed in Foreign Affairs of January and February 2009 that "Congress needs to do its part by funding the Reliable Replacement Warhead Program for safety, for security and for a more reliable deterrent"; and

WHEREAS, Recognition of the nuclear deterrent requirement is in fact recognition of the significance to our national defense of a resurgent Russia, growing Chinese military capability, immanent Iranian nuclear arsenal, North Korean nuclear program, potential for nuclear proliferation and possible terrorist access to such weapons; and

WHEREAS, Inherent is this recent acceptance of the need for nuclear deterrence is the recognition of a need for provision of reliable and modern means of implementation; and

WHEREAS, Due to the moratorium signed in 1992 it has been nearly 20 years since the United States designed or manufactured a nuclear warhead or conducted an underground test which suspension has resulted in decay of our production capability and loss in the scientific community of nuclear warhead experience; and

WHEREAS, There is concern which will increase with the passing years over the reliability of our nuclear warheads while the warheads age and are subjected to accumulated untested changes; as stated by Gen Kevin Chilton, Commander of United States Strategic Command, "we need a modernized nuclear warhead that has high reliability, safety, and security features that are improved over what we currently have and maintainability of design—which we absolutely do not have today"; and

WHEREAS, Reliability issues due to design and testing failure and budget restraints are not unheard of in history as our World War II experience with submarine torpedo failure in the early war years which rendered the USN submarine ineffective, or the more recent grounding of our F-15E Strike Eagle aircraft due to structure failure across the across the fleet; and

WHEREAS, Design and production of the proposed Reliable Replacement Warhead would result in a reduction in the number of warheads in the stockpile, a means of meeting the Moscow Treaty goals of 1700 to 2200 while maintaining confidence in warhead reliability; and

WHEREAS, Proposals for design and production of a Reliable Replacement Warhead have been defeated by the influence of groups which hope to see the nuclear capability vanish from the world's arsenals placing our strategic planners in the illogical and dangerous situation where the risks to the reliability of our nuclear arsenal continues to grow even while recognition of the need for nuclear deterrence is reaffirmed; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Louisville, Kentucky, August 25, 26, 27, 2009, That The American Legion advocate to the Senate and House of Representatives that hearings commence to resolve the apparent disconnect between the political desire to limit the possession of nuclear weapons and the strategic necessity of fielding a reliable, sustainable and secure arsenal of nuclear warheads; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That subsequent arguments be conducted with a goal of avoiding the possibility of a family-wide failure of our deterrent weapons.

Homeland Security and Civil Preparedness Committee
Charles E. Kruger, Minnesota, Chairman

Referred to the Standing Commission on National Security

Resolution No. 31 (ID)**: Financial Anti-Terrorism Law Enforcement**

Received and Recorded

Resolution No. 40 (OH)**: Post Certified Emergency Response Teams**

Law and Order Committee
George E. Wehrli, Florida, Chairman

Received and Recorded

Resolution No. 82 (MI)**: Second Amendment**

Merchant Marine Committee
Chuck Moreland, Florida, Chairman

No Resolutions

Military Affairs Committee
Leo F. Malloy, Massachusetts, Chairman

Approved

Resolution No. 86: Extend Stop Loss Bonus Payments
Origin: Connecticut
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The American Legion has been the premier veterans advocacy organization since its inception in 1919; and

WHEREAS, Such advocacy includes support of a well trained and capable military through coordination of funding measures that impact those members serving under authorizations in the United States Code Title 10; and

WHEREAS, Current protections and funding under the National Defense Authorization Act provides bonus payments in the amount of five hundred dollars per month to those military personal who have been stop-lossed and retained on active duty by the United States government past their documented and contractual date of separation to meet the force requirements of the military; and

WHEREAS, Such bonus is authorized to those personnel serving under Title 10 authority, to include the Reserve component of the armed forces, while excluding National Guard personnel similarly stop-lossed and retained on Title 32 USC authorization during periods of pre and post- deployment activity, resulting in a severe financial disparity for a number of months between those personnel on Title 32 orders and those Personnel on Title 10 orders; and

WHEREAS, An opportunity exists to correct said disparity through legislative action by the Congress of the United States amending the authorizing language in the National Defense Authorization Act; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Louisville, Kentucky, August 25, 26, 27, 2009, That Congress be urged to amend and insert appropriate language in the National Defense Appropriations Act (NDAA) to extend stop loss bonus payments to those personnel retained under Title 32 orders.

Resolution No. 97: Selective Service Registration Program to Include Registration of Females
Origin: Illinois
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, The American Legion affirmed their support by passing resolution No. 112 at its annual convention in Phoenix, Arizona in 2008; and

WHEREAS, Of the current 23.8 million veterans alive today, 7.5% are female; and

WHEREAS, Females make up over 10% of the active duty forces in the United States, 9% in Britain, 12% in Australia and 19% in France; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense has recognized their value by opening a majority of Military Occupational Specialties (MOS's) to them; and

WHEREAS, Each year we see an increase in female membership in the American Legion; and

WHEREAS, In the last several decades females have made great strides in obtaining equality with males in jobs, salaries, politics and other areas; and

WHEREAS, If a National Emergency arose females would be as willing as their male counterparts to serve their country; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Louisville, Kentucky, August 25, 26, 27, 2009, That The American Legion shall sponsor and support legislation to change the Selective Service Registration Program to include registration of females between the ages of 18-25 years old.

Resolution No. 114: Improved Service for TRICARE Standard Beneficiaries
Origin: Convention Committee on National Security
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, Medical providers often refuse to accept new TRICARE Standard patients; and

WHEREAS, TRICARE is one of the lowest-paying insurance programs in America; and

WHEREAS, TRICARE payment rates are scheduled to decline further under current law (Medicare rates used), which will encourage more providers to not take on any new TRICARE patients; and

WHEREAS, TRICARE contractors (whose goal is to sign up providers for the HMO-style and TRICARE Prime at discounted rates) have little incentive to recruit TRICARE Standard providers; and

WHEREAS, TRICARE imposes more administrative obstacles for providers vs. other programs—especially for those with relatively few TRICARE patients and Command information program is not sufficient; and

WHEREAS, TRICARE Standard imposes much higher retiree co-pays for inpatient care than civilian insurance plans (lesser of $535 per day or 25% of billed charges); and

WHEREAS, TRICARE provides little assistance to beneficiaries who are not enrolled in TRICARE's HMO-style Prime program and who have trouble finding a TRICARE provider; and

WHEREAS, TRICARE reviews and studies have not included enough input from lower ranking service members, family members, and survivor TRICARE beneficiaries; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Louisville, Kentucky, August 25, 26, 27, 2009, That The American Legion urges the U.S. Government and the Department of Defense offer incentives to private medical providers who accept TRICARE beneficiaries as patients; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That studies and reviews of TRICARE be more inclusive of lower ranking service members, family members, and survivors in order that a truer picture of service be attained.

Resolution No. 115: Military Families and Modernizing the Family Readiness Group (FRG)
Origin: Convention Committee on National Security
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, For the interest of clarity, this Resolution will refer to all DOD family support models as Family Readiness Groups (FRGs); and

WHEREAS, The United States has been at war with either Afghanistan or Iraq or both since 2001; and

WHEREAS, The operational tempo required to fight in these overseas contingency operations has not only put tremendous burdens on our service members but also their families; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion supports military families; and

WHEREAS, In supporting military families, The American Legion has obtained a clear understanding that military families need more support; and

WHEREAS, In supporting military families, The American Legion has also obtained a clear understanding that the current family military support models in the Army and the Navy are not meeting the needs of families; and

WHEREAS, Consistent professionalism, accountability, and dependability are missing from the current volunteer-spouse system; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Louisville, Kentucky, August 25, 26, 27, 2009, That The American Legion, increase its support for military families by actively reaching out to military families; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge the Department of Defense (DOD) to make the necessary changes to the Family Readiness Group support model that increases professionalism, accountability, and dependability of all involved; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That DOD consider the following suggestions to improve professionalism, accountability, and dependability in the FRG support model by:

- **Establishing sufficient, qualified, paid civilian positions to manage and supervise all FRGs; and that such persons be qualified in the areas of social work and psychology; and that they work in tandem with unit Officers and Noncommissioned Officers.**
- **Create a military operational specialty (MOS) to effectively develop the training and specific job requirements of rear detachment leaders who would work with their civilian counterparts and the military families;**

and DOD create a detailed rating system for FRG supervisors and rear detachment leaders establishing accountability for their performance.

Resolution No. 116: Support for a Congressional Joint Committee on Military Health Care
Origin: Convention Committee on National Security
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The Military Health System is designed to meet the health care needs of the members of the United States Armed Forces, in peacetime and wartime, around the world through the benefit program known as TRICARE; and

WHEREAS, TRICARE is designed to meet the health care needs of all other military beneficiaries to include family members of active-duty service members; members of the Reserve components and their families; and retired military members and their family members who are not Medicare-eligible; and

WHEREAS, TRICARE for Life is designed to meet the health care needs of military beneficiaries who are Medicare-eligible; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion recognizes the debt owed to the entire military community for their sacrifices and hardships endured in honorable military service to this nation; and

WHEREAS, Military careers have entailed unique and arduous service conditions few other Americans are willing to endure including hazardous duty: service in foreign countries (often in hostile environments); and extended family separations, just to mention a few; and

WHEREAS, TRICARE involves health care service via contracted services, currently in three regions with three different contractors and includes a prescription program; and

WHEREAS, TRICARE reimbursement rates are directly linked to Medicare's reimbursement rates; therefore, face the same challenges in securing health care professionals accepting new patients; and

WHEREAS, TRICARE for Life serves as a Medicare supplemental insurance policy which includes a prescription program; and

WHEREAS, Department of Defense (DOD) is concerned over the growing cost of personnel benefits to include TRICARE and TRICARE for Life; and

WHEREAS, DOD has made several recommendations to change TRICARE with regards to increased premiums, copayments, and fees; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Louisville Kentucky, August 25, 26, 27, 2009, That The American Legion urges Congress to establish a Congressional Joint Committee on Military Health Care to ensure diligent accountability of all funding matters, health care access, and quality matters relevant to all military health care beneficiaries.

Resolution No. 117: Support for the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USU)
Origin: Convention Committee on National Security
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The American Legion has supported the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USU) since its establishment in 1972 as the Nation's

Federal Academic Health Center dedicated to providing uniquely educated and trained uniformed officers for the United States Army, Navy, Air Force and Public Health Service; and

WHEREAS, USU alumni are currently serving well 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 Hebert School of Medicine has a year-round, four-year curriculum that is nearly 700 hours longer than found at other U.S. medical schools; and

WHEREAS, These extra hours focus on epidemiology, health promotion, disease prevention, tropical medicine, leadership and field exercises; and

WHEREAS, Doctoral and Master degrees in the biomedical sciences and public health are awarded by interdisciplinary and department-based graduate programs within the School of Medicine; and

WHEREAS, Programs include infectious disease, neuroscience, and preventive medicine research; and

WHEREAS, The USU Graduate School of Nursing (GSN) offers a Master of Science in Nursing degree in the following programs: Nurse Anesthesia; Nurse Practitioner; Clinical Nurse Specialist Perioperative; and Psychiatric Mental Health; and

WHEREAS, Since 2002, the GSN has provided a Ph.D. Program in Nursing Science; and

WHEREAS, The university's Offices of Continuing Education for Health Professionals and Graduate Medical Education are unique and extensive, serving and sustaining the professional and readiness requirements of the Defense Department's worldwide military health care community; and

WHEREAS, The university's nationally recognized military and civilian faculty conduct cutting edge research in the biomedical sciences and areas specific to the Defense Department's (DOD's) health care mission such as combat casualty care, infectious diseases, post traumatic stress disorder, deployment psychology, neurological and regenerative medicine, prostate cancer and radiation biology; and

WHEREAS, The university specializes in military and public health medicine, focusing on keeping people healthy, disease prevention, and diagnosis and treatment; and

WHEREAS, USU faculty offer significant expertise in tropical medicine and hygiene, parasitology, epidemiologic methods and preventive medicine; and

WHEREAS, The 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; and

WHEREAS, USU is recognized as the place where students receive thorough preparation to deal with the medical aspects of weapons of mass destruction, including chemical, radiological and biological, nuclear and high yield explosive (CBRNE) terrorism and other catastrophe; and

WHEREAS, USU has developed similar training for civilian first responders, medical professionals and emergency planners, the Congressionally-established National Center for Disaster Medicine and Public Health was placed at USU in Fiscal Year 2009; and

WHEREAS, USU is also uniquely qualified and experienced in simulation technology, education and training; and

WHEREAS, USU, recognized by DoD as the Academic Health Center for the MHS, has graduated 4,387 uniformed physician officers who represent approximately one-quarter of the total physicians on active duty in the Armed Forces and often referred to as the backbone of the MHS by the Office of the Secretary of Defense; and

WHEREAS, USU Graduate School of Nursing has conferred 424 Master of Science in Nursing Degrees to uniformed, critically required deployable advanced practice nurses and 11 Doctoral Degrees in Nursing Science who will serve as educators and scientists for military nursing; and

WHEREAS, USU has conferred 1,136 Master and Doctoral Degrees through its Graduate Education Programs in essential areas requested by the MHS; and

WHEREAS, With the establishment of the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center (WRNMMC) by the United States Congress to be designed and constructed as a "world-class medical facilities," through close collaboration between the Armed Services Flag Officers and the USU President; USU's fully accredited and acknowledged academic and research programs will augment the strategic efforts of the Joint Task Force at Bethesda, Maryland; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Louisville, Kentucky, August 25, 26, 27, 2009, That The American Legion urges 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; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That Congress support timely planning and construction at the USU campus during Fiscal Years 2010-2011 to augment the creation of a world-class medical facilities; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That Congress continue funding the University's collaborative efforts for sharing its CBRNE expertise and training; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That Congress support development of the USU Immersive, Wide Area Virtual Environment (WAVE) Simulation for CBRNE/WMD Medical Readiness Training; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That Congress provide continued support for the Defense Graduate Psychology Education Program; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That Congress encourage continued close collaboration between the Joint Task Force and USU with the university serving as the core academic health center.

Referred to the Standing Commission on National Security

Resolution No. 42 (OH)**: Support For Military Families In Year 2010**
Resolution No. 49 (MD)**: Priorities for Military Health Care and Wounded Warrior Care**
Resolution No. 56 (NY)**: Mandate Four Day Delivery Of All Military Absentee Ballots**
Resolution No. 96 (IL)**: Disrespectful Exploitation Of Military Insignias**

Referred to the Standing Commission on Internal Affairs

Resolution No. 113: Designation of National World War I Memorial

Naval Affairs Committee
William B. Goede, Minnesota, Chairman

No Resolutions

Mr. Commander, National Officers, and Fellow Delegates. I am particularly pleased to announce the winners of the National Blood Donor Awards for this past year.

Awards: National Blood Donor

Category I—Departments with 100,000 or more members
Post Participation: Department of Florida
Individual Participation: Department of Ohio
Category II—70,000 to 99,999 members
Post & Individual Participation: Department of Wisconsin
Category III—40,000 to 69,999 members
Post & Individual Participation: Department of Georgia
Category IV—25,000 to 39,999 members
Post & Individual Participation: Department of Washington
Category V—10,000 to 24,999 members
Post & Individual Participation: Department of Montana
Category VI—less than 10,000 members
Post Participation: Department of Alaska
Individual Participation: Department of Hawaii

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 7,740 Medals were awarded to deserving cadets in Senior ROTC and Junior ROTC Units. The winning Departments for 2008-2009 are the Departments of Florida, Minnesota, Michigan, Montana, and Hawaii. This speaks well for these Departments and The American Legion in their recognition of the youth of America enrolled in ROTC programs.

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN WONG: Mr. Commander, this concludes the report of the Convention Committee on National Security. Sir, I would like to thank you on behalf of the commission and the committee for your leadership and guidance throughout the year, especially in the area of military family support and also your leadership into improving the TRICARE system and protecting our military's medical health system. So, thank you for your support and God speed.

Mr. Commander, as a duly elected delegate from the Department of New York, I move we adopt the Convention report.

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: You've heard the motion is there a second? ...*Second.* Discussion? All those in favor vote by the normal sign of aye. Opposed? The motion is carried. The report of National Security is adopted.

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: One of the great privileges of having served as your national commander this year was the opportunity to visit and to see and to witness the incredible spirit of the wounded warriors as we visited them in Landstuhl and at Walter Reed Medical Center and in the military hospitals around the country.

But there was a gap. There was a gap that needed to be filled. Just as Commander Morin saw a gap at Landstuhl, we saw a gap around the country and we created Operation Comfort Warriors to fill that gap, to provide those materials that they so badly needed. Individual materials like sweat suits and iPods and DVD players, things to help fill the empty hours, things to help comfort the wounded body, things to help repair the wounded spirit. We raised a great deal of money. I have monitored all the expenditures that have gone to those military hospitals. Believe me, they have gone to individual wounded warriors. They have improved their lives. But it's not a project that is over, it's a project that is ongoing. It's a need that is ongoing. And at this point if we have departments or individuals that would like to make donations to Operation Comfort Warriors we would be very pleased to receive those donations.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (IN): Mr. Commander, on behalf of the great State of Indiana and Auxiliary Unit 253 from North Webster, Indiana, I present to you this check for $5,000. This is in addition to $4,994 donated by the second district of the Department of Indiana, $1,333 from the SAL, for a grand total of $11,327 this year, commander.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (NY): Commander, we have two checks for the Operation Comfort Warriors. The first one from the Kimlau Post Number 1291 in New York City for $500, and then we have one from the Department of New York for $3,000.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (DE): Commander Rehbein, I would like to present you this check for $500 for the Operation Comfort Warriors from the Nanticoke Post 6, Seaford, Delaware.

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: I want to thank everyone that has made a donation today. We will update you with the total, but we also had donations come into the booth throughout the Convention, and that total has not been tallied. So at some point before the adjournment I will update those numbers.

And I would like very much if you would grant me the indulgence of calling a lady to the podium that has shared this year, worked at my side, supported me from home and on the road, and would you please join me in welcoming the First Lady of The American Legion, my wife, Ann. *(Applause)*

MRS. ANN REHBEIN: I would just like to thank everyone for all the support this year, and the love and outpouring of kindness that you have shown me, and I'm really glad that somebody is home to take care of the bat problem and the gutter problem, shovel the snow, mow the lawn, do the dishes.

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: We're going to draw a line in here—

MRS. ANN REHBEIN: But seriously, this has been a wonderful year for both of us, and I appreciate it very much. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: Most of our family that you met at last year's Convention could not be here because of small children and school and all of the other conflicts that can develop, but I want you to know that they also thank you for what you have done this year. And I have a larger group of brothers and sisters, a group that supported the campaign, that worked the campaign, that have been a primary means of support throughout this year, a group of Legionnaires that finished this year, spent all

year in the top ten in the membership ranks and finished this year in the top ten, and that's an accomplishment that I'm very proud of. And I would ask you if you would join me in thanking the members of the Legion family from the Department of Iowa. We have some on stage, we have others here in the audience. But, please, help me thank the Department of Iowa. *(Applause)*

And at this point I would ask the national vice commanders that have served this year to come forward. I want them to know how well they have represented the national organization as they have traveled through the past 12 months, because they visited many of your departments, they have been on your membership tours, they have been on some special events that I asked them to do. Every one of them, as they put on the cap of national vice commander, as they wore that hat this year, every one of them upheld the pride of The American Legion and helped fulfill that purpose. I have a small gift for each one of them that I hope they will each wear proudly for the rest of their service in The American Legion. There are less than 500 individuals in the entire history of this organization to be designated national vice commanders. That's not a very large group. It's a group that these five gentlemen can very proudly say I was one of them.

And at this point I have a note here in the book that I need to turn the podium to National Vice Commander Simmons for a moment.

A couple of quick announcements. Another donation to the Legacy Fund. We have here $500 from Post 178, Murrells Inlet, South Carolina. And Operation Comfort Warriors, the total at this Convention, donations on stage from the booth, $16,000 that will go to help a lot of great men and women. That brings us to a total since the first of December—we asked for $50,000, we now have received $190,000. Thank you. *(Applause)* Vice Commander Simmons.

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER SIMMONS: Thank you, commander. Commander, if you recall, at the first NEC meeting I said you were a unique person. Well, it changed. You are a double unique person, and the five national vice commanders are proud to be serving with you this year. And what you did this year makes the American Legion organization proud as well. Sir, we know you're ended with working, so we've got a little token of love for you. That's from the five national vice commanders; from Randy, Larry and Chuck as well. You know what is in the envelope? There is more involved, too, sir.

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: Wow. This will go a long ways to helping me accumulate lots more toys. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER SIMMONS: Yes, sir, it will.

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: I want to thank each and every one of you for what you have done this year, the five vice commanders—You know, the three officers that are coming forward, our chaplain, our historian and our sergeant-at-arms, have each in the course of their lives experienced significant challenges, and those three men have all overcome those challenges, have all continued to serve as dedicated members of The American Legion, and it has been my privilege to stand alongside of them as they served as national sergeant-at-arms, national chaplain, national historian, and I want to thank them for their service, what you have given this year to this organization, and I hope you can continue to serve, as I hope we all can continue to serve in one function or another. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER SIMMONS: Sir, with your permission we would love to call Milt up forward, and he can make—Milt? Milt, you had a wonderful

year, and I know you had a load on your hands taking care of the commander. With that, we want to say thank you from the eight of us.

NATIONAL COMMANDER'S AIDE: Thank you. Appreciate it. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: And since we have him here it's also my privilege—you know that's a difficult job. Because you sacrifice, you travel as much as the national commander, but with much less recognition because it's about the details. But it's the details that really make the year work. Because if they are not handled then everything else suffers. The details this year were handled exquisitely. The details this year, all of the work he did, I never had to look. I always knew where Milt was. And every time I had a question, Milt had the answer. Didn't have to look it up, Milt had the answer. He knew what the plane schedules were, he knew the meeting schedules.

I've joked with folks all around the country that there is a difference between telling the national commander—as the aide telling the national commander where to be, and telling the national commander where to go. *(Laughter)* Our relationship I don't think ever reached anywhere near the point where Milt was tempted to tell the commander where to go, and I certainly valued all of his time. Milt, if you would accept that from me, and if you would also accept this as a personal gift. Open it, please. This dates back to Milt's time in the military. We found this—we thought maybe he might enjoy it. Milt is a C-130 pilot, retired out of the Air Force—*(Applause)* And I know he knows the history of that aircraft. But having it all pulled together, all of the models and all the variants of that airplane that flew, we thought you might enjoy looking at that from time to time.

Milt, thank you. And it doesn't happen without the aide's wife, either. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER'S AIDE: And if I could ask Ann to come forward, please. It really has been an honor, and certainly a privilege for me to have served as the aide to the national commander this past year. It's a year that I will always treasure and cherish for the rest of my life. I want to thank each and every one of you out there for all the hospitality and the—just the friendliness and the warmth that you gave to me whenever we visited the posts and the departments. I too want to thank my wife, Pat, because without her support I could not have made it through the year. I never ever had to worry about what was going on at home, because she was taking care of everything, better than I could as far as that is concerned. *(Laughter)*

We've all heard it said that The American Legion has almost an uncanny ability to select the right individual at the right time to be our national commander, and this could not have been more true this year when Commander Rehbein was selected. He met many challenges during this year, and he met each one with professionalism and with dignity. And he always, always had the interest of the veteran uppermost in his mind. And for that I'm proud to have been his aide this past year. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: More toys. Thank you, Milt. Thank you. Thank you greatly. I believe our national sergeant-at-arms has a word or two.

NATIONAL SERGEANT-AT-ARMS FREEL: Commander, Milt, on behalf of the national officers, they have noticed that in your travels you have seen the two bears—one is the Army, I would like to present to Commander Rehbein. The other one is Air Force Bear, to Milt, his aide. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: Thank you, Randy. And there is one additional individual. It was my privilege this year—you know, it was a bittersweet moment when Bob Spanogle announced his retirement, because I knew he would enjoy it, and I want to ask you have you ever seen anyone that had as much fun at a National

Convention as Bob Spanogle has had at this one? *(Applause)* But then it was my responsibility to appoint someone to be his successor, knowing what an impossible task that was to fill Bob's shoes. However, an individual stepped forward, has taken that position, and has done an outstanding job as our national adjutant. If anyone is filling the shoes, standing in the footprints that Bob Spanogle left behind, it's Dan Wheeler. Dan has led this organization at the staff level, he has provided every bit of support and knowledge and wisdom and guidance that I and the national officers have needed as we have traveled. There have been new initiatives started, things that will continue down the road, things that are happening under his guidance. And I want to say thank you to Dan for serving as national adjutant. It has been a pleasure and a privilege to spend these last nine months with you, sir, to provide the guidance for me. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WHEELER: Mr. Commander, it has been the singular honor of my life to have served as your national adjutant. Thank you for that opportunity.

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: And now it is my privilege to call on National Vice Commander Michael Landkamer to please come take the gavel and preside over the next order of business. Before we go to that, the national adjutant has asked for the privilege of making a presentation. Dan?

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WHEELER: Ladies and gentlemen, Mr. National Commander, a wise man once said if you want a friend, get a dog; otherwise be happy to get respect. Mr. Commander, I have seen no evidence of a dog in your office in either D.C. or Indy, but I can assure you that you have a number of friends on your staff, and that has not been at the price of their respect. Just as you have demonstrated leadership and wisdom throughout our nation, and earned the respect of veterans, your fellow Legionnaires, and high officials in government, you have also earned the respect and admiration of your staff, each of whom admires you for your intelligence and leadership, and likes you because of your good disposition, your kindness, and your lovely wife, Ann. It's always a treat when she comes with you. Throughout the year we have enjoyed working with you, and have especially benefitted from your vision and your determination to reach out to veterans of all war eras, leaving none behind.

We have also benefitted, as has the entire American Legion, from your vision concerning electronic communications in our present and our future. Back in November you promised The American Legion College that we would have a new website within a year, and we will launch that website—you promised—on Veterans Day. And it will be awesome because of your direct involvement in its design and execution.

Also this week we are launching one of two blogs—The Burn Pit—because you said a website is good, but it's not enough. We have to have a presence where young vets are talking to each other. We are hopeful that you will continue to be active in your leadership capacities, especially in cyberspace.

To that end your executive directors, John Sommer, Jeff Brown, Marty Justice and Peter Gaytan, and your entire national staff, realized that you would need the latest of equipment to keep working at full capacity. So they have all chipped in, and it is my great pleasure to present to you this fully equipped laptop computer and backpack, so you can carry it easily no matter wherever your travels take you. Thank you, commander, for a fabulous year, and for being an excellent friend to us all. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: And now I call on National Vice Commander Michael Landkamer to preside over the next order of business.

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER LANDKAMER: After serving this year as National Vice Commander I am honored to represent all members of The American Legion in presiding over the next order of business. This is the time when we present our national commander, David K. Rehbein of Iowa, the colors of his year in office and a plaque. At this time I call Past National Commander Daniel Ludwig of Minnesota to present the colors.

Presentation: Plaque and Colors to Outgoing National Commander
Daniel A. Ludwig, Past National Commander (Colors)
Robert W. Spanogle, National Vice Commander (Plaque)

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER LUDWIG: Good morning. It's my privilege to present the Colors on your behalf to our national commander. I invite you to please rise and join me in presenting this official set of Colors to our retiring national commander. I now call on the National Champion Color Guard from Post 49, Department of New Hampshire. Color Guard, present the National Commander's Colors to this station. Hand salute. ...*Color guard enters.*

…Two! Please be seated. Commander Dave, if you would join me, please. Commander Dave, one year ago when you embarked on this journey you talked about pride and purpose. You have caused all of us to renew our pride in our history, in our accomplishments. You have inspired us all to focus on our mission, to focus on our purpose. On your watch, commander, when the president, the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Homeland Security took misguided positions, you, with grace and dignity, with conviction and clarity, challenged those positions and caused each to be reconsidered. Time after time, commander, your effective steadfast leadership made us all proud. Your love for and loyalty to God and country has been an inspiration, and we are forever indebted to you for your service and sacrifice.

Everything these Colors are, everything these Colors represent, you will now carry with you for all time. So as you and Ann and your family gaze upon these Colors in the days and years ahead, you all can have a sense of rightful satisfaction for a job well done. So now, Commander Dave, my friend, on behalf of all gathered here and beyond I am proud to present your Colors to you. May God bless you and your family always. Commander, your colors. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: Color Guard, would you retire my Colors.

...*Color Guard retires Colors.*

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER LANDKAMER: I now call on Past National Commander Robert W. Spanogle of Michigan to present the plaque to our outgoing national commander.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER SPANOGLE: National Commander, would you join me at the podium. I'm honored to be here today to present this Past National Commander's Plaque, authorized by the National Executive Committee of The American Legion, to our national commander, Dave Rehbein. I do so on behalf of the members of The American Legion, the national officers, the National Executive Committee, the national commissions, the national staff, and the delegates, alternates, and guests present.

Mr. Commander, you have kept faith with the principles of The American Legion since your election at the 90th Annual National Convention at Phoenix, Arizona, on August the 28th, 2008. In your acceptance speech that day you cited two words—pride

and purpose. You told us then that we would hear these words again and again in your year as national commander. You defined those two words as a definition of The American Legion. Pride in ourselves as veterans and what we do to help veterans and their families. The purpose as defined by the Four Pillars of The American Legion.

Mr. Commander, we of The American Legion are proud of you and your leadership. When a research paper to the Department of Homeland Security described returning veterans as potential terrorists and used Timothy McVeigh as an example, you took a reasoned and positive approach. You met with the Secretary of Homeland Security, and she apologized to all our nation's veterans. And with your guidance she established an Office of Veterans Affairs and pledged to hire veterans. By your leadership working with Congress you secured a long time mandate of The American Legion, multi-year funding for the VA medical care system. We are awaiting Senate approval of that bill.

When President Obama's administration proposed that wounded soldiers and veterans pay for their medical care under their private insurance policies, again you took a positive and reasoned approach and met with the president. You convinced the president that this policy would be a disaster, and not in the best interest of our nation's values. A month ago you met with the president again and secured his promise not to include, but keep separate the VA medical care system and TRICARE from any national health care bill. For all of us and all of this, our nation's veterans and our military and their families will be forever grateful. *(Applause)*

You visited our young men and women engaged in the War on Terror in Iraq and those hospitalized at Landstuhl and Walter Reed. Your compassion and solidarity was clearly evident when you established Operation Comfort Warriors. You challenged us to reverse the decline in the numbers of young men and women involved in The American Legion Americanism programs. You asked us to be visible in our communities and encourage values training to all those young men and women through our programs. You asked us to knock on doors and invite veterans to join or posts, and join with us to make sure that the values of this great republic are maintained for future generations.

Active posts mean functioning Americanism programs and assistance for soldiers, veterans and their families. We heard you on membership and programs and we knew you were right. We didn't hit that mark for you, but we understand your message and we pledge that we will continue to work to make better American Legion membership and programs.

After these milestones and so many others, on the mission for veterans, The American Legion, the military, and their families, you have traveled thousands of miles. You have slept in countless motel rooms as our national commander. We thank you for your leadership and your dedication to The American Legion. We thank Ann, your wife, your son, Chris, your daughter, Jennifer, and all of the family for their support and sharing you with us this year.

It is my honor to represent The American Legion and present to you this plaque from all of us with our respect. It represents our appreciation and our abiding friendship, and we ask for your wise counsel in the future years ahead. As we said during the Vietnam War at the end of a successful mission, Bravo Zulu! Thank you, dear friend, for a job well done. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: Receiving those Colors, receiving that plaque, hearing those words—I asked those two gentlemen to be part of this ceremony because they have been part of the wise and more importantly honest counsel that I have

received in the progression towards this job and during this year in the operation of this job. I'll let you judge the quality. All I will say to you as I receive these Colors and that plaque—you gave me this job, and I did the best I could. I did the best—absolute every effort that I could give. *(Cheers and applause)*

Thank you. Thank you. And now we go forward. And now it's our responsibility, all of us, to make next year better, because every year needs to be better than the year before. We carry that charge. I carry that charge. I will give next year my best effort, and I hope you will all do likewise. *(Applause)*

Special Order of Business: Election of National Officers

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: We come now to a special order of business, the election of the national officers. National Judge Advocate Philip B. Onderdonk of Maryland will read the rules of Convention governing the nomination and election of officers.

NATIONAL JUDGE ADVOCATE ONDERDONK: Thank you, Mr. Commander. The rules for election of national officers.

Rule 15, Final sentence. Election of National Officers shall be by roll call.

Rule 17: Prior to the election of National Officers the National Commander shall appoint subject to approval of the Convention, a Judge of Election and such number of tellers as he deems necessary, provided that the total tellers 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 concludes completes the reading of the rules pertaining to the election of national officers.

Election of the National Commander

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: National Adjutant Wheeler will now call the roll of the departments. I would ask that the delegation chairmen be close to the microphones. And as chairman of this Convention, as judges for the election I now appoint John A. Derner, Adjutant of the Department of Iowa, as judge, and as tellers Terry Woodburn, Adjutant, Department of Illinois; W. E. 'Gene' Franks, Adjutant, Department of Alaska, and Mike McDaniel, Adjutant, Department of Florida.

The judges and the tellers are on stage. If it would be possible, can we have the lights lowered somewhat? It's very difficult to recognize individuals. And I would ask National Adjutant Wheeler to begin the roll call for the election of the national commander.

(The National Adjutant calls each department in turn.)

DEPARTMENT COMMANDER MITCHELL (AL): Sir, my name is Wayne Mitchell. I am Department Commander of the great State of Alabama, and I'm a duly authorized delegate to this Convention, and I rise to yield the floor to the gentleman from Florida so that he may make a nomination. Roll Tide.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN MARTEL (FL): Commander, Paul Martel, Past Department Commander and Delegation Chairman for the great State of Florida. With your permission I would like to yield my time to Past Department Adjutant Dyke Shannon. Thank you.

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: Permission is granted. Delegate Dyke Shannon is granted the privilege of the podium.

DELEGATE SHANNON (FL): Mr. Commander, distinguished guests, and most importantly the delegates to this Convention, it is my distinct honor and privilege to appear before you today to place in the name of an outstanding individual, Legionnaire, gentleman and friend, for the office of national commander of The American Legion.

Having served as a department adjutant of Florida for almost 30 years, I've seen a lot of individuals come and go in this organization. Very few stand out with solid leadership skills at the level our candidate possesses. We all realize that with the times we live in a leader of an organization of this magnitude must be prepared at all times to address issues not only in the area of veterans affairs, but national security and civil and social issues that affect all of us as well.

This individual is prepared and capable of dealing with these challenges. And, in fact, one of his master's degrees is in national security and strategic studies. Our candidate is one of those individuals which we in The American Legion feel that we had an early influence in their life.

While attending Martins Ferry High School, where he served as president of the National Honor Society and student council, as well as senior class vice president, he had his first contact with The American Legion. In 1967 he attended Buckeye Boys State in the great Department of Ohio. Upon graduation he entered the United States Naval Academy, and in 1972 he was commissioned an ensign in the United States Navy with a bachelor of science degree. This was the beginning of a 24 year career, having served 19 of those years on sea duty. During his career he has held numerous leadership positions, including commanding officer of the Naval Communications Station, United Kingdom, in Thurso, Scotland, for three years.

While serving in Scotland he met both the Queen and Queen Mother. He also served as commanding officer of the guided missile frigate USS *McInerney* for two years,

including combat missions during Operation Desert Storm. During his career he has earned two master's degrees. In 1996 he retired from the Navy with the rank of captain. His military awards include the Bronze Star, four Meritorious Service Medals, three Navy Commendation Medals, and numerous campaign and service medals and ribbons.

Clarence is a Paid-Up-For-Life member with 27 years of membership and eight Gold Brigade Awards. I can take a lot of time and list the many offices in The American Legion that Clarence has held, but most of you have received brochures outlining his many offices. A short summary is that he was post commander three times of Atlantic Beach Post 316, and virtually held every chairmanship in the post. He has been district commander, area commander, our first department vice commander, and department commander in 2003, and obtained an all time high in membership.

He has continued to assume responsibilities in many areas. He has for 11 years been a Boys State counselor, five years on the Boys State board of directors, five years on our long range planning committee, and on and on.

At the national level he has been a member of the National Security Council since 1997, serving three years as chairman of the National Security Commission. He has served as a member for one or more years of the National Legislative Council, National Membership and Post Activities, and Commander's Advisory Committee, to name a few. If elected he will be the first graduate of The American Legion College to be elected national commander, having attended in 2000. *(Applause)*

Upon recommendation of our late National Executive Committeeman and our candidate's mentor, George Derrick, it was my pleasure to have sent him to that Legion College. In his home community he is a member of many veteran and civic organizations. He served two years as chairman of the Northeast Florida Veterans Council, and is a member of the Sons of the Legion and the Legion Riders. As a dedicated husband, father, and grandfather, the Legion is a big part of their entire family.

Clarence married his wife, Liz, in Martins Ferry, Ohio, 32 years ago. Liz, who was born and raised in Thurso, Scotland, is active in the Auxiliary, having been unit president eight times, district president twice, and area president. He and Liz have three children. Jimmy is an Army veteran of Desert Storm and dual member of the Sons and the Legion; Sharon, a Navy veteran and dual member of the Auxiliary and the Legion. Nicole is a member of the Auxiliary. Jimmy's wife, Samantha, is a Marine veteran and dual member of the Legion Auxiliary, and Nicole's husband, David, is a member of the Sons of the American Legion. All six of their grandchildren belong to the Sons or the Auxiliary. So this is truly an example of an American Legion family. And he told me that his grandchildren call him Pam-pa, but he is grudgingly willing to give up that title for just one year to be Mr. National Commander.

As you can see, our candidate is certainly qualified professionally and by his Legion experience. He is eager to serve this great organization. He has worked very hard to reach this point. As we enter the last year of the first decade of the 21st century we must begin to look at doing things differently.

Soon after I returned from Vietnam in the 1970s I started my Legion career in the Department of Indiana. The war cry then was that we need younger members. Well, 35 years plus-years, the same war cry. We need younger members. They are just from different wars. Our candidate has visited your department, and many of you have heard him discuss how we must change our mindset to recruit younger members in new and unique ways with methods whose names didn't exist just a few years ago. We know we

must embrace technology and enhance our own communication via the internet and other methods. Our candidate is working on plans to help you accomplish these goals. He truly has a vision for how we can end this decade a bigger and better organization.

It has been said that a manager does things right, but a leader does the right thing. I'm confident this individual is prepared to do the right thing and lead this great organization. You may not know this, but Florida has never had a national commander. So for the very first time in the history of the Sunshine State it is my honor and a personal pleasure to place the name of Mr. Clarence Hill of Atlantic Beach Post 316, Department of Florida, in nomination for the high office of national commander of The American Legion, 2009-2010. Thank you. *(Cheers and applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: The adjutant will resume the roll.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN PAWSON (AK): Mr. Chairman, the Department of Alaska yields to the Department of Kentucky.

NECMAN COFFMAN (KY): Mr. Chairman, Randall Coffman, National Executive Committeeman of the Department of Kentucky requests the chair recognize Alternate NEC Randall Fisher, Department of Kentucky, for the purpose of seconding the nomination of Clarence Hill, Department of Florida, for national commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: Mr. Randall Fisher is recognized and granted the privilege of the podium.

ALTERNATE NECMAN FISHER (KY): Good morning. Having known Clarence Hill for several years, I can tell you he possesses the integrity and strong leadership skills to lead our great organization.

Clarence Hill was born and raised in Martins Ferry, Ohio. He's the second of seven children. His parents, Elmer P. Hill, of Canton, Ohio, and Virginia Donnelly of St. Clairsville, Ohio, are both deceased. He attended the Buckeye Boys State, 1967, and graduated from Martins Ferry High School in 1968. His wife, Liz Robinson, was born and raised in Thurso, Scotland. She graduated from Thurso High School. They met in Norfolk, Virginia in 1974, and were married in 1976. It's interesting, they met at a party after a rugby match, and Clarence was transporting people in a van. He went up and asked Liz to dance, and asked her to wait for him while he was doing some more transporting back to the post. When he returned Liz was gone, and he didn't get her phone number. But a fellow ensign had her phone number, but he wouldn't give it to Clarence. Clarence later took the number out of his ensign's wallet, and the rest was history. They have three children: Jimmy, Sharon, and Nicole, and six grandchildren. Bud, 18; Amanda, 15; Kadence, four; Amelia, three; McKenzie, two, and Fionna, one. Kadence and McKenzie are here on stage with their mother, Nicole.

Clarence traveled extensively during his 24 years in the Navy. Ten duty stations. Five years in Norfolk, Virginia; one and one-half years in Jacksonville; eight months in Philadelphia; another year in Norfolk; one and one-half years in Monterey, California; four years again in Jacksonville; three years in Thurso, Scotland; two years again in Jacksonville; two years in Gaeta, Italy; one year in Newport, Rhode Island, and then he retired in Jacksonville, Florida. He has been a Legion member of the Atlantic Beach Post 316 since 1983.

Liz encouraged Clarence to join The American Legion. She wanted to join the Auxiliary, and she gave Clarence her application and told him he needed to sign it. He put it aside and told her he would sign it later. I'm sure some of you have heard Clarence

tell this story. And Liz told Clarence there is two ways she could join the Auxiliary. One, if he was a member, and the other was he had to be deceased. *(Laughter)*

Clarence has been a very dedicated Legionnaire, a dedicated husband, father, grandfather, and military leader. Clarence Hill is a strong leader and supports all the Legion's programs and purposes. I, Randall Fisher, Alternate NEC from the Commonwealth of Kentucky, proudly supports and seconds the nomination of Clarence Hill for highest office of national commander for the year 2009 and 2010. Thank you.

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: The Adjutant will resume the roll.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN BRANCH (AZ): Comrade Commander, sir. My name is Henry Branch. I'm the delegate chairman from the great State of Arizona, and at this time Arizona proudly yields to the great State of New Hampshire.

NECMAN NEYLON (NH): Mr. Adjutant, John Neylon, National Executive Committeeman, speaking on behalf of our delegation chairman, Past Department Commander George McCall, requesting that Past National Vice Commander Joe Caouette, who is seated on the stage, be recognized for the purpose of a second.

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: Mr. Joe Caouette, from New Hampshire, is recognized and granted the privilege of the podium.

DELEGATE CAOUETTE (NH): Mr. Commander, fellow delegates, it's a pleasure for me to second the nomination of a truly great Legionnaire to lead our organization in the coming year. You've already heard from the nomination address and the first seconding address of the deep and committed responsibility that our candidate has through the grass roots level of The American Legion, his dedication and service to the post, to his district, and to his department.

Clarence Hill is a Legionnaire who has never forgotten his roots. He is a gentleman that knows the value of our organization at the grass roots level. He is very well versed in one of the pillars of The American Legion, serving as the department Oratorical chairman for many years, and on the Boys State Board to this present date. Can't you just imagine the strong Americanism feelings that I have for this candidate? He was chairman of the National Security Commission, American Legion College graduate in 2000, and the first Legion college graduate to become the national commander of The American Legion. A man that is very well versed in the four pillars of The American Legion. He has been employed for a security protective agency since 1996, and is responsible personally for 44 contracts.

Fellow delegates, in this time of America's history, when mainstream America is looking for an advocate to carry its message across the land, that vehicle to get this done is The American Legion. And we have a candidate that has been tested under fire, and is ready and willing to carry the burden of leadership on his shoulders. As a duly elected delegate to this convention from the Department of New Hampshire, it's a privilege and an honor to second the nomination for the position of national commander of The American Legion for the year 2009-2010, Clarence Hill. *(Applause)*

...Herein a demonstration of support took place.

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: The Convention will return to order. The national adjutant will resume the roll call.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN ROGERS (AR): Arkansas. Ross Rogers, National Executive Committeeman, acting delegate to the State of the Arkansas, seconded the nomination of Clarence Hill for national commander. That is our vote for him. Thank you very much.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN FERCHO (CA): Dennis Fercho, Department of California, delegate chairman, delegate to this Convention, second the motion.

DEPARTMENT COMMANDER McCURDY (CO): Commander, Frank McCurdy, department commander of the beautiful State of Colorado, seconds the nomination for Clarence Hill for national commander.

DEPARTMENT COMMANDER DAGGETT (CT): Harvey Daggett, Department of Connecticut, seconds the nomination for Clarence Hill.

DEPARTMENT COMMANDER McBRIDE (DE): Delaware, Ruth McBride, delegation chairman of Delaware, seconds the motion for Clarence Hill as commander.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN (DC): Mr. Chairman, the District of Columbia is proud to second the nomination of Clarence Hill for commander of The American Legion.

DELEGATE MARSHALL (FR): Mr. Adjutant, Bill Marshall, Department of France, elected delegate to this Convention, and the true birthplace of The American Legion, Department of France, casts its 10 delegate votes to Clarence Hill for the high office of national commander 2009-2010.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN ADAMS (GA): Mr. Chairman, Butch Adams, department commander of the great State of Georgia, and delegation chairman, and home of the current national SAL commander, Mark Arneson, and state where no veteran is left behind, proudly puts all 54 delegates and a second of Clarence Hill for national commander. Go Dogs.

DEPARTMENT COMMANDER CORDES (HI): Mr. Chairman, Daniel Cordes, commander, Department of Hawaii, seconds the nomination of Clarence Hill.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN MATTICE (ID): Tom Mattice, delegate chairman for the State of Idaho, seconds the nomination for Clarence Hill.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN FLANAGAN (IL): Bill Flanagan, delegate chairman, Department of Illinois and commander, cast all 121 delegates for Clarence Hill.

DEPARTMENT COMMANDER (IN): Bob Newman from the great State of Indiana, proudly seconds the nomination of Clarence Hill.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN FEUERBACH (IA): Bruce Feuerbach, Iowa delegation chairman seconds the nomination for Clarence Hill for national commander.

DELEGATE THOMAS (KS): Commander, John Thomas, duly registered delegate from the State of Kansas is proud to second the nomination of Clarence Hill for the year 2009-2010.

DELEGATE AUCOIN (LA): Mr. Chairman, Charlie Aucoin, NEC from the great Department of Louisiana, would like the second the nomination of Mr. Clarence Hill for national commander.

DEPARTMENT COMMANDER OLSON (ME): Andy Olson, commander State of Maine, seconds the nomination of Clarence Hill.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN OESTEREICH (MD): Orlyn Oestereich, delegate chairman for the State of Maryland, seconds the nomination of Clarence Hill.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN BARBOUR (MA): Mr. Chairman, Bill Barbour, department chairman for the great State of Massachusetts, home of Plymouth Rock, the Mayflower, Past National Commanders Jake Comer and Paul Morin, and the can do spirit that lives, further seconds the motion for Clarence Hill for the high office of national commander, sir.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN HERBRUGER (MX): Arthur Herbruger representing the Department of Mexico with posts in six different countries, seconds the motion for Clarence Hill as national commander for 2009-2010.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN ANDERSON (MI): Mr. Adjutant, Bill Anderson, delegate chairman of the great State of Michigan, and the home of the 2009 World Series Champions, supports Clarence Hill for national commander.

DEPARTMENT COMMANDER DAVIS (MN): Al Davis, commander of Minnesota. Minnesota seconds the nomination of Clarence Hill for national commander.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN GOSA (MS): Mr. Commander, Robert Gosa, Alternate NEC from the great State of Mississippi, and delegate to this 91st Convention, proudly cast a second for Clarence Hill. Go Rebel.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN STRAGLIATI (MO): Mr. Chairman, Vic Stragliati, delegate chairman and past state commander from the great Show Me State of Missouri, seconds the nomination for Clarence Hill.

DEPARTMENT COMMANDER MITCHELL (MT): Jack Mitchell, department commander from the last best place, the Big Sky Country, casts its 19 ballots for Clarence E. Hill for national commander of The American Legion.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN CROSIER (NE): Mr. Chairman, Bill Crosier, delegation chairman from the great State of Nebraska, home of Big Red football, casts our 51 votes for Clarence Hill for national commander.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN FINLEY (NV): Mr. Chairman, Jerry Finley, junior past commander from the battle born State of Nevada, seconds the motion for Clarence Hill 2009-2010 national commander of The American Legion, and casts all 15 delegate votes for our new National Commander.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (NJ): Mr. Chairman, delegation from New Jersey, casts all 67 ballots for our new national commander, Clarence Hill. Go Navy.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN JORGENSEN (NM): Mr. Chairman Bruce Jorgensen, duly elected delegate, casts all of the votes from the State of New Mexico, the Land of Enchantment, for Mr. Clarence Hill.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN BERTRAND (NY): Mr. Chairman, Ed Bertrand from the Department of New York, proudly seconds the nomination of Clarence Hill for national commander.

DEPARTMENT COMMANDER COOK (NC): Mr. Chairman, Lou Cook, department commander and delegation chairman from the great State of North Carolina, seconds the nomination for Clarence Hill.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN QUAM (ND): Mr. Chairman, Carroll Quam, delegation chairman, Department of North Dakota, casts its 26 votes for Clarence Hill as our national commander.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN KIMBALL (OH): Bob Kimball, delegation chairman from Ohio, seconds the nomination of Clarence Hill for commander of The American Legion.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN WILSON (OK): Mr. Chairman, D. Wilson, past commander of Oklahoma, delegate chairman, Kimball recognizes Clarence Hill as our new national commander.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN OWENS (OR): Kevin Owens, delegate chairman for the great State of Oregon, casts its delegate strength for the next national commander, Clarence Hill.

DEPARTMENT COMMANDER SOCHA (PA): Mr. Chairman, department commander of the great State of Pennsylvania with the largest membership in the national organization, home of the champion Philadelphia Phillies, the Pittsburgh Steelers, and the Pittsburgh Penguins, seconds the nomination of the next national commander of The American Legion, Clarence Hill.

DEPARTMENT COMMANDER SCHOLTEN (PI): Herbert Scholten, department commander, in conjunction with our other delegate, Bill Kelly Nechtman, casts our nomination for Clarence Hill.

DEPARTMENT COMMANDER FIGUEROA (PR): Mr. Chairman, Luis Figueroa, Department of Puerto Rico, USA. We vote 13 delegates for Clarence Hill.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN GOLDE (RI): Mr. Chairman, David Golde, delegate chairman from the State of Rhode Island, proudly seconds the nomination for Clarence Hill for national commander.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN HOLLAND (SC): Mr. Chairman, James Holland, past department commander of South Carolina and delegation chairman. The great State of South Carolina seconds the motion of Clarence Hill for national commander.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN HULS (SD): Jim Huls, delegation chairman from the great State of South Dakota, birthplace of American Legion Baseball, seconds the nomination of Clarence Hill.

DEPARTMENT COMMANDER MATHIS (TN): Mr. Chairman, Don Mathis, from the great State of Tennessee, seconds the nomination of, and casts 35 delegate votes for our next national commander, Clarence Hill.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN McNAIR (TX): Mr. Chairman, James McNair from Texas, the great State of Texas, as chairman of our delegation I second the nomination and cast all 88 votes for Clarence Hill.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN ENGELBRECHT (UT): Mr. Chairman, delegate chairman, Lee Engelbrecht, from the great State of Utah seconds the nomination of Clarence Hill for the national commander.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN FARMER (VT): Dick Farmer, past department commander, and delegate chairman from the Green Mountain State, proudly seconds Clarence Hill for our next national commander.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN CLEVINGER (VA): Les Clevinger, chairman delegation, Department of Virginia, proudly seconds the nomination of Clarence Hill for national commander.

DEPARTMENT COMMANDER SCHWARTZ (WA): Bob Schwartz, commander from the golden green covered hills of eastern Washington, are to the high mountains to the end of the Lewis and Clark Trail at the Pacific Ocean, the great State of Washington seconds the nomination of Clarence Hill.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN WOLFE (WV): Mr. Chairman, West Virginia delegate chairman, Gary Wolfe, I nominate Clarence Hill for national commander.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN ENDRES (WI): Mr. Chairman, Leo Endres, delegation chairman, Department of Wisconsin, seconds the nomination for Clarence Hill for national commander, and pledges Wisconsin's 75 delegates.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN JACOBS (WY): Jake Jacobs, NEC Wyoming, a state with high altitudes, low magnitudes, but great attitudes, proudly seconds Clarence Hill.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WHEELER: Mr. Commander that completes the roll call.

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: Thank you, sir. I recognize microphone number one. If you would please leave the lights on the microphones.

DELEGATE COCCIMIGLIO (PA): Mr. Commander, Richard Coccimiglio, Department of Pennsylvania. In view of the fact that there's been 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 Clarence E. Hill be elected national commander by acclimation.

I will now make that first nomination. Mr. Commander, as a duly elected delegate to this 91st Convention, I move that we suspend the rules of this convention pertaining to the election of the National Commander, and the nomination and election of national vice commanders, which rules shall be reinstated at the conclusion of the election of the national vice commanders. ...*Second.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: There is a motion before us and a second to suspend the rules of this convention pertaining to the election of the national commander and the nomination and election of national vice commanders, which rules shall be automatically reinstated at the conclusion of the election for national vice commanders. That motion is non-debatable and requires a two-thirds vote. All of those in favor of the motion signify by saying aye. Those opposed say no. That motion is carried. Microphone number two.

DELEGATE CATCHESBERGER (NY): Margaret Catchesberger from the State of New York. Mr. Commander I move the nominations for the office of national commander be closed.

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: You have heard the motion. Is there a second. ...*Second.* That second is acquired. The motion to close nominations is a non-debatable motion and requires a two-thirds vote. All those in favor signify by saying aye. Those opposed signify by the sign of nay. That motion is carried. Microphone number one.

DELEGATE MORVERT (MI): Shannon Morvert, duly elected delegate from the Department of Michigan. Mr. Commandeer, I move that the national adjutant be authorized to cast one vote representing the entire delegate strength of this convention, and that Clarence E. Hill be elected national commander by acclimation.

NATIONAL COMMANDEER REHBEIN: Is there a second? ...*Second.* Having heard that second, there is a motion before us that the national adjutant be authorized to cast one vote representing the entire delegate strength of this convention, and that Clarence E. Hill be elected national commander by acclimation. All those in favor of the motion signify by saying aye. Those opposed say no. That motion is carried. Mr. Adjutant.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WHEELER: As national adjutant, I cast one vote representing the entire delegate strength of this convention for the election of Clarence E. Hill as the national commander of The American Legion.

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: Thank you, sir. And it is now my pleasure to declare that Clarence E. Hill is elected national commander of The American Legion. *(Applause)* Would the national sergeant-at-arms assist the new national commander to the platform. Our new national commander is being escorted by Mr. Robert Proctor, National Executive Committeeman from the Department of Florida, and the national sergeant-at-arms. And I would ask members of Mr. Hill's family to join us at the podium. The chair

recognizes Past National Commander Jake Comer for the purpose of administering the oath of office to the new national commander of The American Legion.

Administering the Oath of Office to the National Commander
John P. 'Jake' Comer, Massachusetts, Past National Commander

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER COMER: Commander, I am honored and privileged to be selected to swear you in as national commander replacing John Gieger of Illinois, past national commander, who unfortunately could not be with us for very personal reasons, and for you to select me as his stand-in is an extreme honor. Commander, you will raise your right hand and repeat after me.

I, Clarence E. Hill, do solemnly pledge myself to perform faithfully and impartially the duties of the office of national commander of The American Legion. I further pledge that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States of America, and the National Constitution and By-laws of The American Legion. I do not subscribe to the principles of any group opposed to our form of government, so help me God.

May I be the first to congratulate you, Commander?

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: Ladies and gentlemen, the new national commander of The American Legion. *(Standing Applause)*

Acceptance Speech: Newly Elected National Commander
Clarence E. Hill, Florida

Thank you. Thank you, thank you for this day, and for your vote of confidence in electing me your 91st National Commander. Before I begin my comments, I would like to do some introductions. First of all, my wife, Liz, without whom I would not have had a successful Navy career, and I would not be the Legionnaire standing before you today, and you can just ask her. *(Laughter)* She has been my companion, my sounding board, and my confidant for 35 years. As you heard, I met her in March of '74 when I was still an ensign, and we got married in '76. So she has pinned every rank on me to my retirement as a captain. Most of you heard the story reiterated again, that I had two choices when she wanted to join The American Legion Auxiliary, join the Legion or be deceased. *(Laughter)* By the time that I retired and started getting involved heavily with The American Legion, she had been a unit president three times. Thank you to my daughter Nicole, her husband David, and my granddaughters Kadence and McKenzie who are here on the stage. *(Applause)* They are all proud members of the Legion family. My stepson Jimmy, his fiancee Samantha and granddaughters Amelia and Fionna. And my stepdaughter Sharon and grandson Harold, and granddaughter Amanda couldn't be here today, but as you heard, they are all Legion family members and I'm proud of all of them.

Thank you to my post, Atlantic Beach Post 316 for their strong support. My post commander is here in the audience as are a number of our post members, and some of our Auxiliary members and some of our SAL members and some of our Riders. Thank you all. And to my mentor, George Derrick, the former NEC for Florida whose now gone on to Post Everlasting. He never missed an opportunity the day that I retired, to push me into doing things for The American Legion, and I never figured out how to say no. Thank you to Dyke Shannon, a good friend, former department adjutant for Florida for 29 years, for his nomination speech, and for his support and guidance through the years. And thank

you also to Randy Fisher and Joe Caouette for their seconding speeches. And I'm sure you will see more of them. Thank you to Past National Commander Jake Comer, another mentor, for the installation and his advice and guidance over the years. Team Florida, are you out there. *(Cheers)* They have been a real anchor to the campaign, and not just the Legionnaires, but the Auxiliary, the SAL, and the Riders from Florida. Thank you to Bob Proctor who served as the chairman of the committee and as our NEC, and he had plenty of advice along the way, and I know you find that hard to believe. Thank you to Dennis Boland who was the co-chairman and the Alternate NEC, who was always there when I needed him. And of course, thank you to Mike McDaniel, the treasurer who didn't lose any of that money that I was spending. And of course I have to thank my wife again, as she booked all of my flights and spent a lot of time doing that because she wanted to be sure that I was leaving. She had a better campaign slogan for this campaign than I had. Her slogan was: "It's about time you deployed again." *(Laughter)*

Thank you to the committee that's worked these last couple of years real hard, and are wearing those green shirts out there. A great thank you to them for all they did for this campaign, but a special thanks to three couples who made all the receptions the spectacular success that they were. George and Erma Wehrli, Phil and Peggy Hearlson, and Larry and Sandy White. You'll get to know Larry and Sandy a little better as the year progresses, because Larry has agreed to serve as my aide. Again, thank you Larry. I would like to thank all the departments I visited, for your courtesies and your camaraderie. It was a real honor to spend time with you. And a great deal of thanks goes to Commander Rehbein for his leadership, his responsiveness, and his ability to meet every challenge during his superb year he just finished. You have set the bar high, sir. Please join me in recognizing his performance again. *(Standing applause)*

As I assume the reins of our great organization here in Louisville, I cannot help but repeat a part of the opening from my campaign speeches. These are extremely challenging times that we face. As a grassroots organization, the strength and reputation of our posts are crucial to our organizational success. Some posts are flourishing, some are struggling. Those posts that are doing well are encouraged to reach out and help those posts that need help. The post is where the programs are conducted, where the hard work that establishes our reputation occurs, and where The American Legion has an impact and makes a difference. The district commanders are closest to that action, and a vital cog to making us successful by visiting their posts, by helping them when necessary, and ensuring their posts are participating in the programs.

Our veterans and active duty forces need our strength as never before. Any success that we can achieve depends on our ability to influence members of our government at all levels. Many of you have heard me refer to working membership as "the hardest easy job" that we have to do. And by that I mean that most Legionnaires can cite chapter and verse of all the things that The American Legion offers, and all the things that we do that would incite a person to join the organization. And I congratulate them on how well they speak on our behalf and sell the product, but then when you ask them how many have you recruited, the answer is usually none or one. So there must be something hard about recruiting that I haven't figured out yet. If you know what that is, I would appreciate it if you'd let me know now to solve it, so I could put that out to all the Legionnaires that seem to have a problem with recruiting members.

I've only been working membership since I retired from the Navy in '96, but there's only been two years of growth in that time. Every other year we have lost members. We

cannot continue to keep getting smaller and be effective at serving our veterans, nor be successful at lobbying Congress. We've got to turn this around and put programs in effect that will result in long-term growth of our organization, programs that our successors can build on and make better. DMS is back this year, and has already brought in over a 100,000 with the goal of 190,000. But we can't let DMS make us lazy again. We need to continue that personal touch in mentoring our members. The more you stay in touch with those you recruit, the more chance we have of keeping them and retaining them as members.

There are four areas of the membership that I have stressed in this campaign. I believe the Legion Riders are the greatest membership idea that we have ever had. Establishing Legion Riders chapters brings in new members to all three branches of the family. And upwards of 75 percent of those members would not have joined if the Riders didn't exist. Their accomplishments are value added to the organization and are significant. Just witness again the Legacy Ride this year when they brought in over $600,000. I consider them a fountain of membership and enthusiasm, and I can't help but think like the V8 commercial, we could have had the Riders 70 years ago.

Someone out there has the next great idea that's going to be beneficial for our long-term growth. It's not me or I'd be telling you what that idea is. But somebody out there has that idea, so if you have ideas for the long-term growth of this organization, please percolate them up.

Women and minorities are important to our future because there are more women and minorities serving now than ever before. We need to attract more women and minorities. We need to educate them about The American Legion. Get them involved in our programs, and encourage them to take on positions of increased responsibility. There needs to be more women and minorities in this room. But if The American Legion is not going to take advantage of their time and talent, some other organization will.

And let's not forget the Vietnam veterans as they are a valuable resource, and currently make up 35 percent of our membership, and are still the largest group of eligible veterans out there. Many of them have recently retired or they're about to retire, so they have the time and the ability to get involved with our programs and to make an immediate impact.

And finally, we need to attract the youth that are serving our nation today. To do that, we must consider their needs, and adapt to and bridge the generation gap, just as those World War I veterans had to do for World War II and Korea, and the World War II and Korea folks had to do for Vietnam. There's a mindset shift that has to occur for us to attract those young members in there. In today's euphemism we need to start thinking outside the box. Be more creative in what we offer in our posts. Think of things like after school programs or day cares, or a couple of computer work stations as a mini internet cafe, or wiring your posts for wi-fi and advertising it. Consider hosting adventure type activities that the youth today are interested in. Their experiences growing up were far different than my experiences and your experiences growing up. And I'll just give you one example. I didn't pass through a metal detector or have a police officer and have a concern about weapons at my school. And so they have a different perspective, a different thought process. I believe the technology is important to our future success. The Internet is a wonderful tool, and that's where the youth of today are. National will be rolling out a new website in November that will hopefully make us more attractive to the youth.

So in short, how we handle the color gap, the gender gap, the generation gap, and the technology gap is crucial to our long-term success. We need to take advantage of the social networking aspects of the Internet and have a presence and be involved with MySpace, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and whatever else is out there. National will be setting up two blogs on this new website. The Burn Pit for the younger veterans, and another one for the Vietnam veterans. And I encourage each department to consider having a blog of your own, and have your own presence on some of those social networking sites. I'm on Facebook, I'm on Twitter, I'm on LinkedIn, and I invite you to look me up. I'm going to try to keep up with them this year. I follow the VFW, the DAV, the AMVETS, the SVA, the IAVA, and they all follow me. Some of them are putting out a lot of information on those sites, whether accurate or not. But those young kids are reading that information and don't know the difference in accuracy, and they are joining some of those organizations based on what they're seeing on the Internet.

During the year I hope to keep you up to date on the national site with a summary of each visit that I make. I will try to hold a regular webcam meeting with the national vice commanders. I will also try to periodically put up a webcast on the national site to keep you apprised of current important issues and accomplishments. And if you haven't heard, the national site during this Convention had over 22,000 hits an hour; 516,000 hits a day. And I think that our staff has just been magnificent in making this happen. *(Applause)*

I believe that timely communications are important to making our message more effectively heard, so I'll be working hard to reach out to you to let you know what we're doing about those important issues. But it is just as important for you to reach out within your own communities to let them know the good work that you're doing. For too long I have heard the lament that we aren't very good at tooting our own horn and publicizing our activities. Well, why not? What's stopping us?

The national organization puts out regular press releases and has things that you can get and modify them to suit your own community. And you can do your own releases; you can establish your own rapport with your media in your communities and make your own contacts and make it happen.

But of course we don't even toot our own horn very well within our organization. We only had 59 percent of our posts submit end of year reports this year. Fifty-nine percent sounds pretty pathetic, but that's what we've got to work with to make our annual report to Congress. So do you feel that we're going to have an accurate report of the fantastic year that we have just had this year when we make that report to Congress? We have to do better with these things and you as the leaders of this organization need to spearhead that effort.

This organization was established on four pillars in 1919, and we've remain true to those four pillars today. First, we take care of our veterans. We lobby for veterans benefits, and our service officers help veterans with their claims. We volunteer at VA hospitals. And we take challenges like Operation Comfort Warriors; Community Covenants and Heroes to Hometowns, and we make them successful. Second, we take care of our kids. We provide for them through the Child Welfare Foundation; Children's Miracle Network; The American Legion Endowment Fund; the Temporary Financial Assistance; the National Emergency Fund and the Legacy Scholarship program. Third, are our Americanism programs. Baseball was live webcast for the first time this year, and drew overly two million viewer minutes. Boys State; Boys Nation; the High School Oratorical Contest; Junior Shooting and Boys Scouts. These are programs that can't be

matched. Finally, we are for a strong national defense. We lobby Congress for funding for weapons and for quality of life issues. We are there for the troops when they leave, we support them and their families while they are gone and we are there when they return. We support the troops is not just a slogan for us, it's a way of life. The terrorist threat hasn't diminished and we need to be ready for any contingency.

I would like to devote a little time to our responsibilities as a grassroots issues driven organization. The new administration and new Congress, a lot of activity has been occurring and not all of it has been bad. It's kept Commander Rehbein and the national staff busy, and has demonstrated the need for you all to be involved, to express your opinions on the issues, and to stay in touch with your elected officials at all levels.

Our credibility comes from you, the voter. The national commander, Steve Robertson or any member of the national staff can visit your representatives to discuss an issue, but if that's the first time that representatives has heard that issue, it's not a problem for him. But on the other hand, if he has a hundred e-mails, phone calls, letters that he's heard from the constituents back in his home area, the people that have to elect him every year, and then he hears it from one of us, that reinforces it and that means something. We can have an impact that way. I encourage you all to visit that Legislative Action Center on the national site and sign up for the alerts, and respond to them when they come. And if you need any help, then contact the staff. They are here for you just as much as for anyone else.

I would like to give you just a couple of examples of on-going issues. Obviously, the health care debate is today's hot topic. A final bill hasn't been drafted yet, so we need to stay alert to ensure that VA and TRICARE are not affected by any national program. Advanced funding for the VA remains a priority. It has a lot of support and is awaiting Senate action. The ACLU continues its attack on veterans monuments dedicated to our fallen comrades. A bill to allow the VA to collect from Medicare has finally been introduced, so we need to be vocal in our support and help in getting co-sponsors for that bill. A resolution designating September 16th as The American Legion Day has also been introduced and needs co-sponsors. And you all got a brochure and a booklet about a campaign to make your town a Legiontown. Closing Guantanamo Bay is another hot button issue, and its schedule to happen in January. I've been to Guantanamo and I've been to Camp Delta, and believe it to be professionally run and a needed facility. But its negative press around the world has made it synonymous with everything that's bad. So it probably will go away, but how to accomplish that is a hard question to answer, and particularly what to do with those dangerous detainees. And when the health care debate has run its course, the illegal immigration debate will begin.

These are but a few examples of the need for each of you to pay attention to what is happening, and to take part in it. And who knows what other issues will come up this year, as they did for Commander Rehbein with the president's proposal to bill our health insurance for our war wounds, or the Secretary of Homeland Security issuing a report saying our returning veterans were vulnerable and at risk to being recruited by terrorist organizations. So we need to remain vigilant.

Today you have given me a tremendous honor by electing me your national commander, and I thank you for your trust. It's you, the blue cap Legionnaire that keeps us the greatest organization in the world. And I pledge to give you my best effort, but I need your help. I'm depending on your support, your dedication, and your participation to make this year successful. At every level of The American Legion we must be relevant to

all veterans from all wars. Thank you, and may God bless you, and God bless America. Thank you. *(Standing applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: Clarence, if you would invite your wife, Liz, if you would join us here at the podium, please. And there is a group of ladies that have a presentation.

MRS. LUDWIG: Liz, on behalf of us former first ladies, wives of past national commanders, I would like to present you with this badge as our newest first lady. Congratulations and best wishes for the coming year.

MRS. HILL: Thank you all. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: Microphone number two.

DELEGATE WILSON (CA): Janet Wilson, Department of California, duly elected delegate, home of Bruce Thiesen, past national commander. Mr. Commander, since the rules of the Convention have been suspended, I move that the nominations for the office of national vice commander be made from the floor of this Convention.

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: You've heard the motion. Is there a second? ...*Second.* All those in favor of the motion signify by the sign of aye. Those opposed say no. Motion carried.

Election of the National Vice Commanders

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: We will now entertain nominations for the offices of national vice commander from the floor.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN MATTICE (ID): Commander. Tom Mattice, delegate chairman for the State of Idaho, yields the microphone to Rick Helsey for the purpose of a nomination.

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: Mr. Rick Helsey, Department of Idaho.

DELEGATE HELSEY (ID): Good morning. The American Legion of Idaho is proud to endorse a Vietnam veteran and Legionnaire of 42 years with The American Legion. He is currently a member of Post 37 in Grangeville, Idaho, serving as our NEC. He has devoted his life to veterans and their families by assisting with claims for compensation, pensions, and other benefits. It is my honor, as a duly elected delegate to this 91st National Convention, to nominate Morris M. Bentley for the national vice commander of The American Legion. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: Microphone number two.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN OESTEREICH (MD): Orlyn Oestereich, delegation chairman from the Department of Maryland. I would like to request that you recognize Jack Milburn, National Executive Committeeman from the Department of Maryland for the purpose of making a nomination.

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: Mr. Milburn is recognized and granted the privilege of the podium.

DELEGATE MILBURN (MD): Mr. Commander, distinguished guests, fellow delegates to this 91st National Convention I'm here to nominate a gentleman from the State of Maryland for national vice commander who earned his eligibility for The American Legion through his service during the Vietnam War. He's a 32 year member of Frank M. Jarman Post 36 on the eastern shore of Maryland. His service to The American Legion spans all levels of The American Legion, from post to national. Post commander to department commander to National Executive Committeeman. Additionally, he has served and is still serving on numerous committees and commissions within the

Department of Maryland. He was chairman of the Maryland Veterans Commission from 2001 to 2008; member of the Maryland Veterans Home Commission from 2002 to 2006. It gives me great pleasure to place a nomination in the name of Gordon Browning for the high office of national vice commander. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: Microphone number one.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN BARBOUR (MA): Bill Barbour department commander and delegate chairman, Massachusetts. Mr. Commander, I ask that Past National Commander Paul A. Morin be recognized for the purpose of a nomination.

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: Past Commander Morin is recognized and granted the privilege of the podium.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: Thank you, Commander Dave, delegates to this 91st Convention and guests. It is indeed an honor and special privilege to nominate a great friend, the endorsed candidate for national vice commander from the Department of Massachusetts. A true blue cap Legionnaire, Mark A. Avis is a 26 year member of The American Legion from Merrill-Simmons Post 130 in Palmer, Massachusetts. Mark is married to the love of his life, Joyce. He is the father of three wonderful children, Michael, Rebecca and Melissa. And a special grandfather to Isabel. Mark has served as post, county and department commander, as well as a multitude of other offices within our great American Legion. He works on behalf of our veterans everyday as a veterans agent for several small towns within Massachusetts. He has served as the National Executive Committeeman, and on numerous national commissions. And he was my aide during my year as national commander in 2006. Mark is a retired veteran, having served in the U.S. Army from 1971 to 1973, and then 20 years in the Army National Guard. On behalf of the Department of Massachusetts, we are proud to recommend to you a dedicated Legionnaire who will work to continue the legacy of The American Legion. I ask your endorsement of Mark A. Avis of Massachusetts for the high office of national vice commander. I, Paul A. Morin, a delegate to this Convention, move the nomination. Thank you, commander.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN KIMBALL (OH): Mr. Commander, Bob Kimball, a duly elected delegate to this Convention, requests that you yield the microphone to William Balser, past department commander of Ohio, for a nomination.

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: Mr. Balser is recognized and granted the privilege of the podium.

PAST DEPARTMENT COMMANDER BALSER (OH): Mr. Commander, fellow delegates and guests, it's an extreme honor and a privilege for me to be asked to put in the name of a close personal friend as a candidate for national vice commander. James C. Morris is a 39 year member of Jenkins Vaughan Post Number 97 in Cardington, Ohio. He earned his eligibility by his service in the U. S. Army during the Vietnam War. He's held all the offices at the post and district levels, he served on many committees at the department level, and was our state commander in the years 1997 to '98. He also was elected National Executive Committeeman at the National Convention in 2002. Jim is an advocate of all of the aims and purposes of The American Legion, and he will work tirelessly to accomplish our goals. He resides in Cardington with his wife of many years, Elizabeth. They have three children, seven grandchildren. He is an active member in his community of the emergency squad, the Police Auxiliary, and Little League Baseball. He also serves on the Veterans Service Commission in Morrow County. As a duly elected

delegate to this Convention I am pleased to nominate James C. Morris to the high office of national vice commander. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: Microphone Number 1.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN HULS (SD): I'm Jim Huls, delegation chairman to this Convention from the great State of South Dakota, the home of the shrine of democracy, Mount Rushmore. Please recognize National Executive Committeeman Paul Evenson for the purpose of nominating a national vice commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: National Executive Committeeman Evenson is recognized and granted the privilege of the podium.

NEC MEMBER EVENSON (SD): Thank you, Mr. Commander. Convention delegates, it is indeed an honor and a privilege to introduce and nominate a good friend and fellow Legionnaire, Gene Schumacher, from the Department of South Dakota, for the office of national vice commander. Gene's service to his country was from 1961 through '65 in the Air Force as a Titan II Missile Technician at Vandenberg Air Force base in California. Gene is a 43 year Paid-Up-For-Life member of Post 24 in Aberdeen, South Dakota. Gene has been very active and has distinguished himself at every level of The American Legion. He has served his post as commander for two different terms, and as post adjutant for over 13 years. Gene is also very active in membership in his post in being a 32 year Go-Getter, and 21 of those years as a Century Go-Getter. Gene served as District 14 Vice Commander, as district commander and department vice commander in 1980 and '81. In 2004 the Legionnaires of South Dakota elected Gene as department commander. Prior to that Gene was their state membership chairman, served on our Department Administrative Committee, and also as our department finance officer. Gene is also very active in the South Dakota Boys State program, serving on the board of directors, and also as a registrar for the Boys State for the past five years. On the national level Gene has been a member of the National Employment Committee since 2001, and also a member of the National Legislative Council. Gene and his wife Sharon of 46 years have been blessed with two sons and four grandchildren. Gene and Sharon are members of the Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Aberdeen, South Dakota, and Gene is a retired area manager for a utility company. The Department of South Dakota is very proud of Gene. Therefore, on behalf of the Legionnaires of South Dakota I am proud to nominate Gene Schumacher for national vice commander. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: Do I hear a second to the nominations? ...*Second.* Microphone 2.

DELEGATE GOVERNOR (NY): Mr. Commander, Ken Governor, duly elected delegate from the State of New York. Mr. Commander, I move that the nominations for the offices of national vice commander be closed.

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: You've heard the motion that the nominations for the offices of national vice commander be closed. Is there a second? ...*Second.* That motion is non-debatable. All those in favor of the motion signify by the sign of aye. Those opposed say no. Motion is carried, nominations are closed. Microphone number 2.

DELEGATE AREA (TX) Mr. Commander, Larry Area, a duly elected delegate to the great State of Texas, move that the national adjutant be authorized to cast one vote for the entire delegate strength of this Convention, and that James Morris of Ohio, Eugene Schumacher of South Dakota, Gordon Browning of Maryland, Mark Avis of

Massachusetts, and Morris Bentley of Idaho, be elected national vice commanders by acclimation.

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: You heard the motion. Is there a second? …S*econd.* All those in favor of the motion vote by sign of aye. Those opposed say no. The motion is carried. Mr. Adjutant.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WHEELER: As national adjutant of The American Legion I cast one vote representing the entire delegate strength of this Convention for Morris Bentley, Idaho; Gordon Browning, Maryland; Mark Avis, Massachusetts; James Morris, Ohio; Eugene Schumacher, South Dakota, for the office of national vice commander of The American Legion.

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: Thank you, sir. And I now declare Morris Bentley, Gordon Browning, Mark Avis, James Morris and Eugene Schumacher elected national vice commanders of The American Legion. Will those five individuals come to the stage. *(Applause)* Let me introduce to you individually the new national vice commanders for The American Legion. Mr. Morris Bentley.

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER BENTLEY: Good morning. Thank you for the honor, and I'll work and slave just like every other Legionnaire out there. Thank you.

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: Doctor Gordon Browning.

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER BROWNING: Thank you very much.

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: Mr. Mark Avis.

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER AVIS: Thank you very much, and I promise to work very hard for all the blue cap Legionnaires of this great organization. Thank you.

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: Mr. James Morris.

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER MORRIS: Thank you very much. This is an honor that I have been so proud to accept, and I promise you that I will work very hard for The American Legion. Thank you.

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: Mr. Eugene Schumacher.

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER SCHUMACHER: Thank you all very much, especially my department. Commander Hill, we'll work very hard for you. Thank you.

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: I now call on Past National Commander Ron Conley of Pennsylvania to present the Colors to our incoming national commander.

Presentation: Colors to Incoming National Commander

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER CONLEY: What a great honor this is for me to present the Colors to our new national commander. Thank you, Mr. Commander, Legionnaires, and distinguished guests. Please rise for the presentation of our national Colors by the Color Guard of Post 149, Tilton, New Hampshire, to National Commander-elect Hill.

...At this time the delegation stood and rendered a salute to the Colors.

Color Guard, present the Colors to the new national commander of The American Legion. Hand salute! Two!

Please be seated. National Commander Hill, please join me here at the podium. We stand before this Convention having received the unanimous vote of confidence in your ability to represent not only the Legionnaires, but also all American veterans in the coming months.

Clarence, I know and the delegates know you are the right man to carry our great organization forward in the coming year. You were the department commander of Florida

during my term as national commander 2002 and 2003. I always knew that Florida was in good hands. Your embrace of technology and social networking will bring new energy to our membership recruiting efforts. The American Legion doesn't just have a captain at its helm, but a Navy captain at that. I know that you will navigate this ship with the skill of a true professional. May the Colors that we present to you be a source of inspiration and pride.

National Commander Hill, God bless you and The American Legion as you lead us this coming year. Color Guard, return the Colors of the national commander of The American Legion to post. Please rise. Hand salute! Two! Again, thank you very much for this great honor to present to you the Colors of our nation.

NATIONAL COMMANDER HILL: Thank you, Past National Commander Conley. *(Applause)* I have always been proud of my association with Past National Commander Conley, who started that System Worth Saving that we have continued to this date. It is one of the landmarks that we're noted for. So thank you.

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: The Sons of The American Legion are our friends and our legacy. The man chosen to lead the Sons of The American Legion for this coming year is impressive and committed. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome from the Detachment of Georgia, Mr. Mark Arneson, national commander of the Sons of The American Legion. *(Applause)*

Greetings: Mark Arneson, Georgia, Newly Elected National Commander Sons of The American Legion

Good afternoon, ya'll. Commander Rehbein and The American Legion, on behalf of the Sons I want to say thank you for all the victories for veterans that you've created these last few months. To Commander Hill and The American Legion, we look forward to the new victories for veterans that ya'll will accomplish this next year. It is this positive PR that ya'll have created that on Sunday we launched Operation Proud Son. Operation Proud Son will be one where we will grow the Sons. Our goal this next year, 350,000 members, a five percent increase over this last year. *(Applause)* Thank you. We will promote membership not through a gimmick, but as an honor. It is our love of country and our want to recognize our fathers and our mothers for their service to this great country, and that is why we join the Sons of The American Legion. For some of us Sons our parents made the ultimate sacrifice. These heroes, our fathers and our mothers, are why we, the Sons, join together for a greater good. Commander, with your permission I would like to recognize my father for his service during the Korean War.

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: Absolutely.

SAL NATIONAL COMMANDER ARNESON: Thank you, sir. My father has served The American Legion for these past 55 years, and it's with great honor and pride that I say, Father, thank you for your service, sir. *(Applause)*

I'm a firm believer that it is not by luck, or circumstance, or good fortune that The American Legion has succeeded these last 91 years, and the Sons for the last 77 years. When you stop to think as to what is said at the beginning of every meeting, "For God and country," you understand why we have succeeded all these years. It is for the greater good of this organization why we come together here today to pay attribute to ya'll's service to this great country.

On Sunday we launched Arneson's Armed Forces with one mission, to keep God number one, to keep veterans number one, and to keep America number one in the hearts and minds of our fellow countrymen. Thank you and God bless. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: This is an exciting time at every National Convention. We have elected a new national commander, and we look forward to a time of growth and community involvement. But this is also the time when the American Legion Auxiliary elects a new president, as this important part of our Legion family is also poised for a great future.

The woman chosen the lead the American Legion Auxiliary for the coming year, Rita Navarreté, has worked many years for veterans and their families. She is a native of Albuquerque, New Mexico, and a member of Unit #72. She is eligible for membership in The American Legion Auxiliary through her husband, Tony, a Vietnam veteran and adjutant of The American Legion Department of New Mexico. Madam President sees her upcoming year of service as an opportunity to inspire the membership in a call to action. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome from the Department of New Mexico, Mrs. Rita Navarreté, national president of the American Legion Auxiliary.

Greetings: Rita Navarreté, New Mexico, National President
American Legion Auxiliary

Thank you. What an honor. What an honor to stand before you this morning. I am part of The American Legion Family, and you need to know that the traditions that have been set since you formed us back in 1919—thank you, thank you so much for the privilege of having and being able to serve under those rules. My year this year will be focused on reconnecting; reconnecting with our members, reconnecting with our veterans, and reconnecting with our communities. And we can't do it alone. It's the Legion Family that will get it done.

Foremost is our membership. Yes, our environment is dismal, our numbers are going down. But I believe, I truly believe that we can reach the higher numbers and reach those veterans that need our help and definitely serve all, all veterans. Thank you for being so patient and waiting.

Our National Secretary Executive Director was going to be here with me. I left her finishing off the Post NEC. And so thank you so much again, and I'll be traveling and hoping to see many of you at the departments or the different events, and appreciate so much that you have allowed me to address your Convention. Thank you. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: Ladies and gentlemen, let me introduce you to the leadership team for the coming year. National Commander Clarence Hill, National President Rita Navarreté, National Commander Mark Arneson. *(Applause)*

According to the Constitution & By-laws the National Executive Committee must meet within 24 hours of the adjournment of the National Convention. Accordingly, the National Executive Committee will meet at 12:40 this afternoon following this convention in Rooms 207, 208, Level 2, of the Convention Center. That's 12:40.

Is there any further business to come before this Convention? Hearing none, please uncover as outgoing National Chaplain Reverend Lawrence Vollink, Department of Michigan, offers the invocation. Please rise.

Benediction
Rev. Lawrence Vollink, Michigan, National Chaplain

Let us pray. O, Lord God, you have surrounded us with joy and love and good friends and comrades. We leave today with mixed emotions.

We're proud to serve this year with our commander, his love, honor, integrity and respect, giving us pride and purpose as he shared himself with his leadership. Today we share his joy and sadness as he leaves the highest office of The American Legion. We thank you for giving us the opportunity to serve alongside him, and to take us to places where beyond our imaginations we were able to go to make this country a better place, filled with faith, hope, and love.

We also commend Clarence Hill, Rita Navarreté, Mark Arneson, as our commanders and the president. May you give them wisdom for their duties, a spirit of sacrifice, and a vision that will not perish. Grant them safety in their travels and all things. Grant all of us safety in travel to where we go, back to our states to serve again. We'll always be grateful for the American Legion. And, Lord, may we always be under your care and protection, now and forever. Amen.

NATIONAL COMMANDER REHBEIN: Please cover. The Color Guard will retire the Flag of the United States. Hand salute. Two!

The time is 12:28. It is with some sadness and a great deal of anticipation that I declare this 91st Annual National Convention of The American Legion adjourned, *sine die.*

...At 12:28 p.m. the 91st Annual National Convention of The American Legion was 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:
General David Petraeus, Commander of the United States Central Command

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: Lyle Overbay—Toronto Blue Jays

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: Matt Stites—Festus, MO

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: Midland Berryhill Post 165—Midland, MI

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: Kyle O'Boyle—Midland, MI

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: Department of Oregon

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 North Carolina

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: Tyler Jacobson, Post 337—Pulaski, WI

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: Department of Michigan

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): Dan Cronkright, Mgr., Steven Cronkright and Patrick Dawson, 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: Garret Yatch—Midland, MI

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:	**Lincoln Rifle Club (CA)—American Legion Post 264 Jacob Carrillo, Dustin McQueary, Brett Morrison, Kaitlin Pennell.**
Precision Individual:	**Kaitlin Pennell, Lincoln Rifle Club (CA)—Post 264**
Sporter Team:	**Lafayette Gun Club of Virginia "White" (VA)—Post 273 Hannah Black, Joshua Black, Matthew Brewer, Thomas Wheeless.**
Sporter Individual:	**William Eades, III, C.E. Byrd H.S. JROTC (LA)—Post 6**

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: T. J. White—Las Vegas, NV

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 Vermont

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: Kyle O'Boyle—Midland, MI

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 Indiana (Andrew Dykstal—National Oratorical Winner)

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):
Courtney Bates—Geneva, FL and Shayna Thompson—Sims, FL
Oviedo H.S. Navy JROTC, American Legion Post 112 (FL)

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 Virginia

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):
2008—Joseph V. Vicek, Gordon K. Place, Lynn Sears, Lawrence Foley, Paul A. Petty, Richard H. Siddall, David Baillie, Mark A. Delaney, Kurt W. Lindemann, Steven Monaghan, Joseph W. Shaw, Patrick Beer, William Mills, Denny Sweat, Michael Katona, Barbara Belmont, John Zantek, Jr., Larry Boyer, Eugene Standfield. 2009—Alan Munch, Ronald Smith, Charles Martin, Mark Milliron, Gary Nordahl, Steven Varner, Sandra Ritter, Lowell Badgley, James Ferris, Don Steele, Steve Baker, Terry Cosgriff, Ronald LeBlanc, Donald McIntosh, Howard Yeomans, Ivan Anderson, Christopher Cancilla, Charles Eubank, Charles Yunker, David Lambeth, Warren Tobin, John Manz, Robert Dusso, David Campbell, Sheldon Gotesky, Theodore Spangenberg, John Murphy, Terry Grogan, David Lunning, Robert Gorshe, Robert Ryan, Wayne Chatfield, Gary Tanner (as of: 12/4/09)

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): None awarded for 2009

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: Department of Montana, Department of Washington

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): 2008 Winners
Category I Lear Siegler (LSI) EG&G Division of URS Corporation—New Boston, TX
Category II Industrial Maintenance Services, Inc.—Wells, MI
Category III Millennium Security Services, LLC.—Roswell, GA
Note: The 2009 Employer of the Year Awards will not be determined until December 31, 2009.

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) 2008 Winners
LVER of the Year: Michael Dembowski—Birmingham, NY
DVOP of the Year: Steve Lord—Meridian, ID
ES Office of the Year: WorkSource (Southside) Career Center—Jacksonville, FL
Note: The 2009 Employment Service Awards will not be determined until December 31, 2009.

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): 2008 Winner
Black Hills Service, Inc.—Ellsworth Air Force Base, SD
Note: The 2009 Awards To Enhance The Lives Of Disabled Persons will not be determined until December 31, 2009.

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 South Dakota (One-Year Narrative History)
Department of Florida (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):
No-Vel Post 159—Venice, FL (One-Year Narrative History)
Ontario Post 67—Ontario, OR (One-Year Yearbook History)

International Amity Award: Awarded by the National Commander with the advice and consent of the National Executive Committee at such times and places as may be consistent and appropriate. It shall be awarded to specific individuals who shall be war veterans within the accepted meaning of the term and members of an authentic veteran organization established in the territory of any of the nations associated as war-time allies of the United States of America. It shall be awarded to such individuals in recognition of outstanding service in the field of veterans affairs and for service and contributions made in the development of international good will and comradeship between their organization and The American Legion.
RECIPIENT(s): None awarded for 2009

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): Senator Chuck Grassley, Iowa

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): 2008 Winners
Category I Detachment of Rhode Island
Category II Detachment of New Mexico
Category III Detachment of Arizona
Category IV Detachment of Florida
Category V Detachment of Pennsylvania
Note: The 2009 Houghton awards will not be determined until December 31, 2009.

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 Department of Maine
Category VI Department of Puerto Rico

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 Wyoming

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: None awarded for 2009

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: None awarded for 2009

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 Maine

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 Bradley R. Dewees

The American Legion Coast Guard Academy Award: Awarded annually to that cadet of the graduating class of the United States Coast Guard Academy who is considered to have personally excelled in athletics.
RECIPIENT: Ensign Craig Johnson

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 Jonathan E. Wellman

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 Andy L. Cahoy

The American Legion Naval Academy Award: Awarded annually to that graduating midshipman of the United States Naval Academy who stands highest in those English, History and Government courses taken to complete a Foreign Affairs major.
RECIPIENT: Midshipman Cory Matthew Francis Kampf

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 Florida
Individual Participation: 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 Washington
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 Hawaii

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: Officer Christopher Biron, Manchester Police Department—Manchester, NH

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 Florida, Minnesota, Michigan, Montana, Hawaii

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: *USA Today*

National Commander's Public Relations Award: Awarded to an outstanding individual and/or organization for distinguished public service in the field of communications.
RECIPIENT: Ben Stein

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 472—Houston, TX

The Lemuel Bolles Trophy: Awarded annually to that band winning first prize in competition with all other bands during the annual National Convention.
RECIPIENT: 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 Minnesota

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): U.S. Marine Lt. Col. Michael R. Strobl

FOREWORD

The American Legion continued to have a strong year under the leadership of National Commander David K. Rehbein, Ames, Iowa. Membership was strong with 2.4 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.

Daniel S. Wheeler
National Adjutant

EXCERPTS FROM CONSTITUTION OF THE AMERICAN LEGION
ARTICLE II

Nature

Section 1. The American Legion is a civilian organization; membership therein does not affect nor increase liability for military or police service. Rank does not exist in the Legion; no member shall be addressed by his military or naval title in any convention or meeting of the Legion.

Section 2. The American Legion shall be absolutely nonpolitical and shall not be used for the dissemination of partisan principles nor for the promotion of the candidacy of any person seeking public office or preferment.

ARTICLE III

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

William E. Galbraith, Nebraska
John H. Geiger, Illinois
Joe L. Matthews, Texas
Michael J. Kogutek, New York
Keith Kreul, Wisconsin
Clarence M. Bacon, Maryland
John P. Comer, Massachusetts
Hon. H. F. Gierke, North Dakota
Miles S. Epling, West Virginia
Robert S. Turner, Georgia
Dominic D. DiFrancesco, Pennsylvania
Bruce Thiesen, California
William M. Detweiler, Louisiana
Daniel A. Ludwig, Minnesota
Joseph J. Frank, Missouri
Anthony G. Jordan, Maine
Butch L. Miller, Virginia
Hon. Alan G. Lance, Sr., Idaho

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
Martin F. 'Marty' Conatser, Illinois
Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan

National Executive Committeemen

F. Wayne Turner, Alabama
James L. Van Horn, Alaska
Deodoro M. Aguilar, Arizona
Ross Rogers, Arkansas
Fred J. Walton, California
Ralph P. Bozella, Colorado
Richard W. Anderson, Connecticut
Charles T. Armbruster, Delaware
Paul H. Hasz, D.C.
Robert J. Proctor, Florida
William E. Marshall, France
Ray Hendrix, Georgia
Andrew W. Johnson, Hawaii
Morris M. Bentley, 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
John F. Milburn, Maryland
James F. Army, Massachusetts
Arthur Herbruger, Mexico
Gerald N. Dennis, Michigan
Virgil V. Persing, Minnesota
Charles E. Langley, Mississippi
Richard A. Heigert, Missouri
Bob O. Beals, Montana
Douglas Boldt, Nebraska
Salvatore Ruvolo, 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
Richard Zulch, Ohio
Bobby J. Longenbaugh, Oklahoma
Charles E. Schmidt, Oregon
Richard A. Coccimiglio, Pennsylvania
William J. Kelly, Philippines
Carlos Orria-Medina, Puerto Rico
Ernest Gerundio, Rhode Island
Billy W. Bell, South Carolina
Paul A. Evenson, South Dakota
Perry D. Roberts, Tennessee
Conrad L. Roberson, Texas
William E. Christoffersen, Utah
Leslie V. Howe, Vermont
George C. Lussier, Jr., Virginia
William F. Schrier, Washington
William W. Kile, West Virginia
David L. Gough, Wisconsin
Gerald L. Jacobs, Wyoming

Alternate National Executive Committeemen

Willis Frazier, Alabama
Peggy Dettori, Alaska
S. Paul Griffin, Arizona
Cleave B. Weiss, Arkansas
Roy L. Nichols, California
(vacant) Colorado
D. Joseph Jackson, Connecticut
Lyman R. Brenner, Delaware
Theodore A. Webb, D.C.
Dennis R. Boland, Florida
John H. Miller, France
Charles F. Wessinger, Georgia
LeRoy P. Pulawa, Hawaii
Wayne D. Mitchell, Idaho
Eugene Thompson, Illinois
Jack Butler, Indiana

John J. Ross, Iowa
Elgin Wahlborg, Kansas
Randall Fisher, Kentucky
Owen D. Watts, Louisiana
Paul A. L'Heureux, Maine
Leroy E. Thornton, Maryland
Milton K. Lashus, Massachusetts
Mark A. Walker, Mexico
Darwin Krieger, Michigan
Raymond DeZurik, Minnesota
Robert E. Gosa, Mississippi
Clark E. Pointer, Missouri
Sylvia A. Beals, Montana
Jerry Landkamer, 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
Wayne D. Satrom, North Dakota
Henry S. Long, Ohio
William E. Finch, Oklahoma
Richard Clark, Oregon
John J. Gasper, 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
Rollen D. Bradshaw, Tennessee
James E. Prendergast, Texas
Terry D. Schow, Utah
Maryls A. Lemnah, Vermont
Thomas E. Saunders, Virginia
Michael L. Montaney, Washington
William E. Burkett, West Virginia
David A. Kurtz, Wisconsin
William R. Wright, III, 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
James A. LaCoursiere, Connecticut

It has been a great honor and privilege to have served the Northeast Region. A special thanks to the Department of Connecticut for endorsing me to become a National Vice Commander.

It is also an honor to have served my term under National Commander David Rehbein, a very strong Commander. My year was also complimented by serving with the other four National Vice Commanders which I give praise; they are dedicated 100% to The American Legion and The American family. Our togetherness bonded into a friendship that will last forever. Legionnaires, be proud we belong to an organization (The American Legion) that has smart and dedicated people serving us in all of our Headquarters.

My year began in Phoenix, Arizona, August 28, 2008.

September 2008

2-8 Briefing, training and membership phone calls at both National Headquarters, Indianapolis, Indiana.

2-11 Training and Legislative Briefings at Washington, D.C. Headquarters. Breakfast and our National Commanders Testimony to Congress.

19-21 Department of Maine, Fall Conference and official visit.

October 2008

11-16 Indianapolis, Indiana, NEC meeting.

November 2008

14-16 Department of Massachusetts, DEC Meeting, official visit

December 2008

5-7 Department of New Hampshire, Membership Round-Up, unofficial visit

12-13 Department of Rhode Island, Christmas Party, official visit

January 2009

9-11 Department of Pennsylvania, Membership Promotion and Homeless Veteran dinner, unofficial visit

23-25 Department of Massachusetts, Membership & Mid-Winter, unofficial visit

30-Feb.1 February, Department of Delaware, Post Dedication and DEC, official visit

February 2009

19-22 Department of North Carolina Membership promotion.

March 2009

1-4 Attended the Washington Conference.

April 2009

3-5 Department of Pennsylvania, DEC Meeting and Commander Testimony, official visit

18-19 Department of Connecticut, Membership visit and Homecoming, unofficial visit

25-26 Department of New Jersey, Department Commander's Dinner, official visit

May 2009

4-7 Indianapolis, Indiana NEC meeting.

15-16 Canada trip, Legion Baseball graduate of the year, Commander approved

19 Coast Guard Academy, New London, Connecticut, Awards ceremony and graduation

June 2009

20-21 Legion Baseball player of the year, Cooperstown, New York, in addition trip, Commander approved

July 2009

10-12 Department of Connecticut, Department Convention, official visit

August 2009

1-2 47th Annual Parade of Champions, Scranton, PA, approved by Commander and Adjutant

21-27 National Convention Louisville, Kentucky.

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER
Michael J. Landkamer, Nebraska

On August 28, 2008 I was elected National Vice Commander of The American Legion during the closing session of 90th Annual National Convention of The American Legion.

From September 2, 2008 to September 8, 2008 I was at the National Headquarters of The American Legion in Indianapolis, IN for a briefing on the divisions of The American Legion. I also found what Departments I would be responsible for during the 2008 –2009 Membership Campaign. I was assigned the Departments of Missouri, Iowa, Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, Kansas and Nebraska.

On September 8, 2008 I flew to Washington, DC. The next day I was at the National Headquarters of The American Legion in Washington. I heard from the divisions based at the Washington office. I attained the meeting of the National Legislative Commission on the 10th of September. On September 11, 2008 I attended at hearing of the Senate and House Committees on Veterans Affairs. The National Commander of The American Legion presented the views and request of The American Legion. The National Commander received a standing ovation from the members of the Senate and House Committees on Veterans Affairs. The next day the 12th I flew home.

From the 11th to the 16th of October I attended the National Commander Homecoming and the Fall Meeting of the National Executive Committee in Indianapolis, IN. October 24th and 25th I visited the Department of Missouri during the Fall Membership Round Up.

On Veterans Day I was in Aurora, NE as I spoke at the high school for their program. Later that day we were in Central City, NE for the Veterans Day Parade and gave the address for their program. November 20th to 23rd I visited the Department of Iowa for the Membership Tour and Membership meeting of the Past District Commanders.

In February I attended the Washington Conference from February 28th to March 4th. From March 19th to the 22nd I toured the Department of Minnesota on a membership tour.

From April 20th to the 23rd I made my official visit to the Department of North Dakota.

May was by far the busiest month of all. May 4th to the 7th I was in Indianapolis for the Spring Meeting of the National Executive Committee. On the 7th Patty and I flew to Missouri to be in Independence, MO for the 125th Birthday of President Harry S Truman.

The following weekend we spent in Topeka, KS attending the Department Convention of the Department of Kansas. May 20th to the 22nd was spent at the United States Naval Academy in Annapolis, MD. May 23rd to the 25th was spent in Washington, DC. On Saturday night we attended the Stories of Service honoring the Gold Star Mom's Dad's and Spouses. On Sunday we attended a dinner honoring disabled veterans by a local steakhouse and later that day we watched Rolling Thunder roll into Washington. On Memorial Day I attended breakfast at the White House with the President. Later that morning I was at the wreath laying ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknowns and the Memorial Day program at Arlington National Cemetery. Following the program at Arlington we attended the Memorial Day program and wreath laying ceremony at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

During the month of June I attended the Department Conventions of Departments of South Dakota and Nebraska, which were held at the same time. In July we attended the Department Convention of the Department of Iowa.

I will attend the 91st National Convention of The American Legion in Louisville, KY from August 21st to the 27th 2009. My term will expire at the closing of this convention on August 27, 2009. It has been a real honor and privilege to serve in the second highest elected office of The American Legion as a National Vice Commander.

REPORT OF NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER
James W. Davis, Ohio

This is my final report for the 2009 year. I want to take this time to thank the worlds largest Veteran's Group for my year as National Vice Commander and a special thanks to the Department of West Virginia for sending in my name for the prestige office of National Vice Commander. It has been so much more than I expected or anticipated.

This year I have been in a vehicle for 31,172 miles, stayed in 109 motels and been in 151 of the friendliest American Legion Post in the Country. Here is a list of the places that I have been this year.

September 2008

15-16 Salute to all Veterans Past and Present at Flatwood, West Virginia, Honoring all the POW-MIA'S from West Virginia

October 2008

4	Commander Hall's Homecoming in Mason County, West Virginia
5-7	Embassy of France in Washington, DC in honor of the last living WWI Veteran, Frank Buckles
8-9	Boys' State Director's meeting in Indianapolis, Indiana
11-16	NEC meeting in Indianapolis, Indiana
17-18	National Auxiliary President's Homecoming in Columbus, Ohio
26	West Virginia's First District meeting in Newall, West Virginia
30-Nov 2	Department of Virginia's Fall Conference in Hampton, Virginia

November 2008

5-8	Department of Michigan's Membership Pick-Up in the State of Michigan VA Hospital and a tour of the Haven

December 2008

1-20	Visit's to various Legion Posts in Ohio and West Virginia

January 2009

8-15	Department of Illinois Membership Rally all over the State of Illinois
16-19	Department of Wisconsin's Mid-Winter Conference
21-22	Membership Caravan First District of West Virginia

February 2009

1-2	Department of Illinois for the funeral of Commander Bill Hudson
5	5th District meeting in Winfield, West Virginia Boys' State Meeting in Jackson Mills, West Virginia
6-8	Mid-Winter Conference in Huntington, West Virginia
20-23	Department of Michigan's Mid-Winter Conference

March 2009

12	American Legion Post meeting in Bellaire, Ohio
13-14	Membership Booth in Moundsville, West Virginia
29-April 4	Department of Ohio Membership Round-Up

April 2009

4	American Legion Birthday in Parkersburg, West Virginia
5-18, 25-26	District's 4th, 8th, 9th, and 1st District Meetings in West Virginia

May 2009

3-9 & 16	District's 5th, 6th, and 2nd District Meetings in West Virginia
21	Run to the Wall in Charleston, West, Virginia
22-27	United State Air Force Academy's Graduation in Colorado Springs, Colorado

June 2009

13-18	American Legion West Virginia Boys' State in Jackson Mills, West Virginia
19-21	American Legion Ohio Boys' State in Bowling Green, Ohio
24-27	Department of Kentucky's Convention in Louisville, Kentucky

July 2009

8-12	Department of West Virginia's Summer Conference in South Charleston, West Virginia
13-25	American Legion Boys' Nation in Washington, DC

August 2009

1	Start Poker Run for Legacy in Phillipi, West Virginia
5-7	American Legion Baseball Mid-Atlantic Regional in Morgantown, West Virginia
8	West Virginia Membership Workshop in Bridgeport, West, Virginia
18	American Legion Legacy Run stopping in Wheeling, West Virginia
20-27	National Convention in Louisville, Kentucky

So as you can see, my year has been filled with many great memories that will cherish years to come and again I would like to thank the Legion and all the Veterans for their faith and support. If not for them, I would not have had the opportunity of a life time to become the National Vice Commander of the American Legion.

REPORT OF NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER
Harley W. Ray, Oregon

What an honor and privilege to have served the Western regions 13 states and the depts. of Mexico and Philippines. Serving with National Commander Dave Rehbein made my year a very good year. I had the honor of presenting an award to a graduate at West Point, this to me, was the most memorial day of the year.

I've made so many friends, their hospitality was unbelievable. We National Vice Commanders, developed a life time friendship.

Summary of my travels for 2008-2009

September 2008

2-7	Indianapolis, IN—training
8-11	Washington, DC—training
19-21	Rock Springs, WY—Department Executive Committee

October 2008

11-15	Indianapolis, IN—Fall meetings
16-19	Idaho—Department Executive Committee
24-26	Montana—Department Executive Committee

November 2008

7-9	Nevada—Department Executive Committee
9-12	Utah—Department Executive Committee

January 2009

16-19	Wyoming
29–1 Feb	Washington—Department Executive Committee

February 2009

4-6	Arizona
13-15	New Mexico—Department Executive Committee
15-17	Utah—membership
20-22	Nevada

March 2009

1-4	Washington, D.C.
13-15	California—Department Executive Committee

April 2009

3-6	Hawaii—Department Executive Committee
16-19	Oregon—Department Executive Committee
22-25	Alaska—Department Convention

May 2009
3-7 Indianapolis, IN—Spring meetings
22 WestPoint
June 2009
18-21 Colorado—Department Convention
25-28 New Mexico—Department Convention
July 2009
7-9 Mexico—Department Convention
August 2009
23-27 Louisville, KY—National Convention

REPORT OF NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER
Dellano T. Simmons, Texas

It is an honor and privilege to have served the South East Region. A special thanks to the Southern Bloc and Texas for endorsing me to become a National Vice Commander. It is also an honor to be serving with/for National Commander David Rehbein, a very unique commander. What can I say about the other four National Vice Commanders but praise; they are dedicated to and for the American Legion. Our togetherness bonded into a friendship that will last forever. Legionnaires, be proud we belong to an organization (The American Legion) that has smart and dedicated people serving us in all of our Headquarters.

My year began in Phoenix, Arizona, August 28, 2008.

August 2008
29 El Paso, Texas. Visited the American Legion Post 832. In attendance was Texas NEC man, Department Commander and 16th District Commander along with several American Legion Posts in the surrounding area
September 2008
2-8 Briefing, training and membership phone calls at both National Headquarters, Indianapolis, Indiana
2-11 Training and Legislative Briefings at Washington, D.C. Headquarters Breakfast and our National Commanders Testimony to Congress.
19-21 Texas for DEC meeting
October 2008
11-16 Indianapolis, Indiana, NEC meeting.
Attended two District Conventions in Texas
November 2008
Attended District Convention in Texas
Attended District Convention in Louisiana.
Veterans Day Memorial Service
23-27 Department of North Carolina, Purple Heart Association Award, official visit
December 2008
What an honor to be guest speaker to about 150-200 World War II and Korean Veterans in Ennis, Texas
January 2009
9-11 Department of Tennessee, Department Commander's Banquet
12-14 Visited the Department of Georgia to help in getting a new post started
15-18 Department of Georgia, Membership Round-up
21-25 Department of Texas Mid Winter Conference
26-30 Department of South Carolina Membership promotion

February 2009

7 Attended the Four Chaplains Ceremony in Vinton, Louisiana. National Chaplain was the guest speaker

19-22 Department of North Carolina Membership promotion

March 2009

1-4 Attended the Washington Conference

14 Guest Speaker honoring an outstanding Veteran from Post 817

27-29 Guest Speaker for District 21 Convention, Kerrville, Texas

April 2009

2 Guest Speaker for Ride 2 Recovery Veterans in Waco, Texas

15-17 Helped in getting two new posts started in Texas

18 Guest Speaker at District 10 Convention in Texas

24-26 Department of Oklahoma American Legion Children Home Banquet Weekend

May 2009

4-7 Indianapolis, Indiana NEC meeting

June 2009

No visits due to doctor's orders

July 2009

10-12 Participated in District Commanders School in Austin, Texas

August 2009

21-27 National Convention Louisville, Kentucky

REPORT OF THE NATIONAL CHAPLAIN

Rev. Lawrence L. Vollink, Michigan

On August 28, 2008, in Phoenix, Arizona, at the conclusion of the 90th American Legion Convention, I was sworn in as the National Chaplain at the post-convention NEC Meeting. I am very humbled to be given this once in a life-time opportunity to serve in this capacity until the conclusion of the 91st American Legion National Convention in Louisville, Kentucky. For the past eighteen years, the Department of Michigan has been highly supportive of their Department Chaplain and now they have been very enthusiastic to see their own chaplain to be given the privilege of wearing the name "National Chaplain."

Throughout the entire year, our National Commander, David K. Rehbein, has been undergirded with prayer from our chaplains across the country. Our Dept Chaplains and Dept Auxiliary Chaplains came together for the National Chaplains Conference in Indianapolis, Indiana on Sept 26-28, 2008. Our theme was the same as the National Auxiliary Chaplain, Cherita Potter, or as "Faith, Hope, and Love." Excellent workshops were on "Homeless Veterans;" "Returning to Vietnam 40 Years Later;" and "When Johnny Comes Limping Home!"

The National Executive Committee (NEC) met on Oct 11-16, 2008, in Indianapolis, Indiana and the National Chaplain delivered numerous prayers at receptions and meetings. Because of my wife's medical condition which requires special needs, the staff (Dick Holmes), were very helpful in accommodating all of her needs.

Our PR Dept produced a DVD entitled "A Family Affair" and distributed 2,000 copies to our Dept Chaplains who in turn distributed them to places of worship so that they could be shown on the Sunday before Veterans Day. This was for the purpose of encouraging people to pray for our troops. It was a great success. On Veterans Day, I participated in the Great Lakes National Cemetery Ceremony in Holly, Michigan.

In December, I wrote an article on "A Nation Remembers Pearl Harbor" which went out to many local newspapers and post newsletters. Our staff extended the invitation to the Master's Men of Southeast Christian Church of Louisville, Kentucky to sing at the Sunday Patriotic Service on August 23, 2009.

In January and February of this year, many Four Chaplains Services were conducted throughout the country with our chaplains participating. I was the speaker at Berkley, Grand Rapids, Livonia, in Michigan, and in Vinton, Louisiana. Our Legion TV has the video presentation while in Louisiana. I was able to visit the troops at the Houston VA Medical Center and the War Veterans Home, in Jennings, Louisiana (Feb. 5-7) Our National Commander Rehbein visited the Department of Michigan Feb. 19-21, and I was part of the traveling team visiting some posts and the Detroit VA Medical Center.

At the Washington Conference, I had the opportunity to pray at luncheons and receptions. A highlight was to meet Ben Stein, the Public Relations Award Recipient. The Washington office staff made the arrangements with the Congressional staff for the National Chaplain to open their session with prayer on March 3, 2009 and visit with the US Senate Chaplain.

In April (2nd), I led a Memorial Service for Past National Chaplain Robert Davidson who served in 1988-89. At the Dept of Michigan Commander's Testimonial, Susie and I received a standing ovation from the very large crowd.

In May (2-7), our NEC meetings took place in Indianapolis, Indiana and again my contribution was to attend the meetings and give invocations and benedictions. I was guest speaker (for the 12th time) at the Fifth District Memorial Banquet in Grand Haven, Michigan. On Memorial Day (25th), I served as Chairman and Master of Ceremonies for the Ypsilanti Community Parade and Ceremony.

In June (18-21) I participated in the Michigan Department Convention. In July (18-23), I traveled to Arlington, VA to participate in Boys Nation where I conducted a Sunday Memorial Service and preached a brief message on "Being Encouraged!" On Monday, we laid the American Legion Wreath at the Tomb of The Unknown Soldier at the Arlington National Cemetery with our National Commander. Also, I visited the Washington American Legion. Headquarters (20th), and on Wednesday (22nd), I was escorted by Jerry Johnson as we visited some of the wounded soldiers at Walter Reed Medical Center. We also met the staff chaplains who work there. On Thursday, Dean Stoline, escorted my wife and I through the Capitol as I gave the opening prayer at the US Senate, and hosted by the staff of the Senate Chaplain's office. Senator Debbie Stabenow was very gracious during our brief visit with her.

At the 91st National Convention in Louisville, Kentucky, we were lodged at the Galt House where most the national leaders stayed. On Sunday (23rd) I hosted our National Chaplains Breakfast in which we honored our National Youth Champions—Baseball, Oratorical, Jr. Shooting, Boy Scouts, Student Trooper, and Boys and Girls Nation. Our Religious Patriotic Service was awe-inspiring with 'The Master's Men' singing and the Message with the year long theme, "Faith, Hope, and Love" A DVD is available to any Person upon request. I met with different groups throughout the week, including the Commander's Banquet offering prayers and words of encouragement to the people we met along the way. I also gave my blessing to the new National Chaplain for 2009-10.

Throughout the year, I have kept in contact with many chaplains, staff and officers through emails. Numerous cards of sympathy and prayers for the ill were sent out. Coins were given out to military and veterans, thanking them for their service.

It has been truly an honor and a very humbling experience to be called our National Chaplain of The American Legion" I prayed at the beginning of my year, that I would represent our motto well, "For God and Country." I hope my prayer was answered in the affirmative. The people I have met and served are the greatest, which makes the American Legion the greatest organization in the world. May God continue to bless us in all of our endeavors where ever we are serving!

REPORT OF THE NATIONAL HISTORIAN
Charles J. Zelinsky, Illinois

Commander, I want to thank you for the opportunity to serve on your team of officers as National Historian. The record will show that you and your team represented the Organization well. You challenged the administration when you felt they were wrong, such as the insurance reimbursement plan, and you stood with them when their programs benefitted our organization.

The job description for the National Historian is as follows: be responsible for Legion history and help department and post historians promote their work. The National Historian is assisted by the librarian and staff employed by the national organization. The National Historian received numerous Requests for Information (RFI) during the year. Typical requests were for information pertaining to our yearly Historians History/Photo Book contests. Each RFI was answered with a personal phone call and a follow-up letter from the National Historian.

My first task as National Historian was to oversee the judging of Post and Department Histories in the National Contest. There were 44 entries this year. The members of the National Association of Department Historians of the American Legion (NADHAL) did an outstanding job judging the books submitted. They are to be commended for their service. The first place winners were:

One-Year Department Narrative History Contest—Department of Wisconsin

One-Year Department Yearbook Contest—Department of Ohio

One-Year Post Narrative Contest—Landt-Theil Post 470, Saukville, WI

One-Year Post Yearbook History Contest—Matthews-Crawford Post 131, Warrensburg, MO

My theme for the year was "Record our History—Save the Memories." As a personal memory for The National Commander, Illinois Congressman Tim Johnson secured an American Flag that was flown over our Nations Capitol on August 28, 2008, the day Commander Dave Rehbein was elected National Commander to honor his commitment to the "Pride and Purpose" he has toward the veteran community. The flag was presented to Commander Rehbein May 5, 2009.

At the Fall National Executive Committee Meeting, The National Historian announced the launch of a web site for posting pictures of our National Officers as they traveled throughout the country doing the business of The American Legion. I can report that to date, more than 600 pictures have been posted and there were more than 114,000 visits to the site. Thank you to the Department of Illinois Public Relations/Information Exchange Committee for their assistance on this project.

The National Organization not only houses the most comprehensive collection of military research materials and records in the National Library but they also have an outstanding staff. At the Fall National Executive Committee Meeting (October 2009) Mr. Joe Hovish announced his retirement as National Librarian/Curator. At that time Mr. Howard Trace was introduced as the newly appointed National Librarian/Curator. Mr. Trace completed his probationary period during May 2009. We congratulate Mr. Trace

and wish him many successes. I want to thank Mr. Trace and the fine library staff for their support during the year.

At the retirement ceremonies for National Adjutant Robert Spanogle last fall, a number of Commission Chairmen referred to him as the "Oldest National Adjutant." At that time The National Commander charged The National Historian with confirming that Adjutant Spanogle was the longest serving not the oldest National Adjutant at the time of his retirement. With the help of JoEllen Gazvoda of the National Library staff, we can report that Adjutant Spanogle was the longest serving National Adjutant. Mr. Frank C. Momsen (MN) was 70 at the time of his retirement making him the oldest.

This has been a difficult year health wise for me. In mid January I was diagnosed with Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma. While the prognosis was good at the time, it is none the less unsettling to be told you have cancer. As of this date, I have taken the six required treatments and all signs point to a full remission. I want to thank all the Legion Family from across the country that sent cards, letters, emails and prayers as I went through the treatment. You cannot know how much it meant to my family. I want to extend a special thanks to National Commander Rehbein and National Adjutant Wheeler for your support. I also want to recognize and thank Past National Commanders John Geiger, Marty Conatser and the Department of Illinois Legion Family for your support and prayers.

NATIONAL JUDGE ADVOCATE
P. B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

Contracts

The following one hundred thirty (130) contracts have been reviewed or prepared:

1. Articles of Agreement by and between The American Legion and The American Legion National Convention Corporation of Indiana, covering the convocation of the 2012 Convention of The American Legion in the City of Indianapolis, State of Indiana, 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 KBM (KnowledgeBase Marketing-Mutual of Omaha) for marketing of insurance products for Legion members.
10. An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Norlight Telecommunications, Inc., whereby Norlight Telecommunications, Inc. will provide a dedicated internet port and service of same for The American Legion's computer system.
11. Housing contract between The American Legion and Marymount University to provide for lodging and food service for American Legion Boys Nation held in July 2009.
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 Office Max to provide office supplies, office furniture, technology and similar products.
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:
    Resource One
    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 1-800-Flowers.com provides floral and gift products for members.
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. An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Manpower Staffing Services Agreement for temporary help during the 2009 national convention.
39. A Agreement by and between The American Legion and Time Warner telephone and data lines services which includes firewall management, internet "pipe," main voice lines, data line to DC office and data line to Fort Ben office.
40. An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Swift Trip, LLC, Legion Family Travel. Discount travel services for Legion members and their families.
41. An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Mid America Marketing Cancer Care Plus Insurance Program, underwritten by Family Heritage Life available to Legion members.
42. An Agreement by and between The American Legion and WebStream Productions to provide live video webcast streaming of the American Legion World Series Baseball games from August 14-18, 2009.
43. An Agreement by and between The American Legion and IMAVEX, LLC to design an American Legion Museum Tour Website.
44. An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Blueprint Holdings, LLC D/B/A MediaSauce to design a "decision tree" web module for The American Legion website.
45. An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Push Media Group D/B/A Sudden Industries to assist, consult and participate in the design and construction of a new American Legion website.
46. An Agreement by and between Blackhorse Productions for a movie about The American Legion.
47. Eighty-three (83) 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:
    4 Warranty
    Aberdeen American News-South Dakota
    AEGON Direct Marketing
    ASC (The College Board)
    Avis and Budget Car Rental
    Bankers Life & Casualty Company
    Brickmill Marketing Services
    Business Mailing Center
    Careington International
    Caremark, LLC Confidentiality
    CD-COM Systems Midwest, Inc.
    CES Mail Communications, Inc.
    Colonial Penn Life Insurance Company
    Commander Printed Products
    Commercial Letter, Inc.
    Corporate Express Document & Print Mgmt.
    Crell Mail Advertising
    Daily Freeman Journal
    Datagraphic

Data-Mail, Inc.
Dayton Technologies
E H Direct
Epsilon
Equifax Direct Marketing Solutions, LLC
E-Target Media
Fahlgren Mortine
First National Bank of Omaha
Freedom Graphic Systems
G E Financial Assurance
Gallagher Benefit Services
GMAC
HNE Printers/Daily Reporter
Hutchinson Company
info USA, Inc.
International Data Management
JH Marketing Services
KDM
Konik and Company
Kramers Mailing Service
Life Line Screening
Lighthouse List Company
Long Term Care Associates, Inc.
LTCR Analytics IQ, Inc.
Mail Computer Services Direct
Mail Manager
Mailing Services of Pittsburgh
Mainstreet Media-Kansas
MCS Direct
Merkle, Inc.
Military Advantage
MMP Direct and Printing
Moore Wallace Response Marketing
Morgan Printing, Inc.
Name-Finders List
National General Insurance
Nfocus Consulting, Inc.
North Mail, Inc.
On line Insurance Services, LLC
PacifiCare
PEP Direct, Inc.
Perma-Graphics, Inc.
PipMail
Propco Marketing
PSA
Quadriga Art, Inc.
R.R. Donnelley & Sons Company
Ripon Printers
River's Edge Printing

SB MailWorks
SCI Management, LLP
Signature Offset
SIRVA Affinity Group Services
The Mailing House
The Heritage Company
The Hertz Corporation
TN Marketing
Torrington Telegram-Wyoming
TransContinental Direct
True North Companies (Medicare Part D, Program-provided by US Monitor
Valley Printworks
Ventura Printing
VERTIS
Veterans Online, LLC

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/ Cross-Appellees, Record Nos. 04-55732, 04-56167 XAP

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 court's 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 defedant insists. We see no reason to start spending the money. Accordingly, we are keeping an eye on the case. It cannot go forward until the plaintiff does file his complaint. The court has sent notice it intends to terminate this case unless a party fills out a Statement of Intention to Proceed before October 1, 2008. Despite this, the case is still pending.

SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA AND FOR THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

Philip K. Paulson,

Petitioner Case No. GC 849667

v.

Charles Abdelnour, in his
Official capacity as the City
Clerk of the City of San Diego;
Mikal Haas, In his Official
Capacity as Registrar
of Voters for the County
of San Diego;
And Does 1 to 10, Inclusive,

Respondents

This case involves the Mount Soledad War Memorial which contains a cross. Plaintiffs have sued in an attempt to have the cross removed and destroyed. A judge ordered the cross removed or the city would pay penalties of five thousand dollars ($5,000) per day. The matter is currently both in the Federal courts and in the California Supreme Court. American Legion was instrumental in obtaining a stay of the penalty order in the US Supreme Court. American Legion has filed its amicus brief in conjunction with the Department of California in the California Supreme Court. The United States Congress has enacted and 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.)

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 United States
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.

NATIONAL DIRECTOR OF INDUSTRIAL PROPERTY OF THE ECUADORIAN INSTITUTE OF INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

THE AMERICAN LEGION,
Opposer,

v.

CIGNAL INTERNATIONAL CORP.,
Applicant

Request no. 192064/07
Trademark:AMERICAN LEGION
Published in the Intellectual Property Gazette No. 514 of November 2007

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. We are awaiting the result.

CAUSE NO. 352-230915-08

AMY HOOTEN, INDIVIDUALLY AND AS PERSONAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE ESTATE OF DANIELLE HOOTEN, AND AS NEXT FRIEND OF AVERY HOOTEN, A MINOR.	IN THE DISTRICT COURT OF
Plaintiffs,	
VS	TARRANT COUNTY, TEXAS
THE AMERICAN LEGION DEPARTMENT OF TEXAS, THE AMERICAN LEGION,	
Defendants,	
THE SOUTH FORT WORTH AMERICAN LEGION POST #569,	
Defendant and Third Party Plaintiff,	
ALISIA PADILLA AND LUIS REYES,	
Third Party Defendants.	352nd JUDICIAL DISTRICT

This case began in late 2008 as far as the National Organization of The American Legion is concerned by service with an amended complaint alleging that the National Organization was responsible for Post No.569 in Fort Worth, Texas. Apparently, the Post had leased out its hall for a party and Alisia Padilla and Luis Reyes attended the party and left drunk. There was an auto accident involving two cars. The family of the driver of the second car and the driver have not sued the National Organization.

Amy Hooten's attorney filed the amended complaint to bring in the National Organization and refused to accept all the citations including the Urban case that revealed the National Organization had no legal responsibility and was not responsible for the injuries in this case.

After extensive discovery and a deposition of the National Adjutant, the plaintiff's attorney finally dropped his unjustified demand for several hundred thousand dollars. The case is now closed.

IN THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS
BUCKS COUNTY

EVEANN BURCOSKY	COURT OF COMMON PLEAS BUCKS COUNTY
And EVEANN BURCOSKY, Administratrix of the Estate of Michael Burcosky, Deceased And ADAM BURCOSKY, minor, by and through his parent and natural guardian, EVEANN BURCOSKY And JOHN BURCOSKY, minor, by and through his parent and natural guardian, EVEANN BURCOSKY And AMERICAN LEGION POST 834 And THE AMERICAN LEGION	NO. 0902835-34-2

This is a dram shop case filed in Bucks County, Pennsylvania. The plaintiff claims The American Legion served alcohol and is responsible for the actions of the Post club.

The insurance company is defending us and the case is being strongly opposed. The Post attorney filed an answer on behalf of National which must be removed from the record before we can file our answer. In the meanwhile, the case is proceeding.

No. 08-472

In The
SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

KEN SALAZAR, Secretary of the Interior, *et al.,*

Petitioners,

v.

FRANK BUONO,

Respondent.

On Writ of Certiorari To The
United States Court of Appeals
For The Ninth Circuit

This case involves the Mojave Cross. The United States government sold the property to an American Legion Post to maintain this monument to World War I veterans. The Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals and the district courts of the government could not transfer an acre of property if the cross had to be destroyed. The government has appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court. The American Legion has joined as an amicus on the side of the government.

The plaintiff is a former forest service worker. The Mojave Cross is miles from a main artery and can only be found if one looks for it. Hence, the case is another one of those where the ACLU and its minions are seeking attorney's fees from the federal government for saving the country from the danger of a cross on private property.

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 1,023 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 33 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 226 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 2008 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 2008 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, 2 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
Marty Justis, Maryland, 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 offices of The American Legion. All Division Directors resident at the Indianapolis National Headquarters report to the Executive Director.

Mail
June 1, 2008 through May 31, 2009

Incoming letters and parcels (distributed to Divisions for processing)	1,007,356
Incoming parcels	4,320
Outgoing letters/parcels (exclusive of National Emblem Sales)	9,991,304

Freight and Express
June 1, 2008 through May 31, 2009

Out (cartons)	4,886
Out (pounds)	170,526
UPS (in)	2,515
UPS (out)	6,803

LIBRARY AND MUSEUM
Howard Trace, Librarian and Curator

The mission of The American Legion Library is to provide an information storage and retrieval system for The American Legion.

Indexing of documents continues. Internal and external materials are added to the collection regularly. The Library now has indexes to over 51,000 images, 16,000 books and pamphlets, 82,000 documents, and 2,000 microforms. Planning for digital access to library materials has been ongoing throughout the year and material should begin to be available in 2010.

Former Librarian and Curator Joseph J. Hovish retired on December 31, 2008 after devoting 21 years of dedicated service to Library and Museum operations. His tenure included the transition from paper indexes to computer databases that have had a significant impact on Library operations. Mr. Hovish was only the third person to serve as Librarian, and he continued the high standards set by his predecessors, Mrs. Verna Grimm and Mr. Thomas Hull.

A number of researchers made extensive visits to the Library. Areas of research involved veterans organizations and politics; child welfare; medal of honor recipients; World War II, Korean and Vietnam War photos; education; the GI Bill; and flag salute.

Significant Gifts to the National Headquarters Library

The Namesake: The Biography of Theodore Roosevelt, Jr. donated by Robert W. Walker.

Ma Bell: A Little Known American Story donated by W. Russell Young.

World War II: A Chronology of War and *U.S. Army Infantry* donated by James O. Muschett.

The following publications were donated by the Institute of Museum and Library Services: *IPI Media Storage Quick Reference; Framework for Preservation of Museum Collections*; *Preservation Management for Libraries, Archives and Museums*; *Capitalize on Collections Care*; *Emergency Response and Salvage Wheel*; *Field Guide to Emergency Response*; *International Review of African American Art Collecting, Conservation, and Collaborations*; *A Legal Primer on Managing Museum Collections*; *Museum Handbook Part 1: Museum Collections; Caring for American Indian Objects: A Practical and Cultural Guide*; *The Nature of Conservation: A Race Against Time*; *Promoting Preservation Awareness in Libraries*; *The Care of Prints and Drawings*; *Caring for Your Family Treasures*; *The National Trust Manual of Housekeeping: The Care of Collections in Historic Houses Open to the Public*; *Archival Care and Management*.

Copies of *The American Legion Magazine* from 1920's and 1930's donated by James J. Thiel.

The Yellowlegs; *The United States Cavalry*; and *The Cavalry* donated by Curt Garnett.

For the Common Defense—A Military History of the United States of America and *Their War for Korea* donated by Dr. Allan R. Millett.

Copy of Company K 22nd Infantry 1918 Thanksgiving Dinner Menu donated by Albert Schultz.

Designated Heroes Remember: World War II Survivors—Americans, Germans, Civilians, Christians, Jews—Tell their Stories, 1933-1946 donated by Patricia Mills.

The following publications were donated by William J. DeGrosky: *The American Legion Weekly*, January 18, 1924; *The American Legion Weekly*, January 2, 1925; *The*

American Legion Weekly, July 3, 1925; *The American Legion Monthly*, June, 1931; *The American Legion Monthly*, May, 1940; and *The American Legion Monthly*, June, 1953.

The following books were donated by NADHAL: *Alan's War: The Memories of G.I. Alan Cope*; *The U.S. Army and Irregular Warfare, 1775-2007*; *Danger's Hour: The Story of the USS Bunker Hill and the Kamikaze Pilot Who Crippled Her*; *Khobar Towers Tragedy and Response*.

Bulletins, Reports, etc. Received and Filed	447
Periodical Titles Received	208
Books, Pamphlets and *The American Legion Magazine* cataloged	652
Correspondence Written by National Historian	485
Correspondence Written by the Librarian	1,647
Prominent Legionnaire Questionnaires Mailed	1,066
Prominent Legionnaire Questionnaires Received	212
Follow-ups of Correspondence	37
Items Microfilm Added to Stock	20,351

Significant Gifts to the National Headquarters Museum

Scrapbook of New England events of The American Legion donated by Rachel Caliri.

Lafayette, Indiana Post's Legion baseball shirt donated by Joseph T. Bumbleburg.

American Legion uniform and World War II era U.S. Army uniform donated by Ben Truskoski.

Essay written on S/Sgt. John W. Hammer donated by Earl J. Currie.

Purple Heart and Bronze Star awarded to Robert L. Julis donated by John Shockey.

American Legion 1929 membership card donated by Ed White.

Letter from the Membership Committee of the Temporary State Executive Committee of California donated by Jerome Callahan.

Sheet music of "The American Legion Song" for Garrett Cochran Post No 1 in Williamsport, Pennsylvania donated by LaDonna Orians.

The American legion Official Certificate of Identification "The Second A.E.F." of the 9th Annual National Convention donated by Past National Commander Clarence M. Bacon.

World War II United States Army uniform: jacket, trousers, two Garrison caps, black tie and tan shirt donated by Marna Barnes.

Scrapbook of William B. Follett, National Vice Commander 1919-1920 donated by Suzanne Benton.

The following items were donated by James A. Gleason: Chipilly-131st Infantry Post 310 flag, flagpole and stand; United States flag, flagpole and stand; Clayton F. Smith Trophy 1933; binder with history of Chipilly-131st Infantry Post 310; photograph of Company of the 1st Illinois Infantry 1916; and photograph of parade unit at the 23rd National Convention.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (IT) DIVISION
Brad Pryor, Director

The Information Technology Division (IT) is responsible for many processes critical to the operations of The American Legion. IT staff play a key role in the selection and maintenance of all hardware and software used by National Headquarters. E-mail, Internet access, file servers, telephone systems, desktop and laptop computers, network

security and the data communications structure linking the Indianapolis and Washington, D.C. offices are all responsibilities of the IT Division.

IT is also responsible for the computer systems housing The American Legion's membership database. IT keeps the national database current by adding new members, updating addresses and maintaining other information about current members. These same services are also provided for Sons of The American Legion.

Along with the membership system at National Headquarters, IT supports departments, detachments, posts, units and squadrons by providing them with electronic membership updates. Many of our state and local groups use the Association Information Manager (AIM) software offered by National Headquarters to manage their membership records. And many also make use of ALPOP (American Legion Post Officer Portal), which allows post leadership to directly access their member records on the national database via the Internet.

In conjunction with membership database capabilities, The American Legion has invested in sophisticated list processing software. This ensures mailings are sent at the lowest cost using features that eliminate duplicate names from various lists so that only one item is mailed to each addressee; sort mail in U.S. Postal Service sequence; print the address using the USPS bar code to receive the most favorable postal discounts; and identify addresses that would not be recognized and thus not delivered by the U.S. Postal Service, preventing us from wasting printing and postage costs.

The American Legion's IT Division is an integral part of the Marketing Services Group, providing support services for Emblem Sales and production and support services for the Fundraising and Membership Support Services Divisions.

AMERICANISM COMMISSION

Joseph E. Caouette, New Hampshire, Chairman
William A. Pease, Indiana, 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 Americans.

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 Scouts of America activities, and many other citizenship and objective training activities;
- Work for the assimilation of immigrants through schools of citizenship and other agencies and stand for the restriction of immigration so that this assimilation may approach perfection; 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 2008-2009 American Legion year.

American Legion Boys State/Boys Nation

The American Legion believes that if the United States is to maintain its form of government, it must have a citizenry that has a fundamental understanding and interest in its operation. This is what The American Legion Boys State program does for the young men of our nation. It teaches the fundamentals of American government through the state level.

It was 75 years ago that Legionnaires in the state of Illinois first recognized the need for a program that would help high school boys understand and appreciate the government they were learning about in the classroom. It was a time in the history of this nation when un-American ideas seriously threatened its future. Established in 1935, the whole idea of American Legion Boys State, then and now, is to show young people that beyond a doubt, our form of government is good; 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 similar program at the national level and in 1946, established American Legion Boys Nation. This year, it celebrated its 64th anniversary session.

Both Boys State and Boys Nation are unique programs of The American Legion that emphasize participation and personal experience in a respective model “state” and “nation” that is complete with its governing bodies and elected officials.

Each year nearly 20,000 young Americans take part in American Legion Boys State, and throughout its 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 2009 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 an American Legion Boys Nation president and vice president. In addition to federal legislators and representatives of federal agencies, American Legion officials and other leaders of national distinction participate in American Legion Boys Nation. Christopher Andrews of Green River, Wyoming was elected President of the 64th anniversary session of American Legion Boys Nation. He joined the youth champion delegation as a guest of the National Commander at the National Convention of The American Legion in Louisville, Kentucky, August 22-25, 2009.

High School Oratorical Contest

The American Legion has awarded over three million dollars in college scholarships since 1938 to high school students participating in its annual High School Oratorical Contest.

Each contestant must give a prepared oration on some phase of the United States Constitution, giving emphasis on the duties and obligations of a citizen to our government. The prepared oration must be the original effort of each contestant, taking not less than eight nor more than ten minutes for delivery. Each contestant must also give an assigned topic presentation on a constitutional topic (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 Committee. 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 72nd Annual National Oratorical Finals Contest was held at Indianapolis, Indiana, in April 2009. The three finalists were: First place—Andrew Dykstal, Lafayette, Indiana; second place—Caroline Heydinger, Vernon, Vermont; third place—Werner Ferrone, Homosassa, Florida.

Boy Scouts of America

The American Legion charters 2,743 Scout Units in communities across the country involving 71,565 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 Brad Jencks of South Jordan, Utah, as its 2009 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 John Register, Austin, Minnesota; John Dreyzehner, Abingdon, Virginia; and Joe Phillips, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin.

In addition, an estimated 8,000 certificates honoring new Eagle Scout recipients are distributed annually.

Almost 390 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 1,085 active clubs with almost 15,000 young people participating annually.

The 19th annual Junior Air Rifle National Championship was conducted August 4-9, 2009 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 1,200 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 2009 winners were Emily Quiner of Brooklyn Park, Minnesota (Precision) and Deckard Day from Albuquerque, New Mexico (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 2009-2010, awarded nine $3,000 scholarships to recipients in eight states to assist in furthering their education. This brings their cumulative total for the past 49 years to 853 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 2010-2011 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 14,000 copies of the DVD have been sold since its debut in early 2005.

Additionally, over 65,000 copies of the publication *Let's Be Right on Flag Etiquette* and more than 100,000 copies of the pamphlet, *Flag of the United States—How to Display It, How to Respect It* are distributed annually to schools, organizations and individuals. This information is sent at little or no cost to all who request it.

The American Legion continues publication of *Our Country's Flag*, an educational comic book for use in elementary schools. Well over one million copies have been distributed since the booklet was introduced in 1988. The educational booklet, *I Pledge Allegiance*, published in May 1995, is also for use in elementary schools. *Our Country's Veterans* was added to The American Legion's list of educational publications in 2005.

The American Legion continues its campaign to protect the United States Flag from physical desecration. All 50 state legislatures have passed memorializing resolutions in support of a constitutional amendment to give Congress the authority to enact flag protection laws. Working with other organizations of the American Legion-founded Citizens Flag Alliance, The American Legion shepherded a flag protection Constitutional amendment through the House of Representatives six times in the past seven Congresses. In June of 2006, The American Legion spearheaded the drive for the amendment in the U.S. Senate, coming within one vote of passage there. The legislation has been introduced in the 111th Congress.

Service to God and Country

A program of fundamental Americanism, "Service to God and Country," seeks to prevent the spiritual decay of America by charging the electorate with a spirit of unquestionable Americanism, respect for law, reverence for authority and awareness of our human rights and freedoms.

"Service to God" emphasizes regular public worship, daily family prayer and the religious education of children, while "Service to Country" attempts to inculcate a sense of individual obligation to the community, state and Nation. These objectives are aimed at preparing young Americans to take up tomorrow's responsibilities by teaching them moral and spiritual values, renewed interest in our Country's history, self-discipline, self-reliance, ideals of loyalty and honesty.

Each year, a Conference for the Department Chaplains 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 84th season in 2009. Over 90,000 players on 4,800 teams participated in this American Legion Americanism youth activity during the past year. The 2008 George W. Rulon American Legion Baseball Player of the Year is Patrick Singletary from Hendersonville, North Carolina.

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 53 Hall of Fame members played American Legion Baseball, including Jim Rice and Joe Gordon, who were elected in 2009. Other American Legion Alumni inducted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame include 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
Jill Druskis, Nebraska, Deputy 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 may be 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
Michael Novak, 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 requirement to the successful functioning of a republic. While recognizing the right of private and religious groups to maintain schools, The American Legion vigorously subscribes to the necessity for a publicly supported education system to ensure that every American child has the opportunity for an adequate education. The American Legion believes that popular self-government, as set forth in the Constitution of the United States, cannot continue to exist without a continuing system of free public education. Not only does proper national defense require trained personnel, but every

phase of life today demands that we have competent citizens who are qualified, willing and able to discharge their responsibilities.

The availability of educational opportunity for individuals to pursue their own development is a prerequisite to the achievement of all other social goals. Our education system must be designed to provide every person with the means to reach their potential which will provide our Country with the high level of responsible citizens and specialized workers that it requires. In turn, we will have greater assurance of economic growth, of sound decision-making, and the knowledge necessary to promote our national security.

The American education system should produce citizens who understand and are dedicated to principles of free enterprise; to democratic principles and processes; and whose devotion to freedom and human dignity goes beyond mere lip service.

The Education Program of The American Legion consists of four basic elements: (1) recognition of local systems through observance of American Education Week; (2) 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 15-21, 2009.

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, 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
William A. Pease, Indiana, 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 ninety 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.

2008-2009 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 2008-2009, 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. Since our partnership with CMN began in 1998, The American Legion family has donated over $20 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.

Family 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 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 2008-2009 program year, the program aided 1,344 children with $646,981.31 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 2008-2009 program year. At National Convention in Phoenix, Arizona, August 26-28, 2008 the following resolutions, here summarized, were approved.

Admission of Children of United States Citizens: Res. 321-2008. 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.

Drug Trafficking: Res. 327-2008. 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.

Production, Sale and Distribution of Obscene Literature: Res. 319-2008. 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.

Protect Children from the Unrestricted Media: Res. 314-2008. 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.

School Nutrition Programs: Res. 334-2008. 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. 315-2008. It has long been our position that all children should have adequate health services to assure their physical, mental and emotional well being. Unfortunately, many of our 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.

Comprehensive Health Care for Children and Youth: Res. 326-2008. 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.

Support Immunization Programs: Res. 325-2008. The American Legion realizes that in today's society there is no place for communicable disease for which there is a vaccine. Despite available vaccination programs, several childhood diseases breakout annually. We believe that the state and federal governments should provide sufficient funding so that indigent families with children can receive the necessary immunizations against all communicable diseases.

National Family Week: Res. 335-2008. 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.

These are the highlights of our 2008-2009 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, 2008 through May 31, 2009 and combined with these reports.

During the reporting period, The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation recorded $637,078.03 in donations from members of The American Legion Family and individuals across the country. During the same period, our Temporary Financial Assistance program expended $646,981.31 in grants to 1,344 children of veterans. For the 2008-2009 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 $19,054,163 in expenditures and contributions to benefit the children of America.

Children & Youth Literature

During the 2008-2009 program year, 439,868 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 1,556 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 all the dedicated volunteers of The American Legion family. Our members have contributed thousands of unpaid hours, tremendous amounts of energy and personal sacrifice to improve the lives of children and to complete another successful program year. The Commission would also like to thank National Commander David Rehbein and National Adjutant Daniel S. Wheeler for their continued dedication to serving our nation’s youth. Special recognition and appreciation for continued support of Children &

Youth programs is also extended to the American Legion Auxiliary, the Eight and Forty, and the Sons of The American Legion that ensure the continued success of our National Children & Youth Programs.

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
Patricia A. Harris—North Carolina—Consultant
Miles Smith, Illinois—Member
Gary W. Gifford, Maryland—Member
Herbert J. Petit, Jr., Louisiana—Member
Robert M. Johnson, Maryland—Member
Peggy Moon, Minnesota—Member
Jon K. Marsh, Oregon—Member

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	53%	0%	$0.00	$2,664.00	$39,861.00	$19,750.00	$850.00	$4,793.00	$98.50	362	$68,017
Maine	41%	17%	$6,759.89	$2,361.00	$75,533.00	$17,240.00	$149,384.16	$12,756.00	$95.00	11,681	$264,129
Massachusetts	32%	53%	$2,214.68	$1,036.00	$68,244.00	$32,479.00	$2,412.00	$5,311.00	$1,295.00	3,061	$112,992
New Hampshire	64%	36%	$2,330.34	$2,674.57	$112,661.00	$63,675.00	$83,261.00	$11,285.00	$154.55	12,405	$276,041
Rhode Island	24%	31%	$0.00	$0.00	$13,596.00	$1,310.00	$25,855.28	$600.00	$50.00	1,160	$41,411
Vermont	83%	0%	$0.00	$574.00	$103,553.00	$35,751.00	$293,721.00	$0.00	$25.00	3,015	$433,624
TOTAL:	44%	28%	$11,304.91	$9,309.57	$413,448.00	$170,205.00	$555,483.44	$34,745.00	$1,718.05	31,684	$1,196,214
REGION 2											
Delaware	53%	45%	$0.00	$295.00	$87,794.00	$18,879.00	$25,132.00	$170.00	(2)	3,849	$132,268
D.C.	29%	0%	$0.00	$216.50	$629.00	$1,165.00	$500.00	$0.00	$0.00	5	$2,511
Maryland	83%	58%	$2,741.23	$6,345.00	$329,630.00	$155,700.00	$524,338.00	$4,083.00	$100.00	31,308	$1,022,937
New Jersey	24%	0%	$3,451.62	$2,260.00	$82,914.00	$44,272.00	$11,869.00	$0.00	$140.00	1,925	$144,907
New York	77%	100%	$3,782.68	$8,061.82	$465,766.00	$372,041.00	$1,159,948.00	$4,898.00	$410.00	24,933	$2,014,908
Pennsylvania	56%	0%	$13,247.24	$1,290.65	$394,548.00	$267,447.00	$701,076.00	$400.00	$305.00	31,360	$1,378,314
Virginia	99%	41%	$25,596.86	$2,140.00	$471,841.00	$141,677.00	$141,876.00	$56.70	$849.00	33,245	$784,037
West Virginia	99%	35%	$1,786.55	$675.00	$11,726.00	$43,477.00	$20,857.00	$0.00	$100.00	7,046	$78,622
TOTAL:	66%	45%	$50,606.18	$21,283.97	$1,844,848.00	$1,044,658.00	$2,585,596.00	$9,607.70	$1,904.00	133,671	$5,558,502
REGION 3											
Alabama	21%	13%	$13,130.62	$3,963.07	$1,000.00	$5,150.00	$11,900.00	$50.00	$365.09	321	$35,559
Florida	93%	0%	$43,795.43	$50,681.78	$448,602.00	$290,696.00	$365,016.00	$80.00	$1,669.46	41,431	$1,200,541
Georgia	81%	27%	$6,730.10	$1,770.00	$354,157.00	$154,995.00	$113,228.00	$0.00	(2)	17,602	$630,878
Kentucky	69%	0%	$15,974.07	$2,486.50	$189,422.00	$93,856.00	$93,826.00	$0.00	$75.00	7,772	$395,640
North Carolina	30%	25%	$20,271.33	$862.00	$45,170.00	$32,687.00	$13,964.97	$50.00	(2)	4,744	$113,003
South Carolina	28%	12%	$9,543.12	$1,385.08	$52,840.00	$14,771.00	$9,788.00	$0.00	(2)	4,923	$88,325
Tennessee	50%	0%	$13,179.90	$814.00	$27,680.00	$28,126.00	$24,830.00	$0.00	$0.00	1,912	$94,630
TOTAL:	54%	12%	$122,624.57	$61,962.43	$1,118,871.00	$620,281.00	$632,552.97	$180.00	$2,109.55	78,705	$2,558,576
REGION 4											
Arkansas	28%	0%	$1,371.99	$63.40	$72,836.00	$12,127.00	$5,441.00	$25.00	$95.00	2,814	$91,959
Louisiana	33%	0%	$0.00	$2,481.00	$75,313.00	$23,195.00	$20,364.00	$0.00	$175.00	3,514	$121,528
Mississippi	24%	24%	$5,665.71	$1,625.00	$62,425.00	$38,607.00	$20,599.00	$398.00	$100.00	3,090	$129,420
Oklahoma	35%	0%	$30,207.95	$643.04	$87,074.00	$71,148.00	$75,052.00	$124.00	$50.00	8,588	$264,299
Texas	48%	28%	$21,494.70	$5,367.00	$235,830.00	$105,957.00	$110,071.13	$325.00	$618.20	38,981	$479,663
TOTAL:	36%	13%	$58,740.35	$10,179.44	$533,478.00	$251,034.00	$231,527.13	$872.00	$1,038.20	56,987	$1,086,869
REGION 5											
Illinois	35%	55%	$12,425.18	$6,766.50	$133,259.00	$101,696.00	$562,106.00	$690.00	$551.25	10,551	$817,494
Indiana	51%	41%	$12,833.62	$951.00	$214,088.00	$133,445.00	$23,776.00	$2,391.00	$1,232.90	28,057	$388,718
Michigan	60%	55%	$6,873.26	$3,137.59	$275,381.00	$121,476.00	$130,895.78	$0.00	$2,803.15	22,627	$540,567
Missouri	55%	0%	$9,333.37	$1,588.63	$72,287.00	$32,172.00	$24,578.00	$0.00	$345.00	3,959	$140,304
Ohio	83%	44%	$11,084.05	$88,360.00	$569,553.00	$351,314.00	$234,525.00	$0.00	$85.00	64,353	$1,254,921
Wisconsin	99%	55%	$17,043.18	$4,150.07	$23,880.00	$100,451.00	$243,685.00	$100.00	$0.00	11,806	$389,309
TOTAL:	62%	45%	$69,592.66	$104,953.79	$1,288,448.00	$840,554.00	$1,219,565.78	$3,181.00	$5,017.30	141,353	$3,531,313
REGION 6											
Iowa	65%	78%	$20,181.98	$755.50	$177,556.00	$42,419.00	$25,706.00	$0.00	(2)	15,496	$266,616
Kansas	65%	0%	$625.00	$3,353.65	$78,031.50	$26,527.00	$17,195.13	$4,356.75	$205.00	9,978	$130,294
Minnesota	47%	83%	$5,039.70	$1,837.50	$342,709.00	$117,857.00	$99,884.00	$10.00	$630.00	37,440	$567,967
Nebraska	95%	48%	$2,058.00	$3,047.68	$91,315.00	$39,500.00	$39,575.00	$678.00	$589.00	21,096	$176,763
North Dakota	50%	1%	$775.62	$3,334.51	$49,173.00	$20,095.00	$23,106.00	$10.00	$0.00	9,161	$96,494
South Dakota	57%	100%	$0.00	$245.00	$35,455.38	$10,011.29	$32,137.67	$5.00	$0.00	70,830	$77,854
TOTAL:	63%	59%	$28,680.30	$12,573.84	$774,239.88	$256,409.29	$237,603.80	$5,059.75	$1,424.00	164,001	$1,315,989
REGION 7											
Arizona	87%	51%	$59,877.04	$2,578.34	$318,611.40	$64,683.00	$476,563.36	$0.00	$1,223.76	34,523	$923,537
California	79%	98%	$17,496.74	$3,894.85	$587,780.00	$283,776.00	$165,937.00	$0.00	$1,933.94	78,141	$1,060,819
Colorado	47%	36%	$24,698.60	$50.00	$30,390.00	$21,091.00	$39,132.00	$0.00	$50.00	3,791	$115,412
Hawaii	65%	40%	$1,910.49	$1,130.00	$3,324.00	$1,995.00	$365.00	$0.00	$0.00	381	$8,724
Nevada	73%	0%	$1,771.04	$4,704.98	$46,677.00	$10,764.00	$8,115.00	$100.89	$338.00	1,021	$72,471
New Mexico	40%	31%	$0.00	$5,013.81	$30,700.00	$3,250.00	$358,323.00	$0.00	$652.53	8,030	$397,939
Utah	26%	100%	$5,073.50	$200.00	$5,773.00	$1,590.00	$3,725.44	$0.00	$218.50	201	$16,580
TOTAL:	66%	72%	$110,827.41	$17,571.98	$1,023,255.40	$387,149.00	$1,052,160.80	$100.89	$4,416.73	126,088	$2,595,482
REGION 8											
Alaska	72%	0%	$0.00	$255.00	$40,082.00	$21,350.00	$2,850.00	$0.00	$50.00	883	$64,587
Idaho	99%	52%	$46,744.36	$2,186.73	$64,761.00	$14,725.00	$28,676.49	$120.00	$105.00	5,382	$157,319
Montana	100%	47%	$16,680.80	$686.42	$25,499.00	$15,079.00	$62,137.90	$15.00	$324.00	16,867	$120,422
Oregon	93%	100%	$22,521.17	$750.00	$129,227.00	$7,715.00	$20,690.00	$0.00	$91.00	14,233	$180,994
Washington	100%	37%	$102,878.18	$967.00	$89,191.00	$26,401.00	$12,592.00	$220.00	$915.54	7,052	$233,165
Wyoming	98%	84%	$3,432.64	$1,802.15	$14,020.26	$3,854.00	$2,845.00	$30.00	$123.80	1,862	$26,108
TOTAL:	97%	57%	$192,257.15	$6,647.30	$362,780.26	$89,124.00	$129,791.39	$385.00	$1,609.34	46,279	$782,594
REGION TOTALS:	60%	43%	$644,633.53	$244,482.32	$7,359,368.54	$3,659,414.29	$6,644,281.31	$54,131.34	$19,237.17	778,768	$13,471,481
FOREIGN											
France	16%	0%	$0.00	$0.00	$650.00	$700.00	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00	603	$1,350
Mexico	100%	0%	$0.00	$0.00	$19,050.00	$900.00	$0.00	$2,642.00	$0.00	409	$22,592
Philippines	1%	0%	$0.00	$0.00	$2,990.00	$1,060.00	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00	75	$4,050
Puerto Rico	22%	0%	$2,347.78	$10.00	$900.00	$1,396.00	$2,008.00	$2,235.00	$0.00	25	$8,897
TOTAL:	17%	0%	$0.00	$0.00	$19,455.57	$8,462.00	$2,008.00	$4,877.00	$0.00	1,112	$34,803
GRAND TOTALS:	59%	42%	$646,981.31	$244,492.32	$7,378,824.11	$3,667,876.29	$6,645,576.31	$59,008.34	$19,237.17	779,880	$18,661,996

(2) - Not organized in the Department

Child Welfare Foundation by National Auxiliary	$10,000
Children & Youth Division by National Auxiliary	$10,000
Child Welfare Foundation by National 8/40	$500
Children & Youth Division by National 8/40	$0
Other children programs by Jr. Auxiliary	$0
Child Welfare Foundation by individuals	$20,152
Bequests to Child Welfare Foundation	$1,136
C.W.F. by Sons of The American Legion	$343,977
Child Wefare Foundation by National Legion	$6,402
GRAND TOTAL	$19,054,163

TABLE #1 REPORTING PERIOD: JUNE 1, 2008 - MAY 31, 2009

TABLE NO. 2
EXPENDITURES FROM NATIONAL TEMPORARY AID FUNDS TO DEPARTMENTS ACCORDING TO YEARS

	1926-45	1946-65	1966-85	1986-95	1996-2005*	2006-2008*	June 2008 - May 2009	Grand Total
Alabama	29,181.33	51,167.06	76,790.45	165,155.82	137,824.69	29,832.04	13,130.62	503,082.01
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	50,818.13	59,877.04	684,812.63
Arkansas	33,873.20	25,962.22	2,881.07	58,723.29	16,181.61	8,789.32	1,371.99	147,782.70
California	30,106.15	16,026.45	1,550.00	7,559.00	30,034.44	51,136.10	17,496.74	153,908.88
Colorado	41,621.11	22,618.11	1,395.00	13,205.83	17,592.15	23,421.44	24,698.60	144,552.24
Connecticut	1,854.00	440.00	450.00	1,192.00	7,971.56	4,267.83	0.00	16,175.39
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	39,862.59	43,795.43	243,062.37
Georgia	69,894.07	86,084.42	4,865.00	8,498.51	12,861.80	6,318.91	6,730.10	195,252.81
Hawaii	870.00	0.00	900.00	0.00	6,168.40	857.48	1,910.49	10,706.37
Idaho	7,593.50	5,771.85	7,366.39	24,202.62	195,485.15	40,800.38	46,744.36	327,964.25
Illinois	30,220.79	4,343.53	10,525.73	129,729.07	276,545.19	24,260.88	12,425.18	488,050.37
Indiana	31,850.08	9,066.40	2,920.00	152,703.98	173,400.66	50,822.87	12,833.62	433,597.61
Iowa	17,493.08	597.00	3,928.45	16,982.47	227,865.82	44,797.15	20,181.98	331,845.95
Kansas	20,766.80	42,064.35	8,923.00	9,691.54	16,291.60	3,064.20	625.00	101,426.49
Kentucky	23,843.50	45,527.90	64,854.96	48,497.66	12,445.22	69,691.55	15,974.07	280,834.86
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	4,595.00	6,759.89	62,677.69
Maryland	5,887.00	3,390.57	3,383.00	4,770.00	31,620.94	1,372.63	2,741.23	53,165.37
Massachusetts	2,754.50	455.00	150.00	7,050.00	18,888.67	9,359.23	2,214.68	40,872.08
Michigan	23,895.33	33,281.24	15,346.82	17,575.76	52,676.66	27,802.12	6,873.26	177,451.19
Minnesota	8,610.77	23,322.79	11,840.33	172,036.26	89,538.19	20,255.70	5,039.70	330,643.74
Mississippi	40,293.63	63,254.14	117,892.56	54,314.88	84,261.79	16,658.98	5,665.71	382,341.69
Missouri	53,073.08	47,799.64	11,056.00	19,362.51	38,984.13	43,123.69	9,333.37	222,732.42
Montana	5,414.25	1,668.85	1,575.30	45,267.56	57,913.91	26,514.05	16,680.80	155,034.72
Nebraska	18,470.10	17,795.68	17,531.06	4,520.25	759.49	0.00	2,058.00	61,134.58
Nevada	585.00	766.00	7,272.00	1,495.00	16,818.94	3,443.30	1,771.04	32,151.28
New Hampshire	4,250.50	4,941.50	0.00	55,557.79	12,610.00	12,403.31	2,330.34	92,093.44
New Jersey	8,995.53	1,946.00	4,478.00	65,437.20	53,194.60	9,926.69	3,451.62	147,429.64
New Mexico	20,074.30	53,098.74	58,723.89	117,760.24	49,262.39	2,649.50	0.00	301,569.06
New York	7,887.54	4,803.00	1,150.00	42,484.24	83,432.27	12,926.02	3,782.68	156,465.75
North Carolina	46,597.50	81,019.60	9,740.00	23,502.67	68,774.55	64,683.47	20,271.33	314,589.12
North Dakota	26,017.45	11,788.21	5,771.32	7,064.40	11,426.94	6,226.39	775.62	69,070.33
Ohio	23,930.43	5,116.25	11,613.89	12,357.65	13,289.44	19,191.13	11,084.05	96,582.84
Oklahoma	40,458.05	65,406.47	88,956.03	171,688.84	203,764.51	60,585.38	30,207.95	661,067.23
Oregon	1,250.50	13,750.15	24,595.95	46,815.83	14,796.00	8,053.51	22,521.17	131,783.11
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	19,804.91	13,247.24	143,818.90
Puerto Rico	17,057.00	57,754.00	55,499.50	49,720.00	11,100.00	3,590.00	2,347.78	197,068.28
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	19,799.88	9,543.12	144,338.55
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	35,691.26	13,179.90	253,663.57
Texas	35,373.50	47,392.43	26,714.50	8,534.74	31,484.75	37,982.64	21,494.70	208,977.26
Utah	11,125.48	3,248.00	3,396.00	13,414.42	14,034.34	1,500.00	5,073.50	51,791.74
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	34,359.07	25,596.86	254,945.78
Washington	3,378.00	427.50	625.00	100,545.28	511,131.69	163,317.49	102,878.18	882,303.14
West Virginia	27,629.98	11,395.94	3,460.00	24,514.68	40,628.59	8,867.65	1,786.55	118,283.39
Wisconsin	15,881.98	8,067.25	9,878.00	19,309.78	74,327.21	23,713.00	17,043.18	168,220.40
Wyoming	8,180.00	1,993.00	1,350.00	2,279.00	13,746.91	3,267.91	3,432.64	34,249.46
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**	**$1,160,496.33**	**$646,981.31**	**$10,376,856.29**

*Includes January 2008 - May 2008

**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			20	10	3	92	125
July		2	1	23	3	110	139
August			9	3	3	91	106
September			16	16	22	101	155
October			6	11	11	89	117
November			19	6	14	108	147
December			12	8	19	95	134
January			8	4	13	73	98
February			13	5	5	126	149
March				2	8	199	209
April			8	7	6	68	89
May			4	1	14	56	75
Totals	0	2	116	96	121	1208	1543
Percentage	0.00%	0.13%	7.52%	6.22%	7.84%	78.29%	100.00%

Table No. 4

Printed Material Furnished Upon Request
During Period June 1, 2008 through May 31, 2009

	Total
8&40 Nursing Scholarship	8,199
American Legion & Children's Miracle Network - Brochure	5,274
American Legion Child Welfare Foundation	12,120
American Legion Endowment Fund Corporation	25,098
Annual Children & Youth Program Piece	20,051
Children & Youth Department Chairman's Guide	275
Family Support Network	34,070
Gateway Drugs	50,977
Make Halloween a Safe and Fun Night - Brochure	66,294
Nathan's Visit Comic Books	6,181
National Family Week	31,279
Play It Safe	24,215
Serving America	33,244
Serving Communities	32,517
Serving Veterans	31,367
TFA Applications	501
TFA Brochures	32,334
Warning Signs -- Suicide Prevention	23,960
Citations:	
Annual Children and Youth Citations	1,077
Certificate of Meritorious Service	59
National Achievement Award	35
Special Children & Youth Citation	385
Reporting:	
Unit Report Form	200
We Want a Report from Your Unit or Salon	50
Department Report Forms	106
TOTAL	439,868

AMERICAN LEGION CHILD WELFARE FOUNDATION, INC.

Dennis R. Boland, Florida, President
Robert K. Caudell, 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 2008, the Board of Directors approved grants to 18 non-profit organizations in the amount of $639,695 for projects to be completed in calendar year 2009. The organizations and amounts are as follows:

American Legion Child Welfare Foundation Grants

American Humane Association	Englewood, Colorado	$24,879
Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America	Washington, DC	$14,351
Caring Kids Television	Dana Point, California	$45,000
Child and Adolescent Bipolar Foundation	Wilmette, Illinois	$40,000
Children's Organ Transplant Association	Bloomington, Indiana	$40,000
Crohn's & Colitis Foundation of America	New York, New York	$30,000
Huntington's Disease Society of America	New York, New York	$38,000
KidsPeace	Orefield, Pennsylvania	$57,610
National Autism Association	Nixa, Missouri	$15,000
National CASA Association	Seattle, Washington	$46,915
National Marfan Foundation	Port Washington, New York	$25,000
National Organization for Youth Safety	Gainesville, Virginia	$58,250
Organization for Autism Research	Arlington, Virginia	$40,980
Our Military Kids, Inc.	McLean, Virginia	$48,800
The Progeria Research Foundation	Peabody, Massachusetts	$15,680
RAND Corporation	Santa Monica, California	$10,089
Reach Out and Read	Boston, Massachusetts	$57,000
ZERO TO THREE	Washington, DC	$50,000

During the 2008-2009 contribution year, donations exceeded $637,078 with over $343,976 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 3, 2009, 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 appointed by the Board of Directors were George A. Buskirk, Jr. (Assistant Treasurer) and Robert K. Caudell (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
Michael E. Walton, Illinois, Chairman
Richard D. Holmes, Indiana, Director

The 90th annual National Convention of the American Legion convened in Phoenix, Arizona, from Aug. 22-28, 2008. National Commander Martin "Marty" Conatser of Illinois called the National Convention to order at 9:00 a.m. on Tuesday, Aug. 26, welcoming Legionnaires to Phoenix and thanking them for their continuing service to our country and to our veterans. The Honorable Janet Napolitano, Governor of the State of Arizona, the Honorable Phil Gordon, and Mayor of the City of Phoenix, Bruce Conklin, Commander, the American Legion Department of Arizona, and Neal Sundeen, President of the National Convention Corporation of Arizona welcomed legionnaires to the National Convention. The Honorable John McCain, Senator from Arizona, as well as Dr. James B. Peake, Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs also addressed the attendees of the 90th National Convention of The American Legion. Other guest speakers attending the 90th National Convention were the Honorable Bob Filner, Chairman, House Committee on Veterans Affairs, the Honorable James Webb, United States Senator from Virginia, the Honorable Barack Obama (via satellite), United States Senator from Illinois and General James T. Conway, Commandant, United States Marine Corps. A special guest to the Convention was The Honorable Richard "Dick" Cheney, Vice-President of The United States, who addressed the National Convention on Tuesday, August 27.

Among the many highlights for the 2008 National Convention was the Patriotic Memorial Service and The National Commander's Banquet for Distinguished Guests that took place in the Phoenix Convention Center. Country music performers "Heartland" provided entertainment to a crowd of approximately 2,300 Legionnaires and guests. A special highlight for the 2008 National Convention was our Tribute to Service at the US Airways Center featuring the US Marine Corps Silent Drill Platoon, a performance by Michael Peterson, an indoor parade and the enlistment ceremony of almost 600 young people into our Armed Forces of the United States.

Convention Commission Activities

The National Convention Commission conducted three regular meetings during the year. Revisions of our request for proposal (RFP) continued in 2008. This process is extremely important as it provides an equal opportunity for all cities to be judged the same way during the initial review and site visit process.

It is the commission's desire to continue to attract new cities that desire to host an American Legion national convention, providing "blue cap" Legionnaires and their families with a varied and enjoyable convention that can be shared by all on an annual basis.

For the 2014 National Convention, the National Convention Commission reviewed bids from Charlotte, North Carolina and New Orleans, Louisiana. Following 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 Charlotte, North Carolina be awarded the 2014 national convention for Aug. 22-28. The National Executive Committee later approved the recommendation.

Future conventions and dates:

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
Charlotte, North Carolina	August 22-28, 2014

We currently have three cities bidding on the 2015 National Convention. Those cities, supported by the appropriate resolution from their host Department, are Atlanta, Georgia, Baltimore, Maryland and Chicago, Illinois. A recommendation for the 2015 host city will be forwarded to the National Executive Committee in May of 2010.

DISTINGUISHED GUEST COMMITTEE
Randall Fisher, Kentucky, Chairman

The Distinguished Guest Committee exists under the umbrella of the National Convention Commission. Responsibilities include the coordination of activities for all distinguished guests invited to attend the national convention. The committee oversees the arrangements for 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
Daniel M. Dellinger, Virginia, Chairman
Joseph C. Sharpe Jr., Maryland, 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, 2008, through June 30, 2009. 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 Daniel M. Dellinger (VA). The division consists of Director Joseph Sharpe, Jr., Deputy 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

2008-2009 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, 2008, in the Phoenix Convention Center, Phoenix, Arizona, in conjunction with the Ninetieth Annual National Convention. A report on that meeting was made to the National Executive Committee on Monday, August 25, 2008. 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 15-16, 2008. A complete report on that meeting appears in the Digest of Proceedings of the National Executive Committee, October 2008.
3. At the 49th Washington Conference, on Monday, March 2, and Wednesday, March 4, 2009 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, 2009, 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, 2009

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, 2008, to July 31, 2009, on matters pertaining to the National Economic Commission,

1. On September 24, 2008, the Deputy Director testified before the House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity on "The GI Bill Implementation."
2. On March 12, 2009, the Deputy Director testified before the Subcommittee on "Contracting and Technology on Stimulus Contracts for Small Business and Veteran-Owned Businesses."
3. On April 2, 2009, the Assistant Director testified before the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity, House Committee on Veterans' Affairs on "Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Programs."
4. On May 14, 2009, the Director testified before the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity, House Committee on Veterans' Affairs on "Federal Contractor Compliance."

5. On July 16, 2009, the Deputy Director testified before the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity, House Committee on Veterans' Affairs on "State Approving Agencies."

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, Daniel M. Dellinger (VA), appointed an eight-person subcommittee to review all of the nominations that had been received during 2008 in the Employer of Veterans Awards Program.

The Commission's Awards Subcommittee met to select the following National winners:

Large Employer: Lear Seigler (LSI) EG&G Division of URS Corporation, Texas
Medium Size Employer: Industrial Maintenance Services, Inc., Michigan
Small Employer: Millennium Security Services,LLC, 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: Michael Dembowski, New York
DVOP of the Year: Steve Lord, Idaho
Employment Local Office: WorkSource (Southside) Career Center, Florida

Other Awards
Employer of the Disabled: Black Hills Service, Inc., South Dakota
Employer of Older Workers: Maule Air Incorporation, Georgia
Homeless Veterans Outreach Award: The American Legion Department of Idaho

EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE
Albert M. Robotti, New Jersey, Chairman
Joseph C. Sharpe Jr., Maryland, Director

The mission of the committee is to promote employment and training opportunities for veterans. To accomplish this, the committee works at the national level with Congress and various Federal agencies. The committee does not place veterans in jobs, but rather, relies on its network of employment 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, 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.

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, 2009, The American Legion has participated in 56 Job Fairs through our national partnerships. Another 46 job fairs are scheduled to occur over the remainder of the year.

Additionally, each Department employment chairperson organizes participation in numerous local Job Fairs other than our 2 national partners. Job duties and expectations, instructions and flyers accompany approximately 300 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 Chairperson, 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 (DOL-VETS)

Director Joseph 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. DOL-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.

DOL-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 Iraq, and then turned around and were sent to Afghanistan. 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 18 to 24 years of age) suffer the highest unemployment rates of all veterans. DOL-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 Iraq or Afghanistan 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.

Small Business

Director Joseph Sharpe is a member of Small Business Administration's Veterans Advisory Committee

Small businesses have become yet another casualty of the credit crunch caused by the ongoing financial crisis. By the end of 2008, more than half of the nation's small businesses looking for credit were unable to obtain a loan. This credit freeze will force many businesses to shut their doors, while others will be unable to expand. In either case, it means a loss of American jobs. Congress should supplement current efforts to thaw the credit market for small businesses by establishing a direct lending program within the Small Business Administration (SBA). This program could provide loans to small businesses that can't otherwise find credit, thereby potentially saving or creating tens of thousands of American jobs.

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 Phoenix during the Legion's National Convention in August 2008 and will be conducting another one in Louisville, Kentucky during National Convention there in August 2009.

In conjunction with this Fair, the Task Force will also be conducting small business development workshops 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

Director Joseph 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 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 Workshops held at Mid-Winter Conference and Phoenix

The National Economic Commission hosted an extremely successful Business Development Workshop in which 200 participants attended. The Northeast Veterans Business Resource Center (NEVBRC) assembled top experts from the private and Federal sectors. Teresa Lewis from Department of Treasury provided tips and tricks when it comes to marketing to the government and 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 subcontracting 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.

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.

It should be noted that SAAs have not had an increase in funding in the last four years (inflation rose 14 percent during this time period). As mentioned, VA has recently been allowed to conduct hiring to process new claims. By contrast, SAAs despite the same demand for services have not been allowed to hire additional staff. SAAs will require an additional $5 million per year for the next three years (total of $15 million). This funding would allow SAAs to continue to fulfill the following duties:

- Make determinations regarding the quality and integrity of all kinds of learning experiences (institutional, job training, flight, correspondence, etc.);
- Work with employers to develop and enroll veterans in job training programs (Apprenticeships and OJT);
- Assess and approve tests for professional and occupational licensing and certification;
- Perform outreach activities to increase the utilization of the GI Bills including briefings during transition assistance programs (TAP) and retirement seminars, and sending out mailings to recently discharged veterans and Selected Reserve personnel;
- Provide advice and guidance to veterans, guardsmen, reservists, and other GI Bill benefit recipients, as well as educators, trainers, and others who counsel veterans; and,
- Train VA School Certifying Officials at all educational institutions and job training establishments.

The Post 9/11 GI Bill has dramatically changed the work requirement for SAAs. Adequate funding will provide additional staffing and other resources for SAAs to fulfill its mission. The benefit stream flows through SAAs as well as the VA, and without fully functioning SAAs, veterans and other benefit recipients will not receive their educational benefits in an efficient and timely manner.

The Government Accountability Office (GAO) report in March 2007 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) focused on the need to "ensure that Federal dollars are spent efficiently and effectively." GAO recommended that VA should require 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. Additionally, GAO recommended that VA establish outcome-oriented performance measures to assess the effectiveness of SAAs efforts. 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 fully agrees with these recommendations.

The American Legion strongly supports SAAs and is committed to working with them along with the VA and other Federal agencies to ensure that America's veterans receive the finest education and training programs so they can live a dignified and successful life after serving this great nation.

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.

The success of the rehabilitation of our severely disabled veterans is determined by the coordinated efforts of every Federal agency (Department of Defense, VA, Department of Labor, Office of Personnel Management and Department of Housing and Urban Development, etc.) 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. Eligible veteran who are enrolled in the education and training programs receive a monthly allowance; those veterans who use VR&E for assistance with immediate employment do not. This policy denies needed assistance to veterans who for economic reasons must look for immediate employment.

Another problem hindering the effectiveness of the VR&E program as cited in reports by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) is exceptionally high workloads for the limited number of staff. This hinders the staff's ability to effectively assist individual veterans with identifying employment opportunities. A recent GAO report noted that 54 percent of all 57 regional offices stated they have fewer counselors than they need and 40 percent said they have fewer employment coordinators than they need. As in the past, achieving ample staffing in VR&E is a major concern. Especially considering the high number of veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan, without a sufficient number of well trained staff, the success of VR&E programs becomes extremely challenging. VR&E also needs relevant data concerning the number of

veterans who are applying for disability benefits, so they can project future workload and hire staff accordingly.

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. Veterans' preference should play a large role in vocational counseling as well. The Federal government has a number 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, suitable for VR&E applicants. Career fields like information technology, claims adjudications, and debt collection offer employment opportunities and challenges for career-oriented applicants.

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) has been lacking in the past; however, there has been improvement recently.

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.

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. A majority of VETS representatives have commended their VR&E counterparts for their willingness to ensure the successful implementation of the

MOU that is designed to improve rehabilitation, training and employment outcomes for disabled veterans.

In fiscal year (FY) 2008, VR&E funding was $770 million, and the program served 97,116 veterans. Their average annual salary for the 8,831 veterans rehabilitated in suitable employment was $32,359. The veterans' average annual salary before entering VR&E was $5,641.

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.

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 Service members' 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 DOD to take appropriate steps to ensure that service members 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. Additionally, The American Legion seeks legislation that will transfer the DVOP and LVER program to DOL-VETS for oversight in order to ensure that the individuals employed to serve veterans are not used for other programs.

Veterans returning from Afghanistan, Iraq and other tours of duty are not always coming back to a hero's welcome—at least from employers. According to DOL, the unemployment rate for veterans younger than 24 was 14.1 percent in 2008, outpacing the non-veteran rate of 11.6 percent for the same age group. Additionally, in DOLs yet to be published, non-seasonally-adjusted numbers for the second quarter of 2009, veterans younger than 24 had a 26.8 percent unemployment rate, compared with 16.8 percent for non-veterans. The unemployment rate for all veterans serving since 9/11 was 10.3 percent, compared with 8.9 percent for non-veterans. 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 Veterans Workforce Investment Program (VWIP) account has only received $7.6 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 2011.

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 TAP and DTAP. Additionally, The American Legion supports that DOD require all separating, active-duty service members, including those from Reserve and National Guard units, be given an opportunity to participate in TAP and DTAP 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.

TAP 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-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-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 service members 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 provide 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.

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 $404.2 million to DOL-VETS for FY 2011.

Military Occupational Specialty Transition (Most) Program

The American Legion supports the new legislation, H.R. 929 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 $60 million 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 131,000 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 $50 million for this highly successful grant program in FY 2011.

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 2011.

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 2011.

Veterans' Preference

The American Legion is deeply concerned with the protection of the veteran and the prevention of illegal hiring practices. Currently, veterans are filing claims after the non-compliance employment event occurred and may become financially disadvantaged while waiting of results of the claim. Proactive measures and continuous oversight must be exercised to protect veterans from unfair hiring practices, not just reactionary investigations.

The following steps taken by the Federal government to protect veterans' employment and demonstrates reactionary measures to assist veterans which may take months to resolve. Many veterans give up or do not file complaints because they must seek employment elsewhere or face serious financial difficulties.

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) administers entitlement to **veterans' preference** in employment. 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."

Veterans' Preference is authorized by the Veterans' Preference Act (VPA) of 1944, it only applies to Federal government employment. It provides that most veterans are to receive an extra five points (ten points for disabled veterans) in receiving and keeping Federal jobs. The Veterans' Employment Opportunity Act (VEOA) of 1998 extended certain rights and remedies to recently separated veterans. VETS 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 ignored by numerous agencies. Figures show a decline in claims by newer veterans compared to Gulf War I. In reality employment opportunities are not being broadcast. Federal agencies as well as subcontractors are required by law to notify OPM of job opportunities but these vacancies are rarely made available to the public.

The American Legion reiterates its position that protection of veterans' employment rights should be proactive and continuous oversight must be emplaced to protect veterans from unfair hiring practices. Reactionary investigations and lawsuits are not sufficient. We further believe that the veteran must be protected at the onset of the hiring process, corrective actions to remedy the veteran's situation in the veteran's favor are not guaranteed. Finally, we recommend to this Committee that the DOJ provide a detailed description of their veterans' employment activities.

The Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA)

For almost 70 years, Federal law has accorded the right to reemployment to those who have left civilian jobs for voluntary or involuntary service in the uniformed services. In 1940, Congress enacted the Selective Training and Service Act (STSA), which provided for drafting millions of young men for World War II. A provision in the STSA gave those drafted the right to reemployment in their civilian jobs. A year later, as part of the Service Extension Act, Congress expanded the reemployment provision to make it apply to voluntary enlistees as well as draftees. In 1994, Congress enacted USERRA, a long-overdue rewrite of the reemployment statute. USERRA is codified in title 38, United States Code, sections 4301-4335 (38 U.S.C. 4301-4335).

The reemployment statute applies to essentially all employers in this country, including the Federal government, state and local governments, and private employers, regardless of size. This law applies to persons who leave civilian jobs to serve in the regular military, as well as the National Guard and Reserve. To have the right to reemployment under USERRA, an individual must meet five simple conditions:

1. Must have left a position of employment for the purpose of performing service in the uniformed services. A period of service can be anything from five hours to five years, and in some cases longer.
2. Must have given the employer prior oral or written notice.
3. The individual's cumulative period or periods of uniformed service, relating to the employer relationship for which the person seeks reemployment, must not have exceeded five years. All involuntary service and some voluntary service are excluded from the computation of the five-year limit.
4. Must have been released from the period of service without having received a punitive or other-than-honorable discharge.
5. Must have made a timely application for reemployment with the pre-service employer after release from the period of service.

If the individual meets these conditions, the employer has the legal obligation to reemploy the individual in the position of employment that he or she would have attained if he or she had remained continuously employed, or in another position for which the individual is qualified that is of like seniority, status, and pay. The fact that the job is filled is not a defense to the employer's obligation to reemploy. In some cases, it is necessary for the employer to displace another employee to make room for the returning veteran. The reemployed veteran must be treated *as if he or she had been continuously employed* by the civilian employer, during the time the individual was away from work for service, for seniority and pension purposes. Section 4311 of USERRA makes it

unlawful for an employer to deny an individual initial employment, retention in employment, promotion, or a benefit of employment because of the individual's membership in a uniformed service, application to join a uniformed service, performance of uniformed service, or application or obligation to perform future service.

The American Legion favors vigorous and effective enforcement of USERRA with respect to all employers, and especially with respect to the Federal government. USERRA's very first section expresses the "sense of Congress that the Federal Government should be a model employer in carrying out the provisions of this chapter." 38 U.S.C. 4301(b). Congress needs to provide adequate funding for ESGR, DOL-VETS, DOJ, and OSC, with respect to USERRA enforcement.

The American Legion recommends funding of $61 million for Program Management that encompasses USERRA and VEOA in FY 2011

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."

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 2011 to enable implementation of a nationwide community-based assistance program to veterans and self employed members of the Reserves and National Guard.

Small Business and the Credit Crunch

Small businesses are another casualty of the credit crunch caused by the ongoing financial crisis. By the end of 2008, more than half of the nation's small businesses looking for credit were unable to obtain a loan. This credit freeze will force many businesses to shut their doors, while others will be unable to expand. In either case, it means a loss of American jobs. Congress should supplement current efforts to thaw the credit market for small businesses by establishing a direct lending program within the Small Business Administration (SBA). This program could provide loans to small businesses that can't otherwise find credit, thereby potentially saving or creating tens of thousands of American jobs.

During the fourth quarter of 2008, 70% of banks reported tightening their lending standards for small firms. As a consequence, fewer than half of the small businesses that tried to get a loan in the fourth quarter of 2008 were able to get one. And of the small businesses that tried to obtain a new line of credit, only three in ten succeeded in doing so. The credit crisis is hitting small businesses across the board, including those that have been current in their payments and have no ties to high-risk sectors of the economy such as housing.

From November 2007 to November 2008, more than one quarter of small businesses reported a decline in the number of jobs at their companies, and in December 2008, only one in eight small businesses said they planned to hire new employees in the next twelve months a 48% drop since August 2008. In addition, the number of small businesses filing for bankruptcy rose 54% from 2007 to 2008.

The 7(a) loan program is the SBA's largest and most used lending program. Under this program, SBA provides a guaranty of up to 85% for loans provided by private-sector to small businesses. But because 7(a) loans are offered through private-sector banks, which are reeling from the current crisis, small businesses may not be able to get the relief they need. From the first quarter of 2008 to the first quarter of 2009, the number of loans approved by the 7(a) program dropped 57%. Moreover, the SBA is expected to guarantee only about $10 billion in loans this year, down from its historic norm of $20 billion per year.

To help ease the credit crisis for small businesses, The American Legion urges Congress to establish a direct lending program through the SBA. This effort would offer low-interest loans to otherwise healthy veteran-owned and service-disabled veteran-owned businesses that are having trouble obtaining the credit they need for necessary operating expenses or expansion.

The American Legion believes 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 Resource Training Centers should include DOD and VA facilities. 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 (VA and the Department of Homeland Security). In 2004, President Bush issued Executive Order 13360 to strengthen opportunities in Federal contracting for service-disabled veteran-owned businesses. The American Legion strongly supports Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Businesses (SDVOSBs) FAR Part 19.1406 language be changed to more closely reflect the intent of Congress to "shall" vs. "may."

Recommendations

Incorporate Executive Order 13360 into SBA Regulations and Standard Operating Procedures

- "Require all Agencies that do not meet their Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business spending goal to annually report to the House and Senate Small Business (SDVOSB) Committee the number of contract actions that were awarded to SDVOSB Joint Ventures (e.g. no later than 90 days after the close of the fiscal year).
- Eliminate the requirement in § 36 (a)(1) of the Small Business Act, which states "2 or more small business concerns owned and controlled by service-disabled veterans will submit offers for a contracting opportunity".
- Require the Procurement Technical Assistance Centers (PTACs) to develop a standardized Joint Venturing training program for Small Businesses.
- Require Prime Contractors that do not meet their Small Business Subcontracting Plans to contribute up to 3% of the profit on their effected contracts to a National Small Business Capacity Development Fund, which will be administered by the SBA.
- Allow Small Business Subcontracting goals to apply to all international requirements and contract actions.

Home Loan Guaranty Program

VA's Home Loan Guaranty program has been in effect since 1944 and has afforded approximately 18.6 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 5, private loan, in some aspects. The current rate for mortgages (July 2009) is 5.58 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.

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. VA partners with 500 community organizations and has authorized an estimated 15, 000 beds through the GPD program—10,000 plus beds available now and more than 15,000 veterans served annually.

The American Legion Strongly Supports Increasing The Funding Level For The Grant And Per Diem Program To $200 Million Annually.

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 28,000 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 40,000 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 41 sites, with 2,100 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 5,000 homeless veterans.

VA's Mental Health Residential Rehabilitation Treatment Program (MHRRTP)

This program identifies and addresses goals for rehabilitation, recovery, health, maintenance, and community integration. This program provides state-of-the-art residential rehabilitation and treatment for veterans with multiple and severe mental

illness, addiction and other psychosocial deficits to include homelessness. MHRRTP operates more than 8,300 beds and treats 33,000 homeless veterans annually.

Healthcare for Re-Entry Veterans (HCRV)

HCRV is an outreach program for veterans at risk of becoming homeless that are awaiting discharge from state or federal prison. VA has 39 Incarcerated Veteran Outreach Specialists to provide outreach and coordinated transitioning into the community. In 2008, 5,145 veterans were seen in 450 prisons.

Homeless Veterans Statistics

The FY 2008 Department of Veterans Affairs Community Homelessness Assessment, Local Education and Networking Groups (CHALENG) report estimates that approximately 131,000 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 National Coalition for Homeless Veterans, veterans represent 26 percent of all homeless people in America.

For FY 2008, The VA Health Care for Homeless Veterans (HCHV) reports that 40,000 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, over 1.8 million 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.

There are signs of a serious crisis as VA by its' own numbers is under considerable pressure to stretch dollars, VA estimates it provides healthcare to about 100 thousand homeless veterans each year, and provides housing with supportive services to approximately 40 percent of those veterans. Hundreds of community-based organizations nationwide struggle to provide assistance to as many of the other veterans, but the need far exceeds available resources.

VA reports over 1,049 OIF/OEF era homeless veterans with an average age of 33 years have been served in homeless specific programs. VA 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 issues related to 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. Reports show that one of every ten homeless veterans under the age of 45 is now a woman. 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 118 sites (85 percent of all sites) reported a total of 1,282 homeless veteran families seen. This was a 24 percent increase over the previous year's 1,038 homeless veteran families. (FY 2008 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.

Homelessness impacts every community in the nation. Approximately 500 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.

FINANCE COMMISSION
Kenneth D. Danilson, Iowa Chairman
George A. Buskirk Jr., Indiana, National Treasurer
Shawn T. Long, CPA, Indiana, Director

The primary obligation of the Finance Commission is to prepare a yearly budget for the National Executive Committee, handle funds under that budget, and exercise reasonable oversight to see that the various divisions and departments of the national organization operate within appropriations. The Finance Commission includes seven members, with the national adjutant as ex-officio secretary and the national commander and national treasurer as ex-officio members. Also attending these meetings are the executive directors of the Washington and Indianapolis offices and the finance director and liaison observers from the National Executive Committee.

The national organization had an operating surplus of $3,400,236 for 2008. 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 Sales Committee
Alvan T. Fuller, Massachusetts, Chairman
Richard B. Keith, Indiana, Director

The American Legion emblem is the exclusive property of the National Headquarters. The sale of the emblem, emblem pins, merchandise carrying the emblem and other items of organizational equipment is the responsibility of the National Headquarters in Indianapolis. The following tables show gross sales, net earnings, etc., for the entire calendar year 2008 and for the first three months of 2009.

January 1 to December 31, 2008
(12 months)

Gross Sales	$10,681,935
Cost of Goods Sold	5,762,732
Overhead	3,403,098
Operating Profit	1,516,105

Total number of 2008 orders processed was 98,596.

January 1 to March 31, 2009
(3 months)

Gross Sales	$ 2,488,599
Cost of Goods Sold	1,335,404
Overhead	796,358
Operating Profit	356,837

Total orders processed for first 3 months of 2009 was 20,299.

The American Legion Life Insurance Program
Kevin J. Bartlett, Michigan, Chairman
Marianne Bergamo, Deputy Director, Corporate Relationship and Insurance

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 52 years, claims have been paid amounting to more than $351 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 2009, the total benefits paid will be nearly $361 million.

The Insurance Committee will consider resolutions to fund the following programs for 2010: 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 2009 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 insureds 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 2008-2009 program year ending June 30, 2009.

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

The 90th National Convention in Phoenix, Arizona, took place during a renewal year for established resolutions. The American Legion's Foreign Relations Commission meticulously reviewed over 30 newly proposed and established resolutions addressing foreign affairs. With the Convention's approval of the accepted resolutions, The American Legion reconfirmed its 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 resolutions that speak to key foreign relation's issues concerning America's national interests.

This year's Major Issues and Highlights:

Resolution 20: Calls for further favorable actions by U.S. 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; U.S. to

take favorable actions toward Laos or Cambodia only after those nations provide the fullest possible accounting for POW/MIAs.

Resolution 22: Supports renewing direct bilateral humanitarian talks with the North Korean regime for the sole purpose of restoring the processes required to account for these unreturned Korean War Veterans.

Resolution 153: Calls for 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 the Six-Party Talks and for the US Government take determined steps toward North Korea's missile threats with close consultations with the Government of South Korea.

Resolution 161: Call for 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; The Legion to exert the maximum effort to account for MIAs from World War II, Korea, Southeast Asia and the Cold War; and the continuance of the U.S. Government 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.

Resolution 165: Calls for 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 160: 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 166: Call on the U.S. Government to support any African nation that clearly demonstrates open democratic reforms, human rights protection and cooperation in the fight against international terrorism.

Resolution 170: Affirms The Legion's support for 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.

NEC Resolutions

In addition, The American Legion approved Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHINSEC) Funding and Support resolution during the Fall NEC and a renewed version of the US-Russia Joint Commission on POW/MIA Affairs Resolution at Spring NEC. Respectively, they are as follows:

Resolution 21: Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation Funding and Support

Calls for adequate funding for Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHINSEC) on the basis of hemispheric training, alliance building, and sharing knowledge among the Organization of American States is a vital interest to the U.S. in terms of the establishment of alliances, hemispheric cooperation and national security.

Resolution 43: Call for the Leaders of Congress to name one qualified member from each of their respective Chambers to serve as Commissioners to pursue interests and objectives of the POW/MIA families and this nation's veterans; for Congress to provide adequate funding needed for the Commission to pursue its mission for full accountability of all the country's service members; and for Russian Federation Prime Minister 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 Commission on POW/MIA.

It is noteworthy to report that in July of this year, Russia agreed to reactivate a U.S.-Russian Commission POW-MIA after nearly five years of inaction and stonewalling. It is also appropriate to acknowledge The War Veterans Committee Resolution (Resolution No. 13; Spring NEC 2008) in which The American Legion and the War Veterans Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States (Formerly the veterans of the USSR) agreed to support the activities of the U.S.-Russia Joint Commission on POW/MIAs.

Meetings of the Commission

The Foreign Relations Commission met in general sessions over the course of the reported year on October 13th through 14th, 2008 during the Fall NEC meeting at the Circle West Room of the Sheraton Hotel, Indianapolis, IN; on March 1st through March 4th 2009 during the 49th Annual Washington Conference at the Renaissance Hotel, Washington, D.C.; and on May 4th through 7th 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 2008

On Tuesday, October 13, 2008 The Foreign Relations Commission met to discuss a variety of issues on international affairs. The Commission reviewed the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHINSEC) Funding and Support Resolution and recommended the same for approval.

On Tuesday, October 14, 2008, the Foreign Relations and National Security Commissions met in joint session. Two video presentations were shown: "The Fight for the Information Domain" and "A Nation Remembers". A short discussion followed along with comments by staff regarding security issues and appropriations and authorizations for the Army in the next congressional session.

Washington Conference 2009

The Foreign Relations Commission, in a joint session with the National Security Committee, met and were addressed by four speakers: John J. Norris, Jr., Deputy Assistant Secretary for East Asian Affairs, U.S. Department of State; Jerry Johnson, Physical Evaluation Board Representative, American Legion, Walter Read Medical Center; and Energy Panel speakers Anne Korin, Chairperson, Set America Free; and Edwin Black, award-winning, *New York Times* bestselling author of "Internal Combustion" and "The Plan." Brigadier General Reuben D. Jones was also scheduled to speak but was unable to appear due to inclement weather.

Mr. Norris presented an overview of U.S. relations with the Asia-Pacific region. In particular, he discussed Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton's first trip abroad since taking office. Secretary Clinton visited Japan (February 16-18), Indonesia (February 18-19), the Republic of Korea (February 19-20), and China (February 20-22).

Mr. Norris also covered such topics as common approaches to the challenges facing the international community, including the financial markets turmoil, humanitarian issues, security and climate change. According to Mr. Norris, the State Department is looking to build bilateral alliances and cooperation throughout Asia on regional and global issues. He emphasized the importance of expanding global cooperative partnership with our ally, South Korea and furthering the development a positive, cooperative relationship between the United States and China.

Mr. Johnson gave an overview of his work at WRAMC assisting service members with their recovery and transition. Specifically he addressed the Physical Disability Agency (PDA) as relates to the Medical Evaluation Boards (MEB) and Physical Evaluation Boards (PEB) that service members go through. He gave a good outline of how the new pilot program at WRAMC is an improvement in many respects over the old system. But he spends a majority of the time exposing the shortcomings of the system. Sometimes the biggest short coming could be human error on the part of the PDA. That human error was identified in the form of DOD advocates and PEB board members over looking evidence or of an ignorance of the regulations. These reasons support the need of VSO representation for service members at these critical evaluation boards.

The Energy Panel followed Mr. Johnson. Ms. Korin and Mr. Black both gave insightful and impassioned presentations on the state of American energy, the necessity for independence from foreign oil, domestic obstacles and related global issues. Ms. Korin described how America's dependence on foreign oil is enabling radical Islamists to leverage power against the United States. She alerted The Legion to the fact that more than 70 percent of the world's proven oil reserves and over a third of production are concentrated in Muslim countries which often have direct ties to supporting terrorist operations. While the U.S. economy bleeds, Ms. Korin said, countries that are sympathetic to and directly supportive of radical Islam such as Saudi Arabia and Iran are on the collecting and accumulating huge profits from oil production. Ms. Korin concluded by stressing the importance of establishing an Open Fuel Standard on the basis of national security. Choosing not to embrace an Open Fuel Standard, Ms. Korin said, is choosing to preserve the Middle East's stranglehold over America's economy and for that matter, the economy of the world.

Mr. Black continued on the subject of oil independence and grimly announced that America faces real danger due to a lack of a realistic energy plan for the future; especially in the event of an oil embargo or depletion crisis. He painted a bleak picture of our country if we continue without having a plan for this possible scenario. If those who wish for the downfall of western society succeed in using our dependence as a weapon against us, Mr. Edwin explained, America will be struck with peril. Society needs a plan, he said, an emergency plan—in the event the oil stops. The answer he said is in the production of a transportation system and the production of automobiles that are not fueled by oil but alternative fuels such as electricity and bio-fuels similar to the bio-fuel utilized in Brazil.

Washington Conference 2009 POW/MIA Update

The expert panel on the POW/MIA issues was comprised of Major Bob Brenzel, USAF, Chief, Vietnam War Working Group, Joint Commission Support Directive (JCSD), Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO) and Ann Mills Griffiths, Executive Director, National League of POW/MIA Families.

Major Brenzel began the session by explaining the inner workings of the JCSD and its chain of command. Major Brenzel indicated that DPMO's reporting relationships will

be adjusted. DPMO is seeking dialogue with those concerned with the interest of incorporating feedback into the organization's improvement. A new Deputy Under Secretary of Defense (Policy Integration/Chief of Staff) will be established to address policy administration, management and integration across the organization, with Defense organizations, and with interagency partners. Because of the Secretary's and the country's continued dedication to prisoners of war and those missing in action, DPMO will be reporting to the Under Secretary's office directly through the new Deputy Under Secretary for Policy Integration. This change moves the POW/MIA mission higher within the President's administration overall, ensuring it receives the attention it deserves. The exact timing of these shifts is still being decided.

Ms. Griffiths began by acknowledging the significant evolution that the POW/MIA issue has gone through since the Vietnam War. Chief among these advancements, she said, are the scientific advancements that make all aspects of the issue more effective in terms of results. MtDNA, she cited, has made it possible to identify very small portions of remains. This is a critical change when dealing with the passage of time and the eroding effects of soil in areas where US losses occurred. Ms. Griffiths continued by pointing out Vietnam's failure to fully cooperate in good faith in accordance with the 1993 agreements which normalized relations with the US. She opined that, although normalized relations should be reversed on the basis of Vietnam's lack of cooperation on the issue, she believes that this will never happen due to billions of dollars of trade and investment by US corporations. Ms. Griffiths concluded by expressing admiration for The Legion's effectiveness on related legislation and recognized the deep friendship that has developed between The Legion and Ms. Griffiths and her organization.

Washington Conference 2009 Business Meeting

Foreign Relations Commission Chairman Mike Helm led the business meeting in the afternoon of March 4, by announcing that there are no foreign relations resolutions in the queue in connection with the upcoming Spring NEC. Following Chairman Helm's remarks, Joseph Grassi, Assistant Director of National Security and Foreign Relations made a presentation outlining President Obama's stated Foreign Relations agenda and his administration's related strategies. These strategies addressed such topics as responsibly ending the Iraq War, finishing the fight against the Taliban and al Qaeda; securing weapons and related technology from terrorists and rogue nations, building diplomacy and seeking Israeli-Palestinian peace. Additionally, Mr. Grassi's presentation delved into the increasing U.S. trade deficit with China and in particular pointed out how China leverages the fact that the Chinese currency is not openly traded as a commodity on the Forex Market as an advantage in the U.S.-China trade situation. Because Chinese currency is artificially valued by the Chinese Government, Mr. Grassi reported, Free Trade as it stands does not equal fair trade.

Spring NEC 2009

An executive session of the Foreign Relations Commission met on May 4, 2009 in the Circle West Room of the Sheraton Hotel, to discuss a variety of issues. The commission reviewed the newly revised US-Russia Commission on POW/MIA Affairs Resolution and recommended the approval.

Also, the commission reviewed two matters that were recently brought to the attention of the national staff in Washington, D.C. The first of which was the proposed International Day of the Soldier. This is an initiative established by the International Consultative Mechanism on Remembrance led by former Presidential advisor Viola

Drath. Although, the Commission understands the good will and peace-building intent associated with this initiative, the commission concluded that the proposal lacked sufficient detail in regards to those who would be recognized. The Commission decided that it will not be able to support any development of this idea at it currently stands.

The second matter involved the question of maintaining the 1993 Resolution entitled "Japanese Compensation to American POWs." The review of this resolution was prompted by a meeting with The American Defenders of Bataan and Corregidor (ADBC) which is seeking The Legion's support. The commission gave this issue a thorough review and determined the current resolution should be maintained and that the ADBC may refer to this official Legion position for support.

Assistant Director Joseph Grassi gave an outstanding presentation on the FY 2010 federal budget for the U.S. Department of State and international programs along with a broad overview of current foreign policy. Among the many topics covered in this presentation, Mr. Grassi shared his in-depth analysis of important subjects such as State Department efforts and strategies in connection with Iraq, Afghanistan, the genocide in Darfur, and the U.S. trade deficit. The presentation included a question and answer period which served as a basis for a spirited discussion on ideas for prospective resolutions. Also, Director Philip Riley gave a comprehensive review of the National Security and Foreign Relations Division's efforts associated with the Legion's Operation Wounded Warriors program.

On Tuesday, May 5, the National Security and Foreign Relations Commissions met in joint session. The Foreign Relations Commission was honored by the visit of National Commander David K. Rehbein and very much appreciated his opening remarks emphasizing the importance of establishing new and meaningful resolutions to communicate The Legion's positions concerning the challenges facing our nation today. The commissions were also honored to have Past National Commander John Brieden in attendance and very much appreciated his participation in the meeting.

The Foreign Relations Commission was pleased to host Chaplin William T. Yates, Colonel (Select), Indiana Air National Guard, as the guest speaker for the National Security/Foreign Relations Joint Session. Chaplin Yates addressed both commissions on many important topics including the care of our troops and military families; post-combat reintegration; traumatic brain injury; post-traumatic stress; and suicide prevention. In addition, Mr. Grassi presented brief discussion on current U.S. foreign policy.

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 J. Besson, Illinois, Chairman
John W. Querfeld, Illinois, Director

The National Internal Affairs Commission was established by resolution of the National Executive Committee in 1947. The original charge for this constitutional commission still remains: to formulate and recommend policies, and to oversee the implementation of adopted policies relating to activities conducted for organizational purposes.

Among those purposes are all those not properly the responsibility of any other national commission, as well as membership strategies, post formation, clerical and records administration for posts and individual members, and special projects. The commission provides guidance and assistance to the national adjutant on necessary administrative operations.

Under the broad interpretation of those purposes not properly the responsibility of other commissions, Internal Affairs oversees awards, constitutional discipline and commemorative activities. The commission also monitors legislative and other regulatory activities that potentially affect American Legion posts and departments, recommending appropriate courses of action.

The commission has four standing committees assigned to it for supervision and coordination: 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 Sons of The American Legion, which is a major program and not a separate organization. The commission also oversees long-term programs and activities as Paid-Up-For-Life and the National Emergency Fund.

A new, exciting program, currently in its growing stages, is American Legion Riders. This is a great venue for us to reach out to veterans who are not yet members of our ranks. For more information on this program, and how it can benefit your post or department, visit www.legion.org/legionriders.

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. In 2009, we had 51 attendees in this year's class (November 2009).

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 (S.A.L.) conducted its 38th National Convention at the Kentucky International Convention Center, Louisville, Kentucky in August 2009.

For the 35th consecutive year, the Sons of The American Legion are at an "All Time High" in membership. The S.A.L. closed its membership at the end of 2008 with a record 327,598 members. This number represents a 1.9% percent increase over the previous year. A total of 38 Detachments achieved 100% membership.

In August 2009, the S.A.L. membership figures for 2009 surpassed the 2008 final membership by over 2,000 members giving them another "All Time High" for membership year 2009.

The S.A.L., as a major program, continues its support of The American Legion programs and is heavily involved with support to our nation's veterans in the VAVS program. In 2008, the S.A.L. provided over 277,782 volunteer hours in VA homes and hospitals. Donations in cash and goods to these veterans exceeded $1,460,135, nationwide. Other projects include Americanism programs of which $1,857,474 was donated along with 491,529 hours of service. This was remarkable considering only than 20% of the Squadron's submitted reports. The S.A.L. also raised over $332,426 in the year 2008 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 four 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, 2009 through August 1, 2009 $18,970 was awarded to American Legion family members. Fortunately, national disasters are down in 2009. During the same period a total of $147,000 in donations were received. 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 of the posts located in 14,000 communities across the country. 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 $2,647,469; Legion Baseball team support cost, $7,922,634; cash contributions to VA Voluntary Services, $2,214,507 with more than 978,396 hours of voluntary services provided; 2,024 Boy Scout Units sponsored, with 57,837 Scouts involved at a cost of $1,668,088; and a total of 13,865 scholarships presented, collectively valued at $3,949,282.

In addition, 3,969,742 hours were spent performing community service work, valued at $6,573,446; a total of 87,752 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 2009 is General David H. Petraeus, Commander, US Central Command.

This committee oversees the awarding of over 60 awards within The American Legion for national recognition in our various programs and services.

Resolutions Assignment Committee
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 Committee
Vincent Gaughan, Illinois, Chairman

The National Constitution and By-Laws of The American Legion can only be amended by the duly elected delegates at a National Convention.

However, the Constitution 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 & Post Activities Committee
Dale Barnett, Georgia, Chairman
Billy R. Johnson, Georgia, Membership Director

Membership and programs go hand in hand to make The American Legion an organization able to provide people and resources to serve the needs of veterans and their families. Membership & Post Activities is pleased to report a continuing membership of nearly 2.4 million members worldwide.

Membership

Final 2007 membership	2,629,364
Final 2008 membership	2,591,732
2009 membership as of Aug. 1, 2009 (projected)	2,400,000

(NOTE: For membership year 2009, we reduced our direct membership solicitation program down to 10,000 members from the normal 190,000 members in order to test various mailing strategies. The program has been resumed for 2010 and we already have over 176,000. We expect a good year in 2010.)

46th Annual National Membership Workshop

The 46th Annual National Membership Workshop convened in Indianapolis on July 31-August 1, 2009, with more than 300 department and district officers from nearly all 55 departments in attendance.

Many who attend already have a good understanding of The American Legion's membership program, especially as it pertains to their departments and districts. But when the workshop concludes, they are prepared to face day-to-day membership challenges with a better understanding of the Legion as it relates to potential members.

The goal of the workshop is to provide these essential membership workers with the tools, knowledge and desire to The American Legion's membership. Whether they are involved in membership recruitment or program implementation, the workshop teaches veterans to help veterans and provide communities the essential programs to maintain a quality of life for which all veterans fought and served to preserve.

New Post Development/Revitalization

The Membership & Post Activities Committee developed a training program in January 1996 designed to assist posts, districts and departments in developing and revitalizing posts. The program provides training workshops to interested volunteers, along with practical field application.

The success of the program is evident, based on the revitalization and development of more than 1,000 American Legion posts in the past 13 years. Efforts have now expanded into urban areas. Many departments have succeeded in revitalizing posts without any actual assistance from National Headquarters staff. Whether departments' requests field assistance or just send members to the training workshop, positive results follow if they adhere to guidelines.

All departments are encouraged to participate in this program. However, success requires a commitment from every level of leadership.

NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION
James E. Koutz, Indiana, Chairman
Steve Robertson, Louisiana, Director

This report covers activities of the National Legislative Commission from August 16, 2008 through August 14, 2009. 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, 2nd Session

As the final days of September passed, congressional leadership realized that it would be impossible to pass all 12 appropriations bills to fund Federal government programs for FY 2009, which would begin on October 1, 2008. Therefore, a consolidated appropriations-continuing resolution bill was developed. This legislation consisted of three major elements:

- A disaster relief package, totaling $22.9 billion, that included block grants, Federal Emergency Management Agency disaster relief funding, and community development block grants;
- Funding for the majority of Federal government programs—with the three exceptions noted below—that would keep government agencies functioning through March of 2009, but at levels equal to FY 2008 funding. This would place the burden of developing FY 2009 appropriations for the last six months of the fiscal year on the next President and the 111th Congress; and,
- Full FY 2009 appropriations for the Departments of Defense (DOD), Homeland Security (DHS) and Veterans Affairs (VA), as well as military construction programs.

The measure passed the House on September 24 by a vote of 370-58, and was approved by the Senate three days later by a vote of 78-12. It was signed by the President on September 30 as Public Law PL 110-329.

The November 2008 congressional elections expanded majority party control in both chambers of Congress. There are now 256 Democrats, 178 Republicans and one vacancy in the House, while the Senate numbers are just as wide: 58 Democrats, 40 Republicans, and 2 Independents who both caucus with the Democrats.

Americanism

The concerted efforts of millions of concerned Americans—including The American Legion and the other 144 member organizations of the Citizens Flag Alliance (CFA)—to pass a constitutional amendment to protect the American flag fell one vote short of passage by the Senate three years ago in the 109th Congress. In 2007, Representative John Murtha (PA) introduced legislation seeking to protect the American flag from acts of physical desecration through passage of a constitutional amendment. A Senate companion measure was introduced by Senator David Vitter (LA) last June. However, neither measure was acted upon by either chamber when the 110th Congress adjourned.

National Security

FY 2009 appropriations for the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) were a part of PL 110-329, the Consolidated Security, Disaster Assistance, and Continuing Appropriations Act, which became law on September 30, 2008. The measure provides $39.9 billion for DHS programs, an increase of $2.8 billion above the White House request. Some of the key provisions include:

- $9.8 billion for the Bureau of Customs and Border Protection;
- $9.1 billion for the U.S. Coast Guard;
- $4.9 billion for the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement;
- $4.6 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;
- $819 million for the Federal Air Marshals program; and
- $775 billion for border security along the U.S.-Mexico border (included under the "Customs and Border Protection" account).

On October 14, 2008, the President signed into law PL 110-417, the FY 2009 DOD authorization bill. The House passed the measure on September 24 by a vote of 392-39.

The Senate then passed the bill on September 27 by unanimous consent. Some of the major provisions in this measure included:

- A 3.9 percent across-the-board pay raise for all military personnel – half a percentage point above the President's request—before special pay or bonuses;
- Increases in Army personnel for FY 2009 by 7000, and a Marine Corps personnel increase of 5000;
- An authorization of a total of $50 million for educational impact aid;
- Prohibits the use of funds to establish permanent bases in Iraq, and prohibits U.S. control of Iraqi oil revenues;
- Prohibits increases in premiums, co-pays and pharmacy user fees for TRICARE recipients; and,
- Mandates that any service member who is retired or separated for a combat-related disability—or the survivor of a member who dies on active duty—will not be required to repay any portion of a bonus or other benefit.

Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

The FY 2009 discretionary VA funding portion of PL 110-329 totals $47.6 billion, $4.5 billion over FY 2008 totals, and $2.8 billion more than the President's request. The American Legion lobbied Congress diligently to ensure that VA's FY 2009 appropriations were available by October 1, the start of the new fiscal year. The chart below shows the President's VA appropriations request for FY 2009, the funding included in the continuing resolution, and The American Legion's funding request outlined in testimony earlier this year.

Discretionary Funding Programs	**President's Proposal FY 2009**	**PL 110-329 FY 2009 Final VA Funding#**	**Legion's FY 2009 VA Funding Request**
Total Medical Care	$38.7 bil.	$41.4 bil.	$38.4 bil.
Medical Services	$34.1 bil.	$30.9 bil.	
Medical Support & Compliance (formerly Medical Administration)		$4.4 bil.	
Medical Facilities	$4.6 bil.	$6.0 bil.	
Medical/Prosthetics Research	$442 mil.	$510 mil.	$476 mil.
Information Technology	$2.4 bil.	$2.5 bil.	$2.3 bil.
General Operating Expenses	$1.7 bil.	$2.0 bil.	$2.8 bil.
National Cemetery Administration	$181 mil.	$280 mil.	$228 mil.
Major Construction	$582 mil.	$923 mil.	$1.56 bil.
Minor Construction	$329 mil.	$742 mil.	$485 mil.
State Veterans' Homes Construction Grants Program	$85 mil.	$325 mil.	$275 mil.
State Veterans' Cemetery Construction Grants Program	$32 mil.	$42 mil.	$45 mil.

 # Includes supplemental funding contained in PL 111-5

Significant increases in the measure:

- A minimum of $3.8 billion for specialty mental health services for veterans diagnosed with mental illness, PTSD, TBI and for suicide prevention;
- $375 million to increase enrollment of Priority Group 8 veterans by 10 percent;
- $133 million above the President's request to increase funding to raise the gas mileage reimbursement rate from 28.5 cents to 41.5 cents per mile for veterans traveling distances for care, and a freeze on the associated deductible;
- Funding to hire an additional 2000 claims processors to work down the backlog of 390,000 benefits claims and to reduce the 6 month time to process new claims;
- $250 million to begin a rural health initiative to improve access to medical services for veterans living in rural areas;
- $1.6 billion to provide veterans with appropriate prosthetic support and sensory aids in light of recent advances in technology; and,
- $130 million to provide the additional case workers and medical services needed for homeless veterans, including $30 million to hire additional personnel for the HUD-VA Supportive Housing Program.

Funding for related agencies of interest to The American Legion include:

- $63 million for the American Battle Monuments Commission, for the care and operation of our military monuments and cemeteries around the world;
- $63 million for operation and maintenance of the Armed Forces Retirement Home in Washington DC;
- $37 million for Arlington National Cemetery operations; and,
- $31 million for the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims, not only for court operations but for the acquisition of a new facility for the Court.

On September 18, the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee sent S 2969, the "Veterans Health Care Authorization Act of 2008," to the full Senate for further action. The measure included 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.

However, due to the volume of legislative business, S 2969 saw no further action.

On September 18, companion measures, HR 6939 and S 3527, were introduced in the House and Senate to address the continuing problem of securing timely funding of veterans' health care, through a process known as "advance appropriations." Under the bills—known as the "Veterans Health Care Budget Reform Act"—the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) would be funded one year in advance. Currently, VHA is funded one year at a time, and is too often the victim of delays and short-term budgets.

Under the legislation, Congress would be authorized to approve VA medical care appropriations one year in advance of the start of each fiscal year. Unlike proposals to

convert VA health care to a mandatory funding program, an advance appropriation does not create PAYGO concerns since VA health care funding would remain discretionary. In addition, an advance appropriation would provide VA with up to a year in which to plan how to deliver the most efficient and effective care to an increasing number of veterans with increasingly complex medical conditions.

Furthermore, the new legislation would also task the Governmental Accountability Office (GAO) with studying and reporting to Congress for the next three years on VA's budget forecasting model and estimates. By shedding sunlight on VA's internal budget process, Congress will have a much greater ability and incentive to develop appropriation bills that provide sufficient funding to meet the best estimate of anticipated demand for VA health care services in future years.

On September 23, the House by a vote of 392-23 passed HR 6897, a bill that would authorize a one-time payment to Filipino service members that played a critical role in the United States' victory in the Pacific during World War II. The bill would require the VA Secretary to make a one-time payment for certain service in the organized military forces of the Government of the Commonwealth of the Philippines and the Philippine Scouts during World War II subject to the availability of appropriations. The amount of the payment would be $9,000 for non-U.S. citizens and $15,000 for U.S. citizens. The bill was amended to include language stating that acceptance of this one-time payment would serve as a complete release of any claim against the United States from Filipino veterans of World War II.

The measure went to the Senate for passage, but was not acted upon before adjournment.

On September 24, the President signed PL 110-324, the "Veterans Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2008." The measure passed the House on September 10 by a vote of 418-0. This legislation enacts a COLA for compensation payments to service-connected disabled veterans and for rates of dependency and indemnity compensation (DIC) for surviving spouses of certain disabled veterans. The COLA was 5.8 percent and became effective on December 1, 2008.

On October 10, the President signed PL 110-387, the "Veterans Mental Health and Other Care Improvements Act of 2008." This measure, introduced by Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee Chairman Dan Akaka (HI), makes various improvements to veterans' mental health and other forms of care. Some of the mental health care provisions of the new law include:

- Setting a standard minimum level of care for substance use disorder, and creating innovative enhancements to treatment;
- Improving treatment to veterans with multiple disorders, such as PTSD and substance use disorder;
- Mandating a review of VA's residential mental health care facilities, to ensure that they are adequately staffed;
- Creating a research program on PTSD and substance use disorder, in cooperation with the National Center for PTSD; and
- Enabling VA to provide mental health services to veterans' families, and setting up a program to aid the families of returning servicemembers.

Other veterans' health care provisions addressed in the measure include:

- More than doubling the beneficiary travel mileage reimbursement (from 11 to 28.5 cents per mile) eligible veterans can receive for travel to receive VA care; permanently sets the deductible to $3 each way for such travel; creates a pilot program on the use of peers to enhance outreach to rural veterans;

and, encourages coordination between VA and rural community-based resources.

- Correcting current procedures used by VA to reimburse community hospitals for emergency care provided to eligible veterans.
- In recognition of the link between traumatic brain injury—a signature wound of the current conflicts—and epilepsy, establishing up to six VA Epilepsy Centers of Excellence focused on research, education, and clinical care for epilepsy.
- Requiring a pain care program, including care for acute pain, for all VA inpatient facilities for long-term mental health and substance abuse care and to prevent long-term chronic pain disability; expands VA health care staff education on pain assessment and treatment; and, increases VA research on pain care.
- Extending authority for VA to provide institutional and non-institutional long-term care and caregiver assistance services.
- Authorizing a series of major medical facility construction projects and outpatient clinic leases.
- Creating targeted programs to assist low-income veterans, and increasing funding capacity for the successful VA Grant and Per Diem program, which assists community-based organizations that serve homeless veterans.
- Expanding a program to help formerly incarcerated veterans reintegrate into society through employment counseling and other services.

On October 10, the President enacted PL 110-389, the "Veterans' Benefits Improvements Act of 2008." Major provisions in the bill include:

- Claims assistance, including simplification of letters to veterans claiming disabilities, to provide meaningful notice of the information and evidence needed to substantiate a claim;
- Addressing employee training for those responsible for processing claims by redeveloping the certification exam and requiring an evaluation of the training and quality assurance program;
- Enhancing home loan refinancing options, an extended increase in the maximum loan guaranty amount, and an extension of the soon-to-expire authority for VA-guaranteed adjustable-rate mortgages;
- Updating housing construction and design guidelines to take into account any new or unique disabilities for veterans in need of specially adaptive housing;
- Increasing the number of veterans that can participate in the independent living program;
- Repealing sunset provisions for the VA Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans;
- Reforming the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) complaint process and ensuring that equitable relief is available to all USERRA victims when appropriate;
- Establishing an Office of Survivor Assistance within the VA;
- Providing assistance to the U.S. Paralympic Program for veterans and members of the armed forces;
- Expanding the number of judges on the United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims to decide the increased number of cases filed and removal

of the ban on judicial review of actions concerning VA's rating schedule; and;

- Updating of veterans' rights to return to work, Federal agency assistance in that effort, and more timely Department of Labor investigations of potential violations of veterans' employment rights.

111th Congress, 1st Session

The First Session of the 111th Congress convened on January 6, 2009. Major issues on the agenda for both chambers include the Global War on Terrorism, the deepening economic recession and the Fiscal Year (FY) 2010 Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) budget. To date, The American Legion has participated in 21 congressional hearings during the First Session.

One of the first orders of business for the new Congress was to finish work on the FY 2009 budget process. The Federal government was still operating under the terms of PL 110-329, an omnibus appropriations bill that fully funded only three departments—Defense, Homeland Security and Veterans Affairs—while funding the remaining Federal government departments, agencies and other bodies at levels equal to FY 2008. By March 11, Congress had passed and the President had signed PL 111-8, a measure making the final appropriations for the final six months of FY 2009. Specific spending totals will be outlined in each subject area in the remainder of this report.

On February 26, the Obama Administration released a summary for the proposed FY 2010 "top line" Federal budget, including VA. The White House requested $52.5 billion for VA discretionary spending programs, an increase of $4.9 billion over the FY 2009 amounts. Mandatory funding would be set at $60.3 billion, making the total VA budget $112.8 billion. Over the next five years, VA discretionary funding will be increased by $25 billion. The gradual expansion of health care will support the health care needs of over 500,000 veterans who have been excluded from VA coverage since 2003. This increased funding will also provide the necessary resources to maintain the high-quality and timely care for lower-income and service-disabled veterans who currently use the system. However, The American Legion remains adamant that all Priority Group 8 veterans must be enrolled.

In addition, the budget proposal would provide greater benefits for veterans who are medically retired from active duty, allowing for all military retirees to keep their full VA disability compensation along with their retired pay. Further, the President's budget would allocate sufficient resources for the effective implementation of the Post-9/11 GI Bill, providing ground-breaking levels of educational support for the active-duty men and women who have served our country. The FY 2010 budget will support additional research and services to a variety of specialty care services. These include prosthetics, vision and spinal cord injuries, aging and women's health. The increased funding will allow the foundation of VA Centers of Excellence to focus on the improvement of these critical services.

Another area to be addressed by the budget proposal would be better information technology that directly benefits veterans in the areas of both health care and benefits through the use of improved electronic medical records. VA will also develop electronic processes to increase accuracy, consistency and timeliness in veterans' receipt of benefits.

Furthermore, the President's proposed budget will address the veteran homelessness in this country. It will expand VA's current services through a collaborative pilot program with non-profit organizations that is aimed at maintaining stable housing for

vulnerable veterans at risk of homelessness. It will provide them with supportive services to help them get back on their feet through job training, preventive care, and other critical services.

Finally, the President's budget request will provide funding to carry VA services to rural communities that are often unable to access VA care. The budget proposal would expand VA mental health screening and treatment with a focus on reaching veterans in rural areas in part through an increase in the number of Vet Centers and mobile health clinics. New outreach funding will help rural veterans and their families stay informed of these resources and encourage them to take advantage of the care they need.

On March 10, The American Legion testified before the House and Senate Veterans' Affairs Committees, giving conditional approval to the FY 2010 "top line" budget outline. However, that approval was contingent on the specific recommendations for VA's discretionary funding accounts, which are expected in May. The testimony also re-emphasized the VA budget request presented by National Commander Rehbein last September. The American Legion will continue to monitor the FY 2010 budget process.

On March 16, National Commander Rehbein and representatives of other veterans' service organizations met with the President at the White House. The meeting was called to discuss an administration proposal to have VA bill the insurance companies of veterans using VA for treatment of their service-connected disabilities. After the meeting, Commander Rehbein said, "This reimbursement plan would be inconsistent with the mandate '…to care for him who shall have borne the battle...' given that the United States government sent members of the armed forces into harm's way, and not private insurance companies. I say again that The American Legion does not and will not support any plan that seeks to bill a veteran for treatment of a service-connected disability at the very agency that was created to treat the unique needs of America's veterans!"

Two days later, after a second meeting with veterans' representatives—as well as a veritable firestorm of protest in the media, from the public and members of Congress—the White House announced it was scrapping the plan. However, The American Legion will continue to keep a close eye on any future VA policy proposals.

On April 2, both the House and Senate passed their respective budget resolutions for FY 2010. The House passed House Concurrent Resolution (H. Con. Res.) 85 by a recorded vote of 223-196, while the Senate passed Senate Concurrent Resolution (S. Con. Res.) 13 by a vote of 55-43.

H. Con. Res. 85 set FY 2010 discretionary spending for veterans' programs at $53.3 billion. This is $5.5 billion more than was appropriated for the current fiscal year, an 11.5 percent increase. The resolution contains an additional $800 million over the Obama Administration's original "top line" request. In mid-March, the minority members of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee released their recommendations for the VA's FY 2010 budget. Among their recommendations were:

- *Ensure timely and accurate processing of claims:* One recommendation was for additional funding for training and performance systems, additional training staff, increased quality checks, and employee testing and certification. It was also recommended that at least $170 million be appropriated for a paperless rules-based adjudication system.
- *Improve veteran-owned small businesses:* Another recommendation would reauthorize VA's expired small business loan guaranty program with sufficient resources to guarantee $1 billion in new loans to veteran-owned small businesses.

- *Ensure all national cemeteries are national shrines:* A third recommendation was for a minimum $300 million increase for the VA National Shrine Commitment, which provides funding to improve the appearance of national cemeteries and monuments. It was also suggested that funds should be appropriated to create a shrine commitment program at the other government agencies with jurisdiction over veteran cemeteries.
- *Provide world class quality health care:* Finally, an increase of $4.3 billion for medical services was recommended. This includes funding for improvement to rural health care, prosthetic limb program modernization, mental health initiatives, military vision centers of excellence and eye trauma registry, home improvement structural alterations (HISA) grants, and the health professional educational assistance program.

S. Con. Res. 13 would also fund VA discretionary programs at $53.3 billion for FY 2010. While short on specific funding recommendations, the Senate resolution highlighted several areas of need. They include:

- *Increased veteran enrollment:* VA has estimated that as many as 266,000 new veteran patients will enroll in the health care system during FY 2010. In addition, VA has estimated that it will treat as many as 550,000 new veterans by FY 2014. This increased workload will require additional resources.
- *Mental health:* VA estimates that 30 percent of its 5.2 million veteran clients have a mental health disorder. The agency further estimates that its expenditures for mental health programs will total $3.9 billion in the current fiscal year. To continue to meet this challenge, VA will require at least that amount for FY 2010.
- *Homeless veterans:* Outreach to homeless veterans continues to be a priority, particularly in light of estimates that at least 45 percent of homeless veterans suffer from mental illness and more than 50 percent have substance abuse problems. The Homeless Veterans Integration Program (HVIP) provides grants to agencies that help veterans find homes and jobs. However, this program—while authorized $50 million—has not had appropriations commensurate with its authorization.
- *Advance appropriations:* For several years, The American Legion and other veterans' service organizations have pushed for adoption of advance appropriations for VA medical care funding. This would allow Congress to fund VA health care one year in advance, then allow for the passage of additional funding as needed during a fiscal year. This is not a new concept, as the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Section 8 vouchers, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and the Head Start program are all funded through advance appropriations.

During Senate floor debate on the budget resolution, Senator James Inhofe (OK) introduced an amendment, cosponsored by Senators Daniel K. Akaka (HI), Richard Burr (NC), Lisa Murkowski (AK) and John Thune (SD), to include VA medical care programs among those to be funded through advance appropriations. The amendment was agreed to by unanimous consent.

The House and Senate budget conferees met and the House agreed to the Senate amendment and it became part of the final bill which was passed by Congress on April 29. It should be stressed that the budget resolution is not law; the budget resolution will be used as the starting point for the writing of the individual spending bills for the next

fiscal year. The President's budget advisors finally released a full, itemized budget request on May 7.

The table below outlines FY 2009 VA appropriations, the President's FY 2010 budget request and VA funding recommendations by The American Legion for FY 2010.

Discretionary Program	**PL 110-329, FY 2009 VA Appropriations**	**President's Request, FY 2010**	**Legion Request FY 2010**
Medical Services	$30.9 bil.	$34.7 bil.	***$42.8 bil. (includes medical and prosthetic research)***
Medical Support & Compliance	$4.4 bil.	$5.1 bil.	
Medical Facilities	$6.0 bil.#	$4.7 bil.	
Medical Care Total	***$41.3 bil.***	***$44.5 bil.***	
Medical Care Collections Fund	($2.5 bil.)	($2.9 bil.)	*
Medical & Prosthetic Research	$510 mil.	$580 mil.	$532 mil.
Information Technology	$2.5 bil.#	$3.3 bil.	$2.7 bil.
General Operating Expenses	$2.0 bil.#	$2.2 bil.	$2.8 bil.
Natl. Cemetery Administration	$280 mil.#	$242 mil.	$249 mil.
Major Construction	$923 mil.	$1.2 bil.	$1.8 bil.
Minor Construction	$742 mil.	$600 mil.	$1.5 bil.
State Veterans' Homes Construction Grants	$325 mil.#	$85 mil.	$275 mil.
State Veterans' Cemeteries Construction Grants	$42 mil.	$42 mil.	$49 mil.

 # Includes supplemental funding from PL 111-5, the "American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009," the $787 billion plan known as the "stimulus package"
** The American Legion supports using Medical Care Collections Funds as supplements, not offsets, to discretionary VA funding*

Americanism

The concerted efforts of millions of concerned Americans—including The American Legion and the other 144 member organizations of the Citizens Flag Alliance (CFA)—to pass a constitutional amendment to protect the American flag fell one vote short of passage by the Senate three years ago in the 109th Congress. On April 30, Representative Jo Ann Emerson (MO) and seven cosponsors introduced House Joint Resolution (HJ Res.) 47, a flag protection constitutional amendment for the 111th Congress. It has been assigned to the House Judiciary Committee. The measure now has 64 cosponsors. On May 6, a companion bill was introduced in the Senate by Senator David Vitter (LA), Senate Joint Resolution (SJ Res.) 15, with 16 cosponsors. The Senate version now has 25 cosponsors. The American Legion will continue to seek passage of a constitutional amendment to protect the American flag because it is the right thing to do. Let the people decide.

Children & Youth

On March 11, the President signed into law PL 111-8, the FY 2009 omnibus funding measure for the remainder of the fiscal year, which ends September 30, 2009. Funding for Department of Justice (DoJ) programs supported by The American Legion include:

- $7.2 billion for the FBI;
- $1.94 billion for the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA);
- $1.33 billion for state and local law enforcement assistance grants;
- $1.05 billion for the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (BATF);
- $950 million for the U.S. Marshals Service; and,
- $374 million for the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), a program The American Legion has enthusiastically supported since its creation in 1974.

On June 18, the House by a vote of 259-157 passed HR 2847, the FY 2010 funding bill for the Departments of Commerce and Justice, science programs and related agencies. The Senate Appropriations Committee on June 25 passed its version of the bill, S 1298, by a vote of 30-0. These measures contain funding for Department of Justice (DoJ) programs supported by The American Legion. They include:

- $7.9 billion for the FBI in the Senate bill, $7.8 billion in the House version;
- $3.4 billion for state and local law enforcement assistance grants in the House version, $3.2 billion in the Senate bill;
- $2 billion for the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) in both bills;
- $1.1 billion for the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (BATF) in both measures;
- $1.1 billion for the U.S. Marshals Service in both bills; and,
- $407 million for the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) in the Senate measure, $385 million in the House version.

Economics

PL 111-8 also contains FY 2009 appropriations for the Department of Labor (DOL). 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 appropriated for FY 2008 and for FY 2009.

Programs	**PL 110-161 FY 2008**	**PL 111-8 FY 2009**
State Administration Grants	$161.9 million	$168.9 million
Federal Administration	$33.3 million	$34.6 million
National Veterans Training Institute (NVTI)	$1.9 million	$1.9 million
Homeless Veterans Programs	$23.6 million	$26.4 million
Veterans' Workforce Investment Programs	$7.4 million	$7.6 million
Totals	***$228.1 million***	***$239.4 million***

On March 30, the House by a voice vote passed HR 1171, a bill to reauthorize the Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program for FYs 2010-2014. Representative John Boozman (AR), who introduced the bill, touted the success of the program, saying it has

helped 9,061 homeless veterans get back to work. During committee consideration, an amendment was added that included provisions to establish a grant program for homeless women veterans and homeless veterans with children. The grants would go toward programs that provide job training, counseling, placement services and child care services. The grants would be authorized at $10 million over five years. All told, the measure would authorize $300 million over five years for homeless veterans' reintegration programs.

On May 19, the House of Representatives approved two bills that affect veterans' economic issues. These measures now go to the Senate for further action. The first measure, passed by voice vote, was HR 1088, the "Mandatory Veteran Specialist Training Act of 2009." The bill mandates training within one year of hiring for state employees assigned to duties as Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOPs) Specialists and Local Veterans' Employment Specialists (LVERs).

Currently, Labor Department rules give new hires up to three years to attend the National Veterans Employment Training Services Institute (NVTI), based in Denver, to learn about their responsibilities to help veterans, especially those with special needs, get jobs. This includes training, career counseling and job referrals. On average, it takes 2½ years for a new employee to attend the training, which means there are hired specialists who are not fully trained. The bill requires new employees and any current employee hired since the start of 2006 who has not yet gone through the training to complete the course within one year.

The second measure is HR 1089, the "Veterans Employment Rights Realignment Act of 2009," which passed the House by a recorded vote of 423-0. This bill gives the VA's Office of Special Counsel responsibility for the investigation and prosecution of cases of employment and re-employment rights violations by Federal agencies, power that currently rests with the Labor Department's Veterans' Employment Training Service (VETS). The shift would send the Special Counsel about 200 to 300 cases a year, and require an increase of about $3 million a year in its $17 million annual budget. The number of cases is so small it is not expected to have any significant change in the workload at the Labor Department, according to a Congressional Budget Office analysis.

On June 23, the House passed HR 1172 by a vote of 411-0. Introduced by Rep. John Boozman (AR), this measure directs VA to include on its website a list of organizations that provide scholarships to veterans and their survivors and, for each such organization, a link to their website. The measure now goes to the Senate for further action.

On July 24, the House by a vote of 264-153 passed HR 3293, legislation to fund the Departments of Labor (DOL), Health & Human Services (HHS) and Education for the coming fiscal year. A companion draft measure was approved on July 30 by the Senate Appropriations Committee. The major highlights of the measures include:

- Funding of $210.2 million for state administration grants and Federal administration in the House bill, $207.7 million in the Senate companion;
- $2.4 million for the National Veterans' Training Institute (NVTI) in both measures;
- A total of $37.3 million for homeless veterans programs in the House version, while the Senate bill contains $35.3 for the program; and,
- $9.6 million for the veterans' workforce investment program in both measures.

On July 28 the House by a voice vote passed HR 1803, the "Veterans Business Center Act of 2009." This measure would amend the Small Business Act to direct the administrator of the Small Business Administration (SBA) to establish a Veterans

Business Center program, headed by a director, to provide entrepreneurial training and counseling to veterans. It would also authorize the SBA director to make grants to each entity designated as a veterans' business center. Further, it would require each center to use such funds on veteran entrepreneurial development, counseling of veteran-owned small businesses through one-on-one instruction and classes, and providing government procurement assistance to veterans.

In addition, HR 1803 would target populations where veterans generally and specifically veterans of Operations Iraqi Freedom or Enduring Freedom exceed the national median. It would also require the SBA director to establish, with respect to veteran-owned small businesses, grant programs for: access to capital; procurement assistance; and, service-disabled veteran-owned small businesses. Finally, it would authorize the SBA director to carry out, every two years, a veterans' entrepreneurial development summit. The bill now goes to the Senate for consideration.

Foreign Relations

Appropriations for the Department of State and Foreign Operations programs for the remainder of the fiscal year are contained in PL 111-8. The measure provides $36.6 billion in total funding. Specific areas of interest to The American Legion include:

- $5.5 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;
- $875 million for international narcotics control and law enforcement;
- $725 million in economic and border security/anti-terrorism military aid to Pakistan;
- $650 million in assistance for nations of Europe, Eurasia and Central Asia;
- $499 million in economic and military aid to Jordan; and,
- $315 million for the Andean Counterdrug Initiative.

President Obama on June 24 signed PL 111-32, the FY 2009 supplemental spending bill. The House of Representatives passed the measure on June 16 by a vote of 226-202, with the Senate passing the measure two day later by a vote of 91-5. The main focus of the measure is to fund the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Among the foreign relations areas addressed in the bill are:

- $7.7 billion in response to the potential flu pandemic;
- $4.8 billion for economic assistance, diplomatic operations and civilian personnel in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan;
- $1.4 billion for various humanitarian assistance programs;
- $721 million for U.N. peacekeeping operations;
- $555 million for security assistance to Israel;
- $310 million for economic and security assistance for Egypt; and,
- $300 million for economic and security assistance for Jordan.

On July 9, the House by a vote of 318-106 passed HR 3081, a bill to fund the Department of State and foreign operations programs for FY 2010. The Senate Appropriations Committee passed its version, S 1434, on July 9 by a 29-1 tally. The House measure provides $48.8 billion in total discretionary funding, while the Senate version contains $48.7 billion. Specific areas of interest to The American Legion include:

- $6.4 billion in total global assistance to fight HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, measles and malaria in the Senate bill, $5.8 billion in the House measure;

- $2.7 billion in economic and security assistance to Afghanistan in both bills;
- $2.2 billion in military assistance to Israel in both measures;
- $1.6 billion for international narcotics control and law enforcement in the House bill, $1.5 billion in the Senate version;
- $1.6 billion in economic and border security/anti-terrorism military aid to Pakistan in the Senate measure, $1.5 billion in the House bill;
- $1.6 billion for international narcotics control and law enforcement in the House measure, compared to $1.5 billion in the Senate bill;
- $1.3 billion in economic and military aid to Egypt in both versions;
- $745 million in assistance for nations of Europe, Eurasia and Central Asia in the Senate version, $722 million in the House bill; and,
- $513 million in economic and military aid to Jordan in both bills.

Internal Affairs

On July 24, House Resolution (H. Res.) 679 was introduced in the House of Representatives by Rep. Deborah Halvorson (IL). This resolution supports the designation of September 16—which is the anniversary of The American Legion receiving its Federal charter in 1919—each year as "American Legion Day," a national day of observance of The American Legion's goals and ideals in which the country may celebrate, with appropriate programs and activities, the long history of The American Legion and its steadfast and patriotic service to the community, state and nation. There are currently 41 cosponsors to the resolution.

On July 27 President Obama signed PL 111-41, the "Korean War Veterans Recognition Act." This law amends Title 4 of the United State Code, adding National Korean War Veterans Armistice Day, July 27, to the list of days on which the flag of the United States should be displayed. The American Legion has for many years lobbied Congress to recognize the service and sacrifices of veterans from this conflict.

National Security

On February 17, the President signed into law PL 111-5, the "American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009." In addition to providing funding to address the economy, this measure also contained FY 2009 supplemental funding for various Federal agencies, including DOD, Homeland Security, and VA.

Major DOD allocations included:

- $2.2 billion for military construction. Two of the projects were announced on March 27 as replacement hospitals for Camp Pendleton, CA, and Fort Hood, TX. Construction should be completed by 2013 and both hospitals will be operational by the next year;
- $400 million for the Defense Health Program for energy efficiency improvements, as well as repairs and modernization construction for medical facilities;
- $300 million for energy efficiency research and development; and,
- $135 million for family housing construction, operation and maintenance for the Army and Air Force.

No funding was included in the final version for the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) account.

Homeland Security earmarks included:

- $1 billion for the Transportation Security Administration for the purchase and installation of explosive detection systems and emerging checkpoint technologies;
- $420 million for construction of Customs and Border Protection land ports of entry to improve border security;
- $300 million for Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) state and local grants for transportation security construction and acquisition;
- $250 million for border security fencing infrastructure and technology;
- $210 million for firefighter assistance grants for construction of new firehouses;
- $160 million for U.S. Customs and Border Protection for the acquisition of new or replacement non-intrusive inspection systems; and,
- $160 million for the U.S. Coast Guard for acquisitions, construction, improvements and the alteration or removal of obstructive bridges.

Selective Service System funding for FY 2009 is contained in PL 111-8, the omnibus continuing appropriations measure. The law appropriates $22 million, an amount equal to FY 2008 appropriations as well as the original budget request. The American Legion continues to support funding for the Selective Service System in case of national emergency.

President Obama on June 24 signed PL 111-32, the FY 2009 supplemental spending bill. The House on June 16 voted 226-202 to pass the conference report to the measure, and the Senate followed suit two days later, approving the measure by a 91-5 tally. Funding in the bill totals $106 billion, an increase of $23 billion over the President's original request. It includes $79.9 billion to fund DOD and intelligence programs related to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Although the wars have typically been funded through such "emergency" supplemental requests since 2001, the President has pledged to move the war costs into the regular DOD budget in the future.

Specific areas in the supplemental request related to national security include:

- $25.8 billion to repair or replace equipment worn down in the wars, including $4.5 billion for acquisition of improved mine-resistant vehicles, $2.7 billion for 8 C-17s and 7 C-130s, $600 million for 4 F-22 aircraft, and $500 million for National Guard and Reserve equipment;
- $3.6 billion for expanding and training the Afghan security forces;
- $2.7 billion for military construction programs to support combat operations in Afghanistan, the armed forces and their families, including hospitals, child development centers, and new hospitals in Maryland and Virginia to replace Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, DC;
- $1.8 billion for Military Health Care, to include funds for programs to support military families, for orthopedic research, for traumatic brain injury and psychological health research, and for rehabilitation equipment for wounded warriors;
- $1.1 billion to combat improvised explosive devices;
- $1 billion to support coalition partners fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan;
- $534 million to provide over 185,000 service members who have had their enlistments involuntarily extended since September 11, 2001 with $500/month for every month they were held under stop-loss orders; and,
- $400 million to Pakistani forces' counterinsurgency operations.

On June 25 the House by a vote of 389-22 passed HR 2647, the FY 2010 DOD authorization bill. The Senate passed its version of the measure, S 1390, on July 23 by a vote of 87-7. These measures set spending levels for defense programs, and usually includes a number of policy statements. Some of the major provisions of the bill include:

- A 3.4 percent across-the-board pay raise for all military personnel—half a percentage point above the President's request—before special pay or bonuses in both bills;
- Authorization for missile defense programs;
- Authorization to fund the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) 2005 account;
- Authorization to address equipment shortfalls in the National Guard and Reserves;
- Authorization for 28 F-35s (Joint Strike Fighters) in the House bill;
- Authorization of full funding for 1 *Virginia*-class submarine, and advance procurement for two additional submarines to be built in FY 2011;
- Increases for FY 2010 of 15,000 Army personnel, 8,000 Marines, 14,650 Air Force personnel, and 2,477 Navy sailors;
- Increases in Army personnel by 30,000 for FYs 2011 and 2012;
- Authorization for family housing programs;
- An authorization for educational impact aid, with an additional funding authorization for those agencies heavily impacted by force structure changes and BRAC; and,
- Extension of TRICARE eligibility to reserve members so they can receive full TRICARE coverage 180 days before they go on active duty.

On June 24, the House by a vote of 389-37 passed HR 2892, the FY 2010 Department of Homeland Security (DHS) appropriations bill. The Senate passed its version, S 1298, on July 9 by a vote of 84-6. The House measure provides $42.6 billion in discretionary spending for DHS programs, an increase of $2.6 billion above current year funding, while the Senate version would provide $42.9 billion. Some of the key provisions include:

- $10.2 billion for the U.S. Coast Guard in the Senate measure, $9.7 billion in the House bill;
- $11.6 billion for the Bureau of Customs and Border Protection in the Senate version, $11.2 billion in the House bill;
- $5.7 billion for the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement in the Senate measure, $5.4 billion in the House version;
- $5.3 billion for the Transportation Security Administration in both bills;
- $4 billion in grants for state and local "first responders" in the House version, $3.8 billion in the Senate measure;
- $1.5 billion for the U.S. Secret Service in the House measure, $1.48 billion in the Senate bill;
- $860 million for the Federal Air Marshals program in both bills; and
- $800 billion for border security along the U.S.-Mexico border (included under the "Customs and Border Protection" account) in the Senate measure, $732 million in the House version.

On June 24, the House voted 404-0 to pass HR 2990, a bill that will further address the problem of the disabled veterans' tax. The bill, called the "Disabled Military Retiree Relief Act," will allow "Chapter 61" retirees—persons who received military disability

retirement with less than 20 years of service—to receive their full military retired pay plus VA disability compensation, without a dollar-for-dollar offset of the retired pay by any amount received in disability compensation.

The offset would be phased out over several years, beginning with full payments of retired and disability pay on Jan. 1, 2010 for those whose disabilities are rated at 90 percent or greater, including those whose 100 percent disability is based upon a determination that their medical conditions make them unemployable. Full concurrent receipt for all Chapter 61 retirees would take effect Jan. 1, 2014.

However, as the bill currently reads, these increased payments would terminate at the end of FY 2010, which is September 30, 2010. For these payments to continue, they would have to be reauthorized.

House Armed Services Committee Chairman Ike Skelton, who introduced the bill, said the legislation does not go as far as he had hoped, but it "…moves us closer to fulfilling the President's pledge to give disabled veterans full access to the benefits they deserve." Funding for the bill's provisions would come from tapping into a development fund for deepwater oil and natural gas resources.

Because the money source was not available when the House Armed Services Committee approved HR 2892, the 2010 DOD authorization bill, language relating to the disabled veterans' tax was not included in that bill. It is likely that the language of HR 2990 will be amended to the DOD authorization measure during conference committee deliberations.

The American Legion will continue to push for full repeal of the disabled veterans' tax.

Selective Service System funding for FY 2010 is contained in S 1432, the FY 2010 appropriations measure for financial services and general government, which passed the Senate Appropriations Committee on July 9 by a vote of 29-1. The House version, HR 3170, passed the House on July 16 by a vote of 219-208. That Senate measure would fund Selective Service operations at $24.4 million, while the House version would appropriate $24.2 million for the agency's operations. Since 1973, the armed forces have relied on volunteers to fill military manpower requirements. However, the Selective Service System remains the primary vehicle by which personnel will be brought into the military if Congress and the President should authorize a return to the draft. The American Legion continues to support funding for the Selective Service System in case of national emergency.

On July 10, the House by a vote of 415-3 passed HR 3082, the FY 2010 appropriations measure to fund the VA and military construction programs. The Senate Appropriations Committee on July 7 passed its version of the measure, S 1407, by a vote of 30-0. A total of $24.6 billion was allocated for a variety of military construction projects in the House bill, while the Senate version would allot $23.2 billion. Some specific military construction program areas include:

- $7.5 billion to implement closures and re-stationing for the 2005 round of BRAC in both bills;
- $2 billion to continue eliminating inadequate military housing in both measures;
- $1.4 billion to support additional military construction requirements to support operations and troop increases in Afghanistan in both versions;
- $537 million to address a large unfunded backlog of environmental cleanup for military bases closed in previous rounds of the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) in the House bill, $422 million in the Senate measure;

- $450 million to accelerate the Army's program to modernize troop housing facilities in the House measure; and,
- $200 million for various National Guard and Reserve construction projects in the House bill.

On July 30 the House by a vote of 400-30 approved HR 3326, the FY 2010 appropriations bill for the Department of Defense (DOD). The bill totals $636.6 billion, an increase of $4.4 billion over current year funding and $3.8 billion below the President's request. Funding for specific program areas include:

- $128.3 billion for all costs to continue military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. President Obama has made it a priority to move all costs for these operations to the regular appropriations process, and not through supplemental funding bills;
- $29.9 billion for DOD health programs;
- $10.1 billion for the F-35 program, including $5.6 billion for procurement of 28 planes in FY 2010;
- $7.2 billion for missile defense programs;
- $3.8 billion for purchase of one *Virginia*-class attack submarine in FY 2010, and advance procurement for another sub in FY 2011;
- $3.6 billion for further development and procurement of Mine Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) vehicles for Iraq and Afghanistan;
- $2.2 billion for further development and procurement of one additional DDG-51 (*Arleigh Burke)* destroyer;
- $1.7 billion for procurement of 18 additional F/A-18E/F Super Hornet aircraft;
- $1.6 billion for further development and procurement of the DDG-1000 (*Zumwalt*) destroyer; and,
- $1.5 billion for the destruction of chemical agents and munitions;
- $1.2 billion for drug interdiction and counter-drug activities;
- $614 million for upgrades and procurement of additional Stryker vehicles; and,
- $500 million for purchases to address National Guard and Reserve units' equipment shortfalls.

The measure contains no funding for closing the Guantanamo Bay detention facility for terrorists captured during the Global War on Terrorism. Appropriators stated that once a plan was in place to close the facility, funding would then be requested.

Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

As part of PL 111-5, $1.4 billion in supplemental funding for VA programs in FY 2009 was included. Major provisions included:

- $1 billion for the VA medical facilities account for non-recurring maintenance;
- $150 million for construction grants for state veterans' homes, with the amount to be available through the end of FY 2010;
- $150 million for the General Operating Expenses account for expenses relating to the hiring and training of temporary claims processors;
- $50 million for the National Cemetery Administration for monument and memorial repairs; and,
- $50 million for information technology related to claims processing.

No funds were appropriated for major or minor construction, or for the medical support and compliance account.

On February 12, legislation was introduced in both the House and Senate to address a funding mechanism for the VA medical care accounts that is sufficient, timely and predictable. The measures, HR 1016 and S 423, are entitled the "Veterans Health Care Budget Reform and Transparency Act of 2009." The House bill was introduced by House Veterans' Affairs Committee Chairman Bob Filner (CA), and currently has 125 cosponsors; the Senate version, introduced by Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee Chairman Daniel K. Akaka (HI), has 50 cosponsors.

The problem for America's veterans is that appropriated discretionary funds are not always available to VA by the start of the fiscal year because of political conflicts. This delay in the timely provision of medical care funds means the VA medical care system administrators cannot hire medical personnel; procure new equipment, supplies and services; or construct and maintain VA medical facilities until those funds are authorized and appropriated.

The main problem in adequately funding veterans' medical care is the inherent political nature of the appropriations process, a process still very much mired in 19th century thinking. The VA budget is not created based upon the medical care needs of veterans and their dependents. It is, instead, based upon the political agendas of Congress and the President, both of which see the VA budget as a political document, not as a medical care document.

The American Legion decided this approach to annual funding failed America's veterans who earned this benefit by virtue of their selfless devotion to country through their military service. The current medical care funding model used to approve annual discretionary appropriations is clearly flawed.

In 2001, The American Legion joined with eight other veterans' service organizations (VSOs) to create the Partnership for Veterans Health Care Budget Reform. The original intent of the Partnership was to support a mandatory funding mechanism to the VA appropriations process. This approach arose from a recommendation taken from the final report of the *President's Task Force to Improve Health Care Delivery for Our Nation's Veterans.*

Mandatory funding for the VA health care accounts meant that veterans' health care funding would be on par with Medicare or Medicaid funding, both of which do not have to go through the annual appropriations process. However, even with all nine VSOs strongly lobbying for this change for the past eight years, Congress opposed all efforts to change their failed funding system. Finally, the Partnership proposed Congress appropriate funds for the VA medical care accounts one year ahead of the current fiscal year; this process is known as "advance appropriations."

Advance appropriations is a technique used for the last several decades by Congress to secure funding authority one year in advance for certain government programs. In this instance, VA would have its health care accounts funded one year ahead of most other government programs, but Congress still maintains its discretionary authority to approve and oversee the use of these funds. By having discretionary funding decided one year in advance, VA medical care accounts would be removed from current fiscal year competition and VA would have its medical care funds available on October 1 of each new fiscal year. There would have to be a one-time, two year appropriation process to get this cycle started. In addition, if advance appropriations for VA medical care are adopted by Congress, VA administrators will know one year in advance what their fiscal year

appropriations will be and can thus plan accordingly for delivering quality medical care services to all enrolled veterans who need it.

On June 10, the House Veterans' Affairs Committee passed HR 1016 by a vote of 23-0. The bill would require—beginning—with FY 2011—a two-fiscal-year discretionary new budget authority for the following VA accounts: (1) Medical Services; (2) Medical Support and Compliance; and (3) Medical Facilities. These accounts would be the only VA discretionary appropriations accounts affected by the legislation, and the entire VA budget would still be subject to congressional scrutiny.

During consideration, House VA Committee Ranking Member Steve Buyer (IN) offered an amendment. It would include the information technology and medical/prosthetic research accounts in the advance appropriations process. The amendment was adopted by a 17-8 vote. The measure was then passed by the full House on June 23 by a recorded vote of 409-1.

On August 6, the Senate by a voice vote approved HR 1016. Prior to final approval, the Senate amended the bill by substituting the language of S 423 for the House-passed text. The bill now returns to the House for further action.

One of the many provisions PL 111-5 addresses a six-decade injustice. Since 1946, Filipino veterans who actively served during World War II have been denied certain benefits their American counterparts have enjoyed. The American Legion has long championed their cause.

The law officially recognizes the service of Filipino veterans as active-duty, a designation that was removed by the 1946 Rescission Acts. It also provides authorization for VA to disburse up to $198 million to any qualifying Filipino veteran who applies for the one-time, lump-sum payment. The amount of the payment is $15,000 if the veteran lives in the United States, $9,000 if the veteran resides in the Philippines. Should a qualifying veteran die before receiving his payment, VA is authorized to pay his surviving spouse. Finally, should a Filipino veteran accept this payment, it constitutes a complete release of any further claim against the United States.

On March 30, the House of Representatives passed HR 1377, a measure that would allow reimbursements to veterans who receive emergency treatment at a non-VA facility. The bill would require VA to pay for a nonservice-connected condition if a third-party insurer does not cover the full cost of care, including the difference between the amount paid by the insurer and the maximum VA allowable amount. Veterans would still be responsible for co-payments to third party insurers. The measure is retroactive, meaning it would allow for reimbursements for emergency treatment provided at a non-department facility at any time before the date of bill's enactment.

On May 19, the House of Representatives approved HR 1170 by a voice vote. This bill would establish $200,000 in Federal grants to encourage the development of technologies to make home life easier for severely disabled veterans. This would include things like voice-recognition systems to help increase independence so that disabled veterans could feed themselves, be more mobile and enjoy more recreational activities. If technology funded by the grants works and becomes widely available, the government would retain a percentage of the patent rights. The measure now goes to the Senate for further action.

On July 10, the House of Representatives by a vote of 415-3 passed HR 3082, a bill to fund the Department of Veterans Affairs, military construction programs and related agencies for FY 2010. The bill now goes to the Senate for further action. Three days earlier, the Senate Appropriations Committee approved its version of the bill, S 1407, by a vote of 30-0.

In addition to FY 2010 appropriations, both HR 3082 and S 1407 include advance appropriations for FY 2011 for the medical care accounts, totaling nearly $48.2 billion. These FY 2011 accounts include: $37.1 billion for medical services; $5.3 billion for medical support and compliance; and, $5.7 billion for medical facilities.

The chart below presents the major discretionary funding categories of VA's budget, showing funding for the current year, the President's FY 2010 budget request, the funding request in HR 3082 passed by the House, the funding requested by the Senate Appropriations Committee in S 1407 and The American Legion's FY 2010 budget proposal as presented by National Commander Rehbein last September.

VA Discretionary Programs	**P. L. 110-329 FY 2009 Final VA Funding**	**President's FY 2010 VA Budget Request**	**HR 3082 FY 2010 VA Appropriations**	**S 1407 FY 2010 VA Appropriations**	**American Legion's FY 2010 Request**
Medical Services	$30.9 bil.	$34.7 bil.	$34.7 bil.	$34.7 bil.	***$42.8 bil. (includes medical & prosthetic research)***
Medical Support & Compliance	$4.4 bil.	$5.1 bil.	$4.9 bil.	$5.1 bil.	
Medical Facilities	$6.0 bil.#	$4.7 bil.	$4.9 bil.	$4.8 bil.	
Total Medical Care	$41.3 bil.	$44.5 bil.	$44.5 bil.	$44.6 bil.	
Medical Care Collections Funds	[$2.5 bil.]	[$2.9 bil.]	[$2.9 bil.]	[$2.9 bil.]	*
Medical/ Prosthetic Research	$510 mil.	$580 mil.	$580 mil.	$580 mil.	$532 mil.
Information Technology	$2.5 bil.#	$3.3 bil.	$3.3 bil.	$3.3 bil.	$2.7 bil.
General Operating Expenses	$2.0 bil.#	$2.2 bil.	$2.1 bil.	$2.1 bil.	$2.8 bil.
Natl. Cemetery Administration	$280 mil.#	$242 mil.	$250 mil.	$250 mil.	$249 mil.
Major Construction	$923 mil.	$1.2 bil.	$1.2 bil.	$1.2 bil.	$1.8 bil.
Minor Construction	$742 mil.	$600 mil.	$727 mil.	$685 mil.	$1.5 bil.
State Homes Construction Grants	$325 mil.#	$85 mil.	$85 mil.	$115 mil.	$275 mil.
State Cemeteries Construction Grants	$42 mil.	$42 mil.	$42 mil.	$42 mil.	$49 mil.

 # Includes supplemental funding from PL 111-5
** The American Legion supports using Medical Care Collections Funds as supplements, not offsets, to discretionary VA funding.*

Funding for related agencies in this bill which are monitored by The American Legion include:

- $81 million for the American Battle Monuments Commission in the Senate version, $62 million in the House bill;
- $27 million for the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans' Claims in both measures.

- $42 million for operations, maintenance and construction at Arlington National Cemetery in the House measure, $37 million in the Senate bill; and,
- $134 million for operations, maintenance and new construction at the Armed Forces Retirement Home in both bills;

On June 10, the House Veterans' Affairs Committees approved a slate of measures, sending them to the full House for action. They included:

HR 952—This measure, titled the "Compensation Owed for Mental Health Based on Activities in Theatre Post-traumatic Stress Disorder Act," was introduced by House VA Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs Chairman John Hall (NY). It would define "combat with the enemy"—for purposes of proof of service-connection for veterans' disability compensation—as service on active duty: (1) in a theater of combat operations during a period of war; or (2) in combat against a hostile force during a period of hostilities.

HR 1098—The "Veterans' Worker Retraining Act of 2009," introduced by Rep. Tom Perriello (VA), would increase the amount of educational assistance payments made by VA to individuals pursuing an apprenticeship or on-job training under several VA educational assistance programs. They include: the Montgomery GI Bill educational assistance program; the Post-Vietnam Era Veterans educational assistance program; the Survivors and Dependents educational assistance program; and the Selected Reserve Montgomery GI Bill educational assistance program.

HR 1821—This bill, the "Equity for Injured Veterans Act of 2009," was introduced by House VA Chairman Bob Filner (CA). It would extend the period of eligibility for training and rehabilitation through VA for veterans with service-connected disabilities until 15 years after the veteran's discharge from active-duty service. Under current law, the time frame is 12 years. It also allows a service-disabled veteran a subsistence allowance for six months of full-time employment training following completion of a vocational rehabilitation program (current law only allows for a 2-month allowance). It further allows a veteran who has unused VA educational assistance entitlement to use such assistance to pursue a program of education as part of a vocational rehabilitation program, as long as VA approves the educational, professional, or vocational objective chosen by the veteran. The measure also directs VA to provide reimbursement for child care to a veteran who is participating in a vocational rehabilitation program and is the sole caretaker of a child. Finally, it requires VA to include in annual budget materials submitted to Congress information on veterans receiving vocational rehabilitation assistance who became employed and achieved independence in daily living.

HR 2180—This bill, introduced by Rep. Harry Teague (NM), prohibits VA from collecting a housing loan fee from any veteran who, but for the receipt of active service pay, would be entitled to compensation for a service-connected disability.

On June 23, the House passed HR 1211, the "Women Veterans Health Care Improvement Act," which passed by a vote of 408-0. Introduced by Rep. Stephanie Herseth Sandlin (SD), the bill seeks to focus VA medical care for the 1.8 million women veterans in this country, with particular emphasis on women who are veterans of Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom. It would: require VA to study the services for and barriers to women veterans; provide staff training to better treat sexual trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD); establish a child care pilot program for certain veterans receiving care; and allow VA to provide care for a newborn of a woman veteran receiving VA maternity care. This bill now goes to the Senate for further action.

President Obama on June 30 signed PL 111-37, a measure to provide a cost-of-living-adjustment (COLA) to increase the rates of disability compensation for veterans

with service-connected disabilities. The measure passed the House on June 23 by a vote of 403-0. The new law will also increase the rates of dependency and indemnity compensation for survivors of certain service-connected disabled veterans. The cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for the above-mentioned benefits would match the annual increase provided to Social Security recipients, which is based on the Bureau of Labor Statistics' Consumer Price Index (CPI). The COLA is designed to offset inflation and other factors that alter the cost-of-living over time. This year's rate has not yet been determined, and some experts are predicting that the CPI will decrease rather than increase. In the event of a decrease in the CPI, veteran and survivor compensation will remain at last year's rate. The COLA will go into effect on December 1, 2009.

On July 9, the House Veterans' Affairs Health Subcommittee approved by voice vote several bills, including:

- HR 1197, the "Medal of Honor Health Care Equity Act of 2009," would assign a higher priority status to recipients of the Medal of Honor for VA hospital care and medical services;
- HR 1302, would establish the position of director of Physician Assistant Services in the office of the VA under secretary for Health;
- HR 1335, would prohibit VA from collecting certain copayments from veterans who are catastrophically disabled;
- HR 1546, the "Caring for Veterans with Traumatic Brain Injury Act of 2009," would direct VA to establish the Committee on Care of Veterans with Traumatic Brain Injury; and,
- HR 2926, would direct the VA to provide hospital care, medical services, and nursing home care for Vietnam-era veterans exposed to herbicide and for Persian Gulf veterans.

These measures now go to the full committee for further action.

On July 14, the House of Representatives passed HR 1037, the "Pilot College Work Study Programs for Veterans Act of 2009," by a vote of 422-0. This bill, introduced by Rep. Stephanie Herseth Sandlin (SD), directs the VA Secretary to conduct a five-year pilot project to test the feasibility and advisability of expanding the scope of qualifying veterans' work-study activities, including positions available on site at educational institutions. This legislation provides an additional avenue for a student veteran to help pay for college and places them on par with other students in the same financial situation. Furthermore, these new work-study positions would provide student veterans with much needed job skills they can use in their professional career.

On July 27, the House of Representatives by a voice vote passed HR 2770, the "Veterans Nonprofit Research and Education Corporations Enhancement Act of 2009." The measure would modify and update provisions of law relating to nonprofit research and education corporations.

VA nonprofit research corporations (NPCs) are independent entities that serve to provide a flexible funding mechanism for the use of non-VA funds to conduct VA-approved research. Last year, these organizations supported more than 4,000 research and education programs to benefit our veterans.

However, it has been 20 years since the law that established this public-private partnership was enacted. It is important to ensure that the statute stays relevant for today's complex research and compliance requirements and provides VA with the necessary oversight authority to simply safeguard the management of these funds. HR 2770 would update and modernize the law to improve the operation and strengthen the oversight of these not-for-profit entities.

A key provision of the bill would allow an NPC to be shared among a number of VA medical centers to simply reduce administrative costs and to allow smaller NPCs to better achieve the potential to support VA research. This bill would provide a number of new guidance and policy requirements to improve management of the NPCs and simply boost VA's oversight capability.

The measure now goes to the Senate for passage.

The House on July 27 by a voice vote passed HR 3155, the "Caregiver Assistance and Resource Enhancement Act," introduced by Rep. Mike Michaud (ME). This bill would provide support services to family and non-family caregivers of veterans, including educational sessions and one-stop access to support services at a caregiver support Web site. The legislation would also make counseling and mental health services available to family and non-family caregivers of veterans. The measure now goes to the Senate for further action.

The House of Representatives on July 28 by a vote of 426 to 0 passed HR 1293, the "Disabled Veterans Home Improvement and Structural Alteration Grant Increase Act of 2009." The measure, introduced by Rep. Steve Buyer (IN), would increase grants for disabled veterans to make accessibility modifications to their homes. The bill would provide a significant increase in the amount payable to veterans under the Home Improvement and Structural Alteration (HISA) grant program.

HISA is administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), and is available to veterans with both service-connected and nonservice-connected disabilities. Veterans disabled as a result of service-connected conditions can receive a HISA grant in addition to other VA home adaptations grants that range as high as $60,000.

The current maximum amount of the HISA grant is $4,100 for service-connected veterans and $1,200 for non-service connected veterans. This amount was established by Congress in 1992 and has not been raised in seventeen years. The bill would increase the maximum amount of a HISA grant to $6,800 for service-connected veterans and $2,000 for nonservice-connected veterans. "This increase is long overdue," said Rep. Buyer, "and I am pleased my colleagues supported this legislation. It would have a direct and immediate impact on improving health care and the quality of life for our disabled veterans." The measure now goes to the Senate for further action.

On July 28 legislation was introduced in the House of Representatives to address an issue that The American Legion has been working on for nearly two decades. House Veterans' Affairs Chairman Bob Filner (CA) introduced HR 3365, the "Medicare VA Reimbursement Act of 2009." This legislation seeks to provide Medicare payments to VA medical facilities for items and services provided to Medicare-eligible veterans for nonservice-connected conditions.

Medicare is a prepaid, Federally mandated health insurance program for all eligible Americans. Generally, any person is eligible for Medicare if that person or their spouse worked for at least 10 years in a Medicare-covered employment, is 65 years of age or older, and a citizen or permanent resident of the United States. Others may qualify for coverage if they are under age 65 with severe disabilities. However, nearly every working person in the United States is mandated to make monthly contributions to Medicare throughout their career.

Veterans pay into the Medicare system without choice throughout their working lives, as do most other citizens. A portion of each earned dollar is allocated to the Medicare Trust Fund. Although veterans must pay into the Medicare system, they cannot use their Medicare benefits at any VA health care facility. Veterans should be permitted

to select their health care provider and use the benefits that they have paid into during their lifetime.

Currently, VA is prohibited from billing Medicare for third-party reimbursements for the treatment of enrolled, Medicare-eligible veterans for medical conditions that are unrelated to their military service. Since the 1990s, The American Legion has strongly recommended Medicare reimbursements to supplement VA's health-care annual budget. Through congressional testimony and numerous interviews with the media, the Legion has promoted Medicare reimbursement as a new revenue source for VA.

The American Legion supports Medicare reimbursements to supplement VA annual budget. The American Legion continues to lobby lawmakers to authorize VA to collect third-party reimbursements from the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

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, 2009.

The Ninetieth Annual National Convention in Phoenix, Arizona, 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, Phoenix, Arizona
August 26-28 2008

Resolution 7 (UT) Domestic Energy Productions
Resolution 10 (UT) Alternative Energy Recourse
Resolution 12 (UT) Recycling Spent Nuclear Fuel Rods
Resolution 13 (UT) Energy Conservation
Resolution 14 (UT) National Plan For Energy Independence
Resolution 15 (UT) Nuclear Energy and Nuclear Waste
Resolution 72 (VA) Management of Space Assets
Resolution 73 (VA) Procurement Of Sufficient F-22 Aircraft
Resolution 74 (VA) Supporting The National Space Program
Resolution 75 (VA) Funding National Aeronautics And Space Administration Budgets
Resolution 77 (VA) Support For The United States Air Forces
Resolution 78 (VA) Aeronautical And Space Exploration
Resolution 88 (FL) Cold War Victory Medal
Resolution 91 (MD) Buy American
Resolution 92 (MD) Combating Cyberspace Threats
Resolution 93 (MD) Foreign Investments In The American Defense Industry
Resolution 94 (MD) National Missile Defense System
Resolution 95 (MD) National Security Principle
Resolution 96 (MD) Rebuilding America's Defense Industrial Base
Resolution 97 (MD) Support For The American Battle Monuments Commission
Resolution 98 (MD) The Armed Forces Retirement Homes
Resolution 99 (MD) Transformations of the Armed Forces
Resolution 100 (MD) Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences

Resolution 101 (MD) Financial Anti-Terrorism Law Enforcement
Resolution 102 (MD) Funding Homeland Security
Resolution 103 (MD) Support for Homeland Security and the War On Terrorism
Resolution 104 (MD) Support for the Non-Federal Roles of the National Guard
Resolution 105 (MD) Support for the U.S. Coast Guard in Homeland Security
Resolution 106 (MD) The American Legion Role in Homeland Security
Resolution 107 (MD) Citizen Corps
Resolution 108 (MD) Burial Eligibility for Arlington National Cemetery
Resolution 109 (MD) TRICARE Eligibility For Members Of The Reserve Components And Their Dependents
Resolution 110 (MD) The American Legion's Position On The Department Of Defense's Force Health Protection Program
Resolution 111 (MD) Fully Funding the U.S. Army
Resolution 112 (MD) Support for the Selective Service registration Program
Resolution 113 (MD) Status of Forces Agreement
Resolution 114 (MD) Reforming the Military Absentee Voting System
Resolution 115 (MD) Purple Heart for TBI
Resolution 116 (MD) Oppose Proposed TRICARE Increases
Resolution 117 (MD) Military Quality of Life
Resolution 118 (MD) Listing Of Veteran Service Organizations For Discharging Service Members
Resolution 119 (MD) Concurrent Receipt Of Military Retired And Severance Pays And Disability Compensation And Their Dependents
Resolution 120 (MD) Second Amendments
Resolution 121 (MD) Fully Funding The United States Navy And The Marine Corps
Resolution 169 (NSC) Support for the War on Terrorism
Resolution 176 (MD) Pain Management Research, Treatment And Therapies
Resolution 242 (NSC) Exempting Mailing Charges for Non-Profit Organizations
Resolution 339 (NSC) Department of Defense Health Care for Military Beneficiaries
Resolution 341 (NSC) Military Commissaries
Resolution 342 (NSC) Military Funeral Honors
Resolution 343 (NSC) Oppose Granting the Purple Heart for Illnesses
Resolution 344 (NSC) Policy On Reserve Forces
Resolution 345 (NSC) Requesting Military Funeral Honors
Resolution 346 (NSC) Commercial Shipbuilding for Defense
Resolution 347 (NSC) Support for the Jones Maritime Act and Related Cabotage Laws

National Executive Committee Meetings
October 15-16, 2008

Resolution No. 18 Restore Full Funding To The Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant Program
Resolution No. 19 Combating Crime in America
Resolution No. 20 Stolen Valor Act

National Executive Committee Meetings
May 6-7, 2009

Resolution No. 36 The Department of Defense Disability Evaluation System
Resolution No. 37 The American Legion Supports Veterans' Mitigation Courts

Resolution No. 38 Support the Pentagon Program to Recruit Temporary, Legal Immigrants in the U.S.
Resolution No. 39 Support Department of Defense Community Covenant Program
Resolution No. 40 Protection, Preservation and Retention of Federal and Military Monuments in the United States
Resolution No. 41 Oppose the Exploitation of any Names or Images of Killed In Action Service Members for Profiteering Purposes
Resolution No. 42 Cancer Research Programs at the Department of Defense
**Resolution No. 44 National Fire Fighter of the Year Award (*Final adoption through Finance Commission)*

National Executive Committee Meetings, Fall 2008

An executive session of the National Security Commission met in the Circle Center Room (Lower Level) of the Sheraton Hotel on October 13, 2008 to consider resolutions properly before it and to conduct other business. A total of seven resolutions were considered and three resolutions, "Stolen Valor Act," "Combating Crime in America," and "Restore Full Funding to The Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant Program" were recommended for adoption.

The President signed the "Consolidated Security, Disaster Assistance, and Continuing Appropriations Act, 2009" on September 30, 2008. Although this is a long-term continuing resolution passed by Congress to continue the operations of the Federal government through March 6, 2009 at the 2008 appropriations level, the act does include the full year FY 2009 appropriations for the Department of Defense and the Department of Homeland Security and for Military Construction and Veterans Affairs. The Defense portion of the appropriations bill will total about $487.7 billion.

The continuing resolution also includes:

- A 3.9 percent pay raise for the military;
- Increases the size of the military by 7,000 soldiers, 5,000 marines, 1,023 sailors, and by 450 airmen;
- $8.6 billion for Army reset and $1.8 billion for Marine Corps reset;
- An additional $800 million for procurement of National Guard and Reserve equipment;
- Extends the authority for the current Wounded Warrior Senior Oversight Committee through the end of 2009;
- Prohibits TRICARE premium increases, and co-pays or user fees for the TRICARE retail pharmacy program;
- Requires DOD to recalculate the monthly premiums being charged to TRICARE Reserve Select beneficiaries;
- Provides tuition assistance and training opportunities for military spouses seeking degrees or careers that are portable as they move with their military spouse to other duty locations;
- Authorizes $1.7 billion for new Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicles for combat units in Iraq and Afghanistan;
- $3.2 billion for quality military housing;
- Prohibits the use of funds to establish permanent bases in Iraq.

National Security-Foreign Relations Director, Phil Riley, addressed the Commission on some key topics that included The American Legion's influence on the direction of Wounded Warrior Care. In particular he discussed the transition issues facing service

members that remain troubling, in particular, the Medical and Physical Evaluation Board process. Mr. Riley indicated that more work needs to be done to ensure fairness and proper evaluations, particularly by the Army. He also addressed issues of 'soft power'. Mr. Riley explained that 'soft power' was the ability to utilize the State Department and other governmental agencies in the overseas nation building operations as opposed to the current approach that has left most of the task of nation building to the Military. Finally, Mr. Riley addressed the state of education in the nation at large.

A letter from Legionnaire Bill Clancy (NY) was read to the Commission. It addressed some key issues facing our nation to include some national security topics. The letter tried to serve as a wake up call to the issues facing our nation. The issues addressed were the economy (finance and banking industry), energy, education and immigration. The Commission applauded the letter at the conclusion of its reading.

Deputy Director for National Security, Alec Petkoff then addressed the Commission on the upcoming Washington Conference, the pre-convention trip and the status of establishing a National Fire Fighter of the Year Award.

The next Washington Conference will be held on March 1-4 at the Renaissance Hotel (999 9th street, NW) in Washington, D.C. Staff is looking over quite a few possibilities for speakers for the coming conference. There will be a presentation by the Army on FCS or Future Combat Systems. With the constant changing dynamics in warfare, it is essential that our military service members have the best equipment. This presentation will give some insight into how the army wants to spend its share of the annual Defense budgets.

Staff is also coordinating with the Navy to obtain a briefing from a flag officer on the current and future role of the Navy.

A third speaker will focus on energy independence. America is being held hostage by our dependence on foreign sources of energy, in particular, oil. Everyone is aware by now that while America only produces 5 percent of the world's oil, and we (U.S.A.) use 25 percent of it. We import over 60 percent of our oil. It would be bad enough if this transfer of wealth was going to our friends, but it is instead going to countries that seek our demise like Venezuela and Iran. Worst of all is the oil that flows to us from Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia is not only an exporter of oil, it is the chief exporter of hate in the form of Islamic extremism. The money we send them for oil is used to construct schools that teach a form of Islam that seeks the submission of all the world to Sharia Law and teaches that the killing infidels is the will of God. It is time we addressed this issue at our Washington Conference.

This year's National Convention will be held in Louisville, Kentucky during the period 21-27 August 2009. Staff has done some preliminary planning to arrange a trip to the Army's Fort Knox. Invitations to all National Security Commission members will be sent.

Department Law Enforcement Officer of the Year submissions are due to the Washington office before the 1 February deadline.

The Commission is still considering a Fire Fighter of the Year Award. Thirty Departments already have Fire Fighter of the Year Awards while another 12 are planning to have them soon. This shows nationwide support for the award. Adjustments to the award will probably include the inclusion of EMS's and all volunteers.

On Tuesday, October 14, 2008, 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.

The National Security Commission thanks National Commander David Rehbein, and the National Executive Committee for their outstanding support.

Washington Conference

The National Security Commission met in general sessions on March 2-4, 2009 during the 49th Annual Washington Conference at the Renaissance Hotel, Washington DC. The following is a summary of those sessions:

Joint Session

The National Security Commission, in a joint session with the Foreign Relations Commission, met and were addressed by four speakers: John J. Norris, Jr., Deputy Assistant Secretary for East Asian Affairs, U.S. Department of State; Jerry Johnson, Physical Evaluation Board Representative, American Legion, Walter Reed Medical Center (WRAMC); and Energy Panel speakers Anne Korin, who chairs the Set America Free Coalition, an alliance of national security, environmental, labor and religious groups promoting ways to reduce America's dependence on foreign oil.; and Edwin Black, award-winning, New York Times best selling author of "Internal Combustion" and "The Plan." Brigadier General Reuben D. Jones, The US Army Adjutant General and Commander Physical Disability Agency, was also scheduled to speak but was unable to appear due to inclement weather.

Mr. Norris presented an overview of U.S. relations with the Asia-Pacific region. In particular, he discussed Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton's first trip abroad since taking office. Secretary Clinton visited Japan (February 16-18), Indonesia (February 18-19), the Republic of Korea (February 19-20), and China (February 20-22). Mr. Norris also covered such topics as common approaches to the challenges facing the international community, including the financial markets turmoil, humanitarian issues, security and climate change. According to Mr. Norris, the State Department is looking to build bilateral alliances and cooperation throughout Asia on regional and global issues. He emphasized the importance of expanding global cooperative partnership with our ally, South Korea and furthering the development a positive, cooperative relationship between the United States and China.

Mr. Johnson gave an overview of his work at WRAMC assisting service members with their recovery and transition. Specifically he addressed the Physical Disability Agency (PDA) as relates to the Medical Evaluation Boards (MEB) and Physical Evaluation Boards (PEB) that service members go through. He gave a good outline of how the new pilot program at WRAMC is an improvement in many respects over the old system. But he spent a majority of the time exposing the shortcomings of the system. Sometimes the biggest short coming could be human error on the part of the PDA. That human error was identified in the form of DOD advocates and PEB board members over looking evidence or of an ignorance of the regulations. These reasons support the need of VSO representation for service members at these critical evaluation boards.

The Energy Panel followed Mr. Johnson. Ms. Korin and Mr. Black both gave insightful and impassioned presentations on the state of American energy, the necessity for independence from foreign oil, domestic obstacles and related global issues. Ms. Korin described how America's dependence on foreign oil is enabling radical Islamists to leverage power against the United States. She alerted The Legion to the fact that more than 70 percent of the world's proven oil reserves and over a third of production are concentrated in Muslim countries which often have direct ties to supporting terrorist operations. While the U.S. economy bleeds, Ms. Korin said, countries that are

sympathetic to and directly supportive of radical Islam such as Saudi Arabia and Iran are on the collecting and accumulating huge profits from oil production. Ms. Korin concluded by stressing the importance of establishing an Open Fuel Standard on the basis of national security. Choosing not to embrace an Open Fuel Standard, Ms. Korin said, is choosing to preserve the Middle East's stranglehold over America's economy and for that matter, the economy of the world.

Mr. Black continued on the subject of oil independence and grimly announced that America faces real danger due to a lack of a realistic energy plan for the future; especially in the event of an oil embargo or depletion crisis. He painted a bleak picture of our country if we continue without having a plan for this possible scenario. If those who wish for the downfall of western society succeed in using our oil dependence as a weapon against us, Mr. Edwin explained, America will be struck with peril. Society needs a plan, he said, an emergency plan--in the event the oil stops. The answer he said is in the production of a transportation system and the production of automobiles that are not fueled by oil but alternative fuels such as compressed natural gas, electricity and bio-fuels similar to the bio-fuel utilized in Brazil.

Afternoon Joint Session/POW/MIA Update, March 2nd

The expert panel on the POW/MIA issues was comprised of Major Bob Brenzel, USAF, Chief, Vietnam War Working Group, Joint Commission Support Directive (JCSD), Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO) and Ann Mills Griffiths, Executive Director, National League of POW/MIA Families.

Major Brenzel began the session by explaining the inner workings of the JCSD and its chain of command. Major Brenzel indicated that DPMO's reporting relationships will be adjusted. DPMO is seeking dialogue with those concerned with the interest of incorporating feedback into the organization's improvement. A new Deputy Under Secretary of Defense (Policy Integration/Chief of Staff) will be established to address policy administration, management and integration across the organization, with Defense organizations, and with interagency partners. Because of the Secretary's and the country's continued dedication to prisoners of war and those missing in action, DPMO will be reporting to the Under Secretary's office directly through the new Deputy Under Secretary for Policy Integration. This change moves the POW/MIA mission higher within the President's administration overall, ensuring it receives the attention it deserves. The exact timing of these shifts is still being decided.

Ms. Griffiths began by acknowledging the significant evolution that the POW/MIA issue has gone through since the Vietnam War. Chief among these advancements, she said, are the scientific advancements that make all aspects of the issue more effective in terms of results. MtDNA, she cited, has made it possible to identify very small portions of remains. This is a critical change when dealing with the passage of time and the eroding effects of soil in areas where US losses occurred. Ms. Griffiths continued by pointing out Vietnam's failure to fully cooperate in good faith in accordance with the 1993 agreements which normalized relations with the US. She opined that, although normalized relations should be reversed on the basis of Vietnam's lack of cooperation on the issue, she believes that this will never happen due to billions of dollars of trade and investment by US corporations. Ms. Griffiths concluded by expressing admiration for The Legion's effectiveness on related legislation and recognized the deep friendship that has developed between The Legion and Ms. Griffiths and her organization.

Business Session

The National Security Commission met in business session on Wednesday morning March 4, 2009. After Chairman Wong's opening remarks and introductions he invited Krisann Owens, who is the National Security Chairman of the American Legion Auxiliary to address the session. She was followed by Mr. Ricky Smith who gave a very informative presentation on the Army's Future Combat Systems. Deputy Director for National Security, Alec Petkoff, then gave an update on the plans for the preconvention trip, the proposed FY 2010 Defense Budget and seven resolutions that may be considered at the 2009 Spring National Executive Committee Meetings. Those resolutions related to the following topics:

- Support for the Community Covenant (Department of Defense (DOD) program that organizes the community to support its service members)
- A position concerning the disposition of the Bells of Balangiga
- A position to support a stand alone fund for DOD research into blood cancers
- National Firefighter of the Year Award
- Reforming DOD's Physical Disability Agency
- Support for Veteran's Mitigation Courts
- Supporting the recruitment of legal immigrants into the armed forces and fast tracking them towards citizenship (as relates to a current Pentagon program)

Preconvention Trip

This year's preconvention trip will be to Fort Knox, Kentucky. The date of the trip will be August 21st. Some of the events being planned include:

- The CCTT, TDS, or UCOFT—tank and Bradley training simulators.
- Engagement Skills Trainer (EST) - A high tech weapons simulator.
- Observing soldier training (obstacle course, bayonet course, rappelling etc.—)
- Brief/Static Display at a Motor Pool (M1A1, Bradley, Stryker, etc.)
- The Patton Museum
- Lunch at the 'Leaders Club' to include a Commander's Brief

Defense Budget
2009 Authorizations

Active Duty Issues

- Pay Raise: 3.9% pay raise effective Jan 1, 2009
- End Strength: Army +7K USMC +5K Navy -2.8K USAF -12.5K (did not restore previously proposed cut for USAF, even though SecDef has stated that the planned USAF cut will not be imposed)
- Family Separation Allowance: Authorizes payment to both member spouses with dependents if both are assigned remotely

Military Family Issues

- Spouse Education: Authorizes programs to help spouses with degrees/credentials/licenses to pursue portable careers
- Impact Aid: Authorizes $35M to assist schools with high proportion of military children, with additional $15M for schools in BRAC/unit movement areas and $5M for schools attended by severely disabled military children

Guard/Reserve Issues

- Education: Requires honorable discharge for Guard/Reserve members to use education benefits resulting from active duty (effective 1/28/08 for members who haven't used any of their entitlement)
- G/R Medical/Dental Readiness: Services may provide free health/dental care to any SelRes/IRR (if subject to involuntary recall) they deem appropriate and may waive dental copays for Guard/Reserve personnel to facilitate/ensure readiness
- Transition TRICARE: DoD may temporarily continue active duty TRICARE coverage for separatees who enter SelRes (continue for 60 days if less than 6YOS; 120 days if 6+YOS

Health Care Issues

- TRICARE Fees: Bar increases in pharmacy copays or retiree fees for FY09
- Preventive Care: Waive TRICARE copays/deductibles for beneficiaries under 65 for colorectal/prostate/breast/cervical screening, annual physical, vaccinations and other services authorized by SecDef (those over age 65 to be reimbursed for copays rather than waived due to budget technicality)

Wounded Warrior Issues

- Decorations: Requires SecDef to replace decorations on one-time basis upon request by recipient or next of kin
- Salute: Authorizes military/vets not in uniform to salute flag during national anthem

2010 Budget Submission

- President Barack Obama wants to increase spending on the U.S. military by $20.4 billion in 2010
- Calling for a crackdown on the Pentagon's profligate procurement system
- Increases defense spending to $533.7 billion
- $533.7 billion does not include money for fighting the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, or about $20 billion that is to be spent on nuclear weapons and other military items outside the Defense Department.
- $130 billion for the wars—down from $144 billion being spent this year
- A complete defense budget is to be released in April. It will provide details on procurement and the fate of major weapon programs

The American Legion Views and Estimates

BUDGET PROPOSALS FOR SELECTED GENERAL DISCRETIONARY PROGRAMS FOR DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE FOR FISCAL YEAR 2010

	Current Defense Funding for FY 2009	The American Legion's FY 2010 Recommendations
Total Defense Spending	$487.7 billion	**$729 billion** (Based on 5 percent of projected GDP.)
Military Personnel	$114.4 billion	**$117.8 billion**
Operation and Maintenance	$152.9 billion	**$175 billion**
Procurement	$101 billion	**$225 billion**
Research, Development, Test and Evaluation	$80.5 billion	**$100 billion**
Defense Health Programs	$25.8 billion	**$106 billion**

Other DOD Programs and Revolving and Management Funds(not including Defense Health Programs)	$6 billion	**$6 billion**

BUDGET PROPOSALS FOR MILITARY CONSTRUCTION FOR FISCAL YEAR 2010

Current Military Construction Funding for FY 2009		The American Legion's FY 2010
Total Military Construction Spending	$25.05 billion	**$26.3 billion**
		$31.3 billion

BUDGET PROPOSALS FOR HOMELAND SECURITY FOR FISCAL YEAR 2010

Current Homeland Security Funding for FY 2009		The American Legion's FY 2010 Recommendations
Total-Homeland Security Spending	$42.2 billion	**$44.3 billion**
Border Fencing and Technology	$775 million	**$1 billion**

National Law Enforcement Officer of the Year Award

The Chairman of the Law and Order Committee George Wehrli (FL), announced the Regional winners of the 2009 Law Enforcement Officer of the Year award. This prestigious award will be presented for the 13th consecutive year at this 91th 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. Seventeen Departments submitted candidates for the 2009 award. The regional winners for this year were from the Departments of New Hampshire, North Carolina, Maryland, Minnesota, and Oregon. The National winner will be chosen at the upcoming NEC.

National Executive Committee Meetings, Spring 2009

An executive session of the National Security Commission met in the Circle Center Room of the Sheraton Hotel on May 4, 2009 to consider resolutions properly before it and to conduct other business. A total of nine resolutions were considered and eight are recommended for approval and one is to be held for further study. Many important resolutions were considered for approval to include Protection, Preservation And Retention Of Federal And Military Monuments In The United States (Department of Wyoming), Oppose The Exploitation Of Any Names Or Images Of Killed In Action Service Members For Profiteering Purpose (Department of Pennsylvania); Cancer Research Programs At The Department Of Defense (National Security Commission [NSC]); National Fire Fighter Of The Year Award (NSC); Support Department Of Defense Community Covenant Program (NSC); Support The Pentagon Program To Recruit Temporary, Legal Immigrants In The U.S. (NSC); The American Legion Supports Veterans' Mitigation Courts (NSC); The Department Of Defense Disability Evaluation System (NSC).

Commission Chairman Fang Wong and staff outlined key provisions in the Fiscal Year 2010 National Defense Appropriations budget and issues concerning the 2009 Defense Supplemental.

The 2009 Defense Supplemental

Defense Secretary Robert Gates is urging congress to pass the $83.4 billion defense supplemental for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan by Memorial Day, saying the pentagon will deplete its funding for its support of Pakistan by next month and money for U.S. operations will start running out in July. We need to support the passage of this bill and urge congress to do it expediently. Now is not the time to play politics. While the troops in Iraq perform the dangerous mission of drawing down their size and while more troops are being sent to Afghanistan, passing this bill in a timely matter will send the right message to our troops unharms way.

DOD FY2010 Request

The supplemental type funding is a holdover from the Bush presidency practice of funding the war separately from the overall defense budget. There will be no such request (as of now) for operations in FY2010. As such the National Security Commission and its staff will watch closely as details come out about the budget and what the reaction of the commanders on the ground is to it. America can not underfund its military in a time of war and can never afford to cut back to the point that our military becomes the 'hollow force' that followed the Vietnam War.

The national focus of late has been the economy. While everyone is concerned about what banks might fail next, where the bottom of the housing market really is, or whether or not they will have a job tomorrow, the fact remains that America is still a nation at war.

The nation's vital interests are threatened around the globe. Terrorism must be fought and defeated. But the threats from nation-states continue to be real and growing. North Korea, Pakistan, and Iran quickly come to mind as countries that threaten the security of our nation. Russia and China must also be kept in balance as the former reemerges and the latter continues its rise in world status. And surly no one can ignore the violence along our border with Mexico. This short menu of issues cries out to the issue of a strong national defense.

The Commission should support some of the proposed increases in the 2010 budget. Namely, the $11 billion increase above the FY09 budget level for the growth in military end strength; $400 million more than last year for the continued steady growth in medical research and development; an increase in overall spending by $300 million for wounded, ill and injured, traumatic brain injury, and psychological health programs; and increased funding by $200 million for improvements in child care, spousal support, lodging, and education.

The commission should be concerned about the following proposed cuts—

- Reduce by $1.4 billion the missile defense agency.
- Ending production of the F-22 fighter at 187—representing 183 planes plus four recommended for inclusion in the FY 2009 supplemental.
- Stopping the growth of army brigade combat teams at 45 versus 48 while maintaining the planned increase in end strength of 547,000.

In conclusion, now is not the time to be cutting defense budgets and The American Legion will urge the administration to fully fund all aspects of our military in order to keep our nation safe and to protect our vital interests.

Chairman Wong and staff also discussed possible resolutions that may need to be considered at National Convention in Louisville, KY. Deputy Director of National Security Alec Petkoff also discussed the pre-convention trip to Fort Knox.

On Tuesday, May 5, the National Security and Foreign Relations Commissions met in joint session. The Commissions were honored by the visit of National Commander David K. Rehbein and very much appreciated his opening remarks emphasizing the importance of establishing new and meaningful resolutions to communicate The Legion's positions concerning the challenges facing our nation today. The commissions were also honored to have Past National Commander John Brieden in attendance and very much appreciated his participation in the meeting.

The Foreign Relations Commission was pleased to host Chaplin William T. Yates, Colonel (Select), Indiana Air National Guard, as the guest speaker for the National Security / Foreign Relations Joint Session. Chaplin Yates addressed both commissions on many important topics including the care of our troops and military families; post-combat reintegration; traumatic brain injury; post-traumatic stress; and suicide prevention. In addition, Mr. Grassi, the Assistant Director for Foreign Relations for The American Legion, presented a brief discussion on current U.S. foreign policy.

The National Security Commission looks forward to working with National Commander Rehbein and the distinguished members of the National Executive Committee in preparation for the National convention. We thank you for your 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; Jerry Johnson, Transition Assistance Representative at Walter Reed Army Medical Center; 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. Andrew Tramontana, 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).

National Firefighter of the Year Award

Americans, especially since the tragic day of September 11, 2001, understand the heroism, bravery and importance of our nation's firefighters and their role in helping to safeguard life and property. The Preamble of the Constitution of The American Legion includes as one of its objectives… "to maintain Law and Order." As concerned citizens and veterans, Legionnaires have always fostered a strong sense of law and order and have upheld the protection of American citizens and the American way of life. They have always held firefighter agencies in the highest regard, and many Posts and Departments already recognize outstanding firefighters of various jurisdictions who daily serve our communities and frequently lay their lives on the line. As such, it is fitting that a National Firefighter of the Year Award be established.

A resolution establishing the new award was adopted at the Spring NEC. The criterion for the award is being finalized and when finished will subsequently be sent to the Departments. The first award should be made at the National Convention in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, August 27 to September 2, 2010.

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; Charles E. Kruger (MN)—Homeland Security and Civil Preparedness; George W. Wehrli (FL)—Law and Order; Charles F. Moreland (FL)—Merchant Marine; H. Warren Post (FL)—Military Affairs; Douglas C. Haggan (FR)—National and Homeland Security Council; 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 90th National Convention. The effort to implement these positions required both administrative and legislative activities.

The Aerospace Committee's current resolutions clearly state The American Legion's full support for a fully funded Air Force and National Aeronautics and Space Administration. The Committee also emphasizes the importance of funding research. Research and development are what keeps the United States second-to-none in the air and in space. To be anything less than number one in these areas is a grave threat to our national security.

HOMELAND SECURITY AND CIVIL PREPAREDNESS COMMITTEE
Charles E. Kruger, Minnesota, 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 roles 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 2008-2009, a total of 97,752 pints of blood were donated by 31,352 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, 2008 through June 15, 2009, many Departments of The American Legion actively participated in the Blood Donor program. The winning Departments included Florida, Ohio, Wisconsin, Georgia, Washington, Montana, Hawaii, and Alaska.

Each winning Department will receive a Certificate of Recognition signed by the National Commander and National Adjutant.

LAW AND ORDER COMMITTEE
George W. Wehrli, 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.

National Firefighter of the Year Award: The Law and Order Committee is pleased to announce the establishment of a National Fire Fighter of the Year Award. A resolution establishing the new award was adopted at the Spring NEC. The criterion for the award is being finalized and will finished will subsequently be sent to the Departments. The first award should be made at the National Convention in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, August 27 to September 2, 2010.

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 1,099 Posts had Fire Prevention programs in 2008-2009.

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. Sergeant Christopher Biron of New Hampshire was selected and will be presented with the thirteenth awarding of the National Law Enforcement Officer of the Year at the 91th National Convention at Louisville, Kentucky.

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
H. Warren Post, Florida, 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 90th National Convention 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 Natural Resources. 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 Florida, Minnesota, Michigan, Montana, and Hawaii. The American Legion presented 7740 ROTC Medals to ROTC students in 2008-2009.

NAVAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
William B. Goede, Minnesota, Chairman

Guided by resolutions adopted at the 90th National Convention, 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.

Working with the national chaplain in keeping with the corporate goal, "the honorable nature of military service," The American Legion video, "A Family Affair—A Prayer for our Troops," was marketed to churches and synagogues that use video as part of their worship services on both Veterans Day and Memorial Day weekends. The booklet, "Legiontown USA," was written and distributed to provide a snapshot of the variety of activities that American Legion posts are involved with every day across America. The publication is filled with vignettes of posts performing service to their community, youth, troops and veterans. In consonance with a second booklet, the Four Pillars of The American Legion, the booklets are useful tools in providing the public, community leaders and elected officials with a complete background on the many services and programs of the organization. The American Legion Day, as established by Resolution 11 passed by the National Executive Committee in May, recognized Sept. 16 as the day the organization was chartered by the U.S. Congress. Using the booklet as a centerpiece, a three-month national information campaign—to provide public education about the nation's largest veterans organization—was developed to begin on The American Legion Day and conclude in November every year. During this period, posts are encouraged to hold public events, obtain a local proclamation of The American Legion Day, and interact with all members of their communities.

Blackhorse Productions is producing a documentary video, "The History of The American Legion," at no cost to The American Legion, which maintains full editorial control. It features interviews with prominent Legionnaires, author and comedian Ben Stein and World War I veteran, and Legionnaire, Frank Buckles. The documentary will be narrated by actor Neal McDonough of Band of Brothers, Desperate Housewives and several motion pictures. Completion is slated for early 2010.

Operation Comfort Warriors has been a huge success, entering August with approximately $171,000 raised. The money has been or is being spent on comfort items for troops recovering in military hospitals and warrior transition units around the world.

Audio-visual projects completed in 2009 included a promotional video for Americanism on the Junior Shooting Sports Program and a new video briefing for oratorical contest judges.

The Public Relations Commission staff also coordinated and procured a video public service announcement for Boys State from NBC News Anchor Tom Brokaw, a former governor of Boys State, to be included in a new promotional package.

PR Tools

Public Relations tools are available free on request and many can be downloaded from The American Legion Web site at www.legion.org, including new suggested speeches for Memorial Day, Flag Day, and Veterans Day. The commission staff is developing an integrated Public Relations System Tool Package to replace the Public Relations Handbook. The new state-of-the-art kit will include instruction, media

products, event planning materials, electronic venues such as website development, social media, television and radio spots, and a full array of fill-in-the-blank news releases, advisories and letters to the editor and community leaders. The package will include a print handbook, DVD, and hyperlinks to media products which can be edited and printed from master templates.

Media Relations

From its presence in the nation's capital, The American Legion received significant media coverage throughout the year. Several high profile national issues in veterans affairs and national security as well as a concerted and assertive six-month-long campaign of broadcasting an average of two press releases per week, feeds to blogs and personal contacts have led to an unprecedented number of media inquiries to the media relations office, on-camera interviews of Legion spokespersons, nationwide radio talk show interviews and contributions to print outlets. Most importantly, media attention continued to spur action by lawmakers to secure and preserve benefits to those we serve.

Awards

At the 49th Washington Conference, noted author, actor, and economist Ben Stein received the National Commander's Public Relations Award for his outstanding support of U.S. servicemembers. *USA TODAY* reporters Blake Morrison and Brad Heath will receive The American Legion Fourth Estate Award during this convention for the series, "The Smokestack Effect: Toxic air and America's schools." Working with more than 30 reporters and others from Johns Hopkins University and the University of Maryland, they joined teams sent to 95 schools in 30 states where they used pumps, metals filters and other equipment taking snapshot samples of the air outside schools. They found toxic chemicals that can aggravate asthma, trigger learning disabilities and cause cancer decades later.

The future

The National Public Relations Commission continues to engage the communications potential of multiple media technologies in continuing to be the nation's preeminent voice of, and for, U.S. veterans and their families.

THE AMERICAN LEGION MAGAZINE COMMISSION

Dennis J. Henkemeyer, Minnesota, Chairman
Jeff Stoffer, Indiana, Director

The American Legion Magazine projects to reach $9 million in total advertising revenue to end the 2009 budget year approximately $500,000 ahead of 2008's sales performance. Circulation changes and a $2 per hundredweight price reduction for paper, starting with the August issue, assures lower manufacturing and distribution costs. Through the first seven issues of 2009, manufacturing costs were $613,000 below budget.

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 2009 have been "The Never Ending Battle," a three-part series on the VA claims backlog and measures the new administration is taking to reduce it. The magazine added "Veterans Update," a column focusing on new developments at VA, the White House and on Capitol Hill that affect veterans. The magazine has closely covered the

progress of the new GI Bill, including launching a new Web site to present information and provide resources, www.mygibill.org.

The magazine division has opened additional new channels of electronic communication in 2009, assuming oversight of American Legion-branded social media, a new blog site and developing a new presence for the National Headquarters set to launch in November. The division produced the first-ever live web cast of The American Legion Baseball World Series in August, reaching nearly 20,000 unique visitors who averaged more than 30 minutes per visit and a total of more than 2 million minutes viewed.

The magazine division looks forward to the challenge of adding new and improved electronic media for the organization while at the same time producing one of the best-read print publications in the industry.

VETERANS AFFAIRS AND REHABILITATION COMMISSION

K. Robert Lewis, Connecticut, Chairman
Barry A. Searle, Pennsylvania, 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, 2009.

The Ninetieth Annual National Convention in Phoenix, Arizona, 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:

2008 National Convention, Phoenix, Arizona

Resolution 30 (SD): Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Dental Care
Resolution 32 (GA): Extend the Filing Period of an Appeal Notice to the Court of Veteran Appeals for Veterans
Resolution 33 (GA): The American Legion Policy on Assured Funding for VA Medical Care
Resolution 34 (GA): The American Legion Policy on Former Prisoners of War
Resolution 35 (GA): The American Legion Policy on VA Compensation
Resolution 36 (GA): Reduce the Number of Years of One-Hundred Percent (100%) Service Connection Required for Dependency and Indemnity Compensation Purposes
Resolution 37 (GA): Amend Title 38, United States Code, to Increase The Special Monthly Compensation (K) Award
Resolution 38 (GA): Remove the Specific Date to Award Dependency and Indemnity Compensation Benefits to Surviving Spouses of Former Prisoners of War
Resolution 39 (GA): VA Role in National Emergency Preparedness
Resolution 40 (GA): Allow Beneficiaries to Retain $90 of their Benefits While in Medicaid-Covered Nursing Homes
Resolution 41 (GA): Presumptive Medical Care for Persian Gulf War Veterans
Resolution 66 (ID): Petition Congress for the Construction of a Veterans' Justice Center and Courthouse
Resolution 69 (VA): The American Legion Policy on State Veterans Home
Resolution 70 (VA): The American Legion Policy on Opening the Federal Supply Schedule for Pharmaceuticals to Medicare and Medicaid
Resolution 71 (VA): The GI Bill of Health

Resolution 85 (NJ): Reinstate Vietnam Veterans with Agent Orange Exposure in the Department of Veterans Affairs Priority Group 6

Resolution 122 (MD): The American Legion Policy on Radiation

Resolution 123 (MD): Extend VA Protection Life Insurance to Service-Connected Who Are Permanently and Total Disabled

Resolution 124 (MD): Recognize Operations in Lebanon (1958), Grenada (1983), Panama (1989-1990) as Periods of War for Department of Veterans Affairs Pension Purposes

Resolution 125 (MD): All Veterans Receive "Wartime" Benefits for Active Military Service Between February 28, 1961 and August 5, 1964

Resolution 126 (MD): Support Presumption of Service Connection for Hepatitis C

Resolution 127 (MD): Revision of Work-Rate Standards for Department of Veterans Affairs Adjudicators

Resolution 128 (MD): Oppose Legislation Authorizing Legion-Accredited Representatives to Develop Claims

Resolution 129 (MD): Clarification of "Service in the Republic of Vietnam" for the Purpose of Agent Orange Presumption

Resolution 130 (MD): Establishment of Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS) as a Gulf War Presumptive Disease

Resolution 131 (MD): The American Legion Policy Regarding Community-Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCS)

Resolution 132 (MD): Provide Full Funding for the Department of Veterans Affairs Construction Program

Resolution 133 (MD): Improve the Disability and Death Pension Program

Resolution 134 (MD): Exempt Purple Heart Recipients from VA Prescription Co-Payment

Resolution 135 (MD): The American Legion Policy on Gulf War Illnesses

Resolution 136 (MD): Increase the Maximum Coverage Under the Service-Disabled Veterans Insurance Program

Resolution 137 (MD): Support Legislation to Place Mariner Medal Recipients in Priority Group 3 for Department of Veterans Affairs Health Care

Resolution 138 (MD): Request Congress Provide the Department of Veterans Affairs Adequate Funding for Medical and Prosthetic Research

Resolution 139 (MD): The American Legion Policy on Department of Veterans Affairs National Life Insurance

Resolution 140 (MD): The American Legion Policy on Department of Veterans Affairs Nursing Home Capacity

Resolution 141 (MD): Open-Ended Presumptive Period for Undiagnosed Illnesses for Gulf War Veterans

Resolution 142 (MD): Oppose Any Reduction of Eligibility Criteria for Department of Veterans Affairs Per Diem Payments to State Veterans Homes

Resolution 143 (MD): The American Legion Policy on Prostate Cancer Research and Treatment

Resolution 144 (MD): Amend the Eligibility Requirements and Extend the Eligibility Time Period for Service-Disabled Veterans Insurance

Resolution 145 (MD): Support Medicare Reimbursement for Department of Veterans Affairs

Resolution 146 (MD): The American Legion Policy on Department of Veterans Affairs Pharmacy Benefits

Resolution 147 (MD): Support the Automatic Waiver of Veterans Benefits Administration Debts of $250 or Less

Resolution 148 (MD): Include World War II Veterans in Priority Group 6 for Department of Veterans Affairs Health Care

Resolution 149 (MD): The American Legion Policy on the Correction of Military Records

Resolution 150 (MD): The American Legion Policy on Department of Veterans Affairs Mental Health Services

Resolution 151 (MD): Exempt Certain Income from Pension Rate Determination

Resolution 178 (MI): The American Legion on Agent Orange

Resolution 179 (MI): Exempt VA Benefits and Services from Pay-GO Provisions

Resolution 180 (MI): Oppose Increased Co-Payments and an Enrollment Fee for Priority Group 7 & 8 Veterans to Receive VA Health Care

Resolution 181 (MI): The American Legion Policy on Tobacco-Related Disabilities

Resolution 182 (MI): Oppose Lump Sum Payments of VA Disability Compensation

Resolution 183 (MI): VA Involvement in the Department of Homeland Security

Resolution 184 (MI): Restore and Increase Burial and Plot Allowance

Resolution 185 (MI): Indiana-Ohio Center for Traumatic Amputation Rehabilitation Research

Resolution 193 (CO): The American Legion Oppose VA Medical Center Sharing Arrangements at the Fitzsimmons VA Medical Center

Resolution 195 (CO): 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

Resolution 237 (NY): Support Legislation that the Department of Veterans Affairs Include and Treat Family Members of Veterans with Illnesses and Injuries

Resolution 311 (VA&R): Department VAVS Coordinators

Resolution 312 (VA&R): The American Legion Policy on the National Cemetery Administration

Resolution 313 (VA&R): Support Budget Reform of Annual Appropriations for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Health Care Funding

Resolution 317 (VA&R): Income Tax Deduction for Volunteer Mileage

Resolution 323 (VA&R): To Clarify the Conditions and Issuance of National Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service (VAVS) Awards

National Executive Committee
August 25, 2008

Resolution 1 (VA&R): Oppose the Privatization of State Veterans Home Inspection

Resolution 2 (VA&R): Oppose the Contracting Out of VBA's Veteran Education Division Services

National Executive Committee Meeting
October 15-16, 2008

Resolution 22: VA Grant WW II Veterans Same Hospital and Medical Entitlements as Previously Granted to WW I and Spanish American War Veterans
(Origin: Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission)

Resolution 23: The American Legion Position on Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease
(Origin: Reg. Resolution 188 (CO) Department Executive Committee)

Resolution 24: Medical Opinions Provided By the Department of Veterans Affairs Primary Care Providers
(Origin: Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission)
Resolution 30: Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Provide Internal Access Phone Number for Veteran Service Organization (VSO) Accredited Representatives
(Origin: Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission)

National Executive Committee Meeting
May 6-7, 2009

Resolution 18: Support the Establishment of Priority Status in the Adjudication of Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Disability Claims of World War II and Korean War Veterans
(Origin: Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission)
Resolution 19: The American Legion Supports the Ride to Recovery Program
(Origin: Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission)
Resolution 20: The American Legion Supports Legislation to Establish a Director of Physician Assistant (PA) Services in the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)
(Origin: Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission)
Resolution 21: Amend Title 38, United States Code, To Establish a Marker for Cremation Urns Provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)
(Origin: Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission)
Resolution 22: Amend PL 109-13 To Open Traumatic Injury Service Members Group Life Insurance (TSGLI) Retroactive Period To All Qualifying Service Members
(Origin: Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission)
Resolution 23: Support Legislation to Place Medal of Honor Recipients in Priority Group 1 for Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Health Care
(Origin: Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission)
Resolution 24: The American Legion Supports The America's Huey 091 Foundation
(Origin: Resolution 194 (CO))
Resolution 25: The American Legion Policy on Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Consolidation Efforts
(Origin: Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission)
Resolution 26: Creation of Ad Hoc Committee to Ensure Proper Representation of Claims Adjudicated by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Pension Maintenance (Management) Centers
(Origin: Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission)
Resolution 27: The American Legion Policy on the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Billing of Private Insurance
(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, 2008, through May 8, 2009.

The Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission met on August 25, 2008, during the National Convention in Phoenix, Arizona 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 14-15, 2008, for the purpose of considering those matters, which had previously been referred for study, and to discuss a broad range of

other veteran related matters. A report of that meeting was presented to the National Executive Committee on October 16, 2007.

The National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission met for the 86th consecutive year in Washington, DC, on March 2, 2009, in conjunction with the 49th Annual Washington Conference.

Annual National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Conference

The 85th Annual Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation (VA&R) Conference was held at the Renaissance Hotel in Washington, D.C. on March 2, 2009. The agenda included presentations by officials of the Department of Veterans Affairs and other guest speakers, who discussed matters relative to veterans' benefits and health care.

National Commander David K. Rehbein (IA) presented The American Legion Volunteer of the Year Award to Mr. Robert Alexson (IA). Conferees were addressed by the Honorable Admiral Patrick W. Dunne, Under Secretary for Benefits (VA), Georg-Hans Michalke (UT), BDD Representative, National Veterans Affairs Rehabilitation Commission and Andrew Tramontana, Assistant Director for DOD Outreach, National Veteran Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission.

The agenda included presentations by officials of the Department of Veterans Affairs, House and Senate Veteran Affairs Committee and two panels on 1) Claims and 2) Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) / Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) / Prosthetics to discuss current matters relative to veterans' benefits and health care.

The Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) / Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) / Prosthetics TBI and Mental Health Panelists included: Colonel Charles W. Hoge, MD, Director of the Division of Psychiatry and Neuroscience, Walter Reed Army Institute of Research; Philip A DeFina, MD, Founder, Chief Executive Officer and Chief Scientific Officer, International Brain Research Foundation; Joel Kupersmith, MD, Chief Research and Development Officer, Veterans Health Administration, Department of Veterans Affairs and Dr. Joel Scholten, MD, Associate Chief of Staff, Rehab Services, Department of Veterans Affairs.

The Claims and Pension Panelists included: Bradley G. Mayes, Director, Compensation and Pension Service, Department of Veterans Affairs; Ms. Jackie Garrick, Professional Staff Member, House Committee on Veterans Affairs; Dahlia Melendrez, Benefits Counsel, Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs and Jim Willis (OR), The American Legion.

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, 2009 to July 31, 2009, on matters pertaining to the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission.

- On March 3, 2009, Joseph Wilson, Deputy Director of VA&R before the House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Health on Veterans' Health Care Legislation including H. R. 784 and H. R. 785
- On March 24, 2009, Ian de Planque, Assistant Director of VA&R before the House Veterans Affairs Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs on the Nexus between Engaged in Combat with the Enemy and PTSD in the Era of Changing Warfare tactics
- On April 29, 2009, Ian de Planque, Assistant Director of VA&R before the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee on numerous veterans' legislation and draft legislation
- On June 9, 2009, Joseph Wilson, Deputy Director of VA&R before the House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Health on Assessing Cares and the Future of VA's Health Infrastructure
- On June 18, 2009, Ian de Planque, Assistant Director, VA&R before the House Veterans Affairs Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs on "Addressing the Backlog: Can VA Handle 1 Million Claims?"
- 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 June 18, 2009, Joseph Wilson, Deputy Director of VA&R before the House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on numerous veterans' legislation and draft legislation

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, When They Come Home—A Post Guide to Establishing A Successful "Heroes To Hometown" Program in your Community. A Department of Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service (VAVS) Tri-fold brochure and VAVS Post Poster* was created this year to provide additional information on that program. *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.

2009 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 130 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.

The National Cemetery Administration had an enacted budget of $230 million in FY 2009 and requested an appropriation of $242 million for FY 2010. The recommended appropriation for the NCA is $250 million for FY 2010, with the additional level of funding reflective of the National Shrine commitment program, which is an initiative to improve the overall appearance and condition of cemeteries as identified in the study on veterans' cemeteries submitted to Congress in 2002.

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 began operations in late 2008 and early 2009 and will ultimately provide service to approximately 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.

Since 1980, NCA's State Cemetery Grants Program has obligated more than $353 million to 38 states and territories for the establishment, expansion, or improvement of 74 state Veterans cemeteries. In fiscal year 2008, NCA-supported state cemeteries provided approximately 25,000 interments. There are 65 operational cemeteries.

NCA Performance Ratings

In a report released in 2008, VA's national cemeteries received the highest current rating by a public or private organization in a nationwide customer satisfaction survey. The survey was the 2007 American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI). VA scored a rating of 95 out of a possible 100 points. This is one point lower than the last survey in

2006, yet continues to be 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 84 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 94 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. Since 1973, NCA has furnished more than 10.3 million headstones and markers. In fiscal year 2008, NCA furnished more than 361,200 headstones and markers.

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. NCA provided more than 511,300 Presidential Memorial Certificates to the loved ones of deceased Veterans in fiscal year 2008. Since 1988, NCA has provided 6.8 million Presidential Memorial Certificates.

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. In the past year, the medical consultant has been working more closely with the attorneys at NVSLP providing key information and medical opinions on numerous cases.

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 224 cases. She has reviewed 72 cases and submitted written reports on 49 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 1.3 million policies in force as of May 31, 2009, with a combined life insurance coverage of some $ 15 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 2281 veterans with approximately $165 million dollars of coverage in force. Currently these programs are operated out of the VA Insurance Center in Philadelphia, PA. The National Association of Insurance Commissioners approved the use of the 2001 Commissioners Standard Mortality Table as the new mortality standard for life insurance. Since the law allows the VA Secretary to set the mortality table for the VMLI program, VA began using the 2001 table, rather than the previous 1958 table, effective October 1, 2006. This reduced premiums for the program an average of 37 percent.

In addition to the life insurance programs directly operated by the 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, 2009 SGLI provided some 5.51 million active duty and reserve personnel, spouses and dependents with more than $ 1.31 trillion dollars of life insurance coverage, while VGLI covered some 432,212 veterans with insurance in excess of $ 57 billion dollars. Of these policy accounts the OSGLI center in Roseland, NJ maintains only VGLI, with the various military service departments maintaining the rest. The OSGLI center processes between 2500-3500 death claims annually with minimal other transactions due to the very limited nature of the coverage as group term insurance only. Currently, claims arising from military operations in the Middle East and Central Asia are processed in less than two business days from the time the last required document is received at OSGLI. In 1992 VGLI became lifetime renewable instead of the single five year term previously in effect. The amount of VGLI a veteran can hold cannot be in excess of the amount of SGLI he or she held in service. In 1997 Retired Reservists, instead of being insured under the SGLI program until age 60 or the receipt of their first retired pay check, were merged into the VGLI program to allow them the option of retaining their coverage as long as desired. Reservists leaving reserve service without the amount of time needed for full retirement may be covered under VGLI if desired. In addition, veterans are now permitted to convert their SGLI/VGLI insurance, in partial amounts at different times or in whole, to a private plan of insurance with a participating commercial insurance carrier as they leave service, or at any time they are in the VGLI program, without having to wait a stipulated period as was previously the case. Effective April 1, 2001 those entering active duty were automatically covered for a full $250,000

under SGLI as authorized by Public Law 106-419, and members of the Individual Ready Reserve who have volunteered for assignment to a mobilization category were also made eligible for SGLI coverage under that law. . In addition, Public Law 107-14 authorized other program enhancements to the SGLI program, effective November 1, 2001, which allows up to $100,000 in spousal coverage on a paid premium basis, and provides $10,000 free life insurance coverage for a member's children. These dependent coverages still cannot, at present, be carried over into the VGLI program and cannot be doubled in the case of both parents being in service. However, while the member's SGLI is in force, spousal coverage can be converted to a private plan of insurance with a participating commercial company upon written application in the same manner as a VGLI policy may be so converted. The American Legion insurance unit presented supporting testimony 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 $228.7 billion dollars in traumatic injury coverage as per a published schedule of losses caused by such physical injuries. On November 26, 2008 VA issued new regulations as a result of extensive reviews to expand the TSGLI schedule of losses and the time period involved. Additions to the TSGLI schedule included expansion of definitions for total and permanent loss of sight, hearing, speech, and various types of paralysis. Other additions included certain types of amputation, limb salvage, facial reconstruction, burns, injuries resulting from authorized use of controlled substances and traumatic brain injury effects. Effective September 1, 2005 regular SGLI coverage was automatically increased to $400,000 from the previous $250,000, and is the current maximum amount of SGLI coverage permitted. Servicemembers electing lesser amounts must do so in $50,000 increments. Spousal and dependent coverage was not impacted by the legislation. The Act specified certain spousal and beneficiary notification requirements for members changing beneficiary designations or electing lesser amounts of coverage. The Act also provided for the group traumatic injury insurance rider to be attached to the group coverage provided under SGLI, the premium cost of which to the insured was to be $1.00 per month. This injury protection ranges from $25,000 to $100,000 in accordance with a disability schedule which has been published and which is composed of a list of physical traumatic injuries involving significant loss of use of physical or mental abilities caused by such injury. Coverage under this rider began December 1, 2005. A retroactive provision for qualifying injuries (Iraq and Afghanistan service) from October 7, 2001 to the effective date was also provided for. The Secretary of Defense certifies to the SGLI center the individuals qualifying for retroactive payments. Servicemembers must be covered by SGLI to have this rider, and for members insured under SGLI the rider is mandatory. Rider coverage ceases on midnight on the date the member separates from the uniformed service. No retroactive period was

contained in the legislation for the $150,000 SGLI increase, but this was addressed through the Dept. of Defense's Death Gratuity benefit instead, as insurance underwriting requirements did not permit new coverage increases to be applied retroactively.

On September 30, 2005 the SGLI enhancement Act of 2005 (PL 109-80) was enacted which made permanent the increase in the maximum allowable SGLI regular coverage from $250,000 to $400,000, and which included various spousal notification requirements for beneficiary changes. This last requirement, for an insured married at the time of making a beneficiary election, that the Secretary of Defense notify the insured's spouse should the insured at any time take action to either reduce the amount of coverage or to name a beneficiary other than the insured's spouse, did not meet with the support of The American Legion. It has historically been the belief of The American Legion that this type of fundamental insurance benefit is a special contract between the service member (or veteran in the case of veteran's coverage) and the federal government, and is a matter personal and sacrosanct to those who serve (or have served) the nation in uniform, and that an insured's beneficiary information should not be released to third parties without the consent of the insured. Such spousal notification, however, does not affect a member's right to elect or change his/her beneficiary designation or amount of SGLI coverage at any time.

Further legislative changes in the SGLI program included PL 109-163, enacted January 6, 2006, which authorized the payment of an allowance to service members serving in Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom for an amount equal to the premium of $150,000 of SGLI coverage, affording them $150,000 of free SGLI coverage provided they did not decline such coverage, and PL 109-233 enacted June 15, 2006. PL 109-233 extends the duration of SGLI coverage from one to two years for service members who are totally disabled upon the date of their separation from active duty or reserve status, effective upon the date of enactment for members released before October 1, 2011. 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 took 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 7.24 million life insurance policies for military personnel, spouses, dependents and veterans, with a total in-force coverage of over $ 1.33 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 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 dual 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 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 2009.

S. 728, 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 a current Commissioners Standard Ordinary Basic Table of Mortality, rather than the 1941 Table remaining 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 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 comments 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.728 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.

Lastly, several further legislative proposals, in Committee as of June 2009, are H.R. 2379 which would allow participants in the VGLI program to purchase up to an additional $25,000 in life insurance coverage once every five year policy term period, H.R. 2713 to increase basic SDVI from its present $10,000 maximum to a maximum coverage of $100,000, plus increase Supplemental SDVI to a new maximum of $50,000 from the current $20,000, with an open period of two years for those meeting SDVI requirements, but who had not applied for such previously, H.R. 2774 to make permanent the two year free SGLI extension period for totally disabled veterans mentioned earlier, and H.R. 2968 for a technical adjustment in accelerated insurance benefits in certain terminal cases under SGLI and VGLI.

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 in 2007 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 remains heavily involved in the large increase in SDVI applications and related appeals cases beginning in 2004 and 2005, occasioned by the mass mailing of SDVI notifications to virtually all service-connected veterans mentioned earlier. Information, staff analysis, and testimony/comments for 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, 2008 to June 30, 2009 the following activities of The American Legion's Philadelphia and St. Paul offices were reported:

Insurance & Debt Management:

Letters Received 10,167
Letters Written 11,951
Disability Insurance Claims 1,896
Death Insurance Claims 1.619
Insurance Folders Reviewed 5,334
In-Force Insurance Policy Accounts Reviewed 5,107
New Insurance Accounts—SDVI 3,522
Telephone Contacts 7,763
Personal Contacts 5,249
Submittal Memorandums & Reports 3,138
DVA Case Responses Processed: Insurance and Debt Management Cases 17,632
*Live Claims, Evidence and Other Submittals Presented 26,739

**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: 1,887
DMC Case Audits: 9,854
DMC Debt Waiver Cases: 2,051
Pension Center Inquiries/Transactions: 4,920
Pension Center VSO Responses Processed: 26,677

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 located at the Washington, D.C. Regional Office (WRO) to provide claims service to individuals residing within the Washington, D.C. Metropolitan Region. 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.

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 June 30, 2008, through June 30, 2009. 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 6,744 cases. Included in this total were 88 (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 48,369 decisions, which 8,513 (17.6%) had American Legion representation. These decisions consisted of 1,999 (23.5%) approvals, 3,242 (38%) remands, 3,016 (35.4%) denials, and 241 (2.8%) others. The last category includes administrative withdrawals, vacated cases, deaths, and dismissals. These figures represent a 0.7% increase in appeal approvals, a 1% increase in remands and a 2.1% decrease 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.

2008 saw the Board of Veterans' Appeals increase productivity to the highest level since 1991 and, according to the BVA Fiscal Year 2008 Report, the two most significant challenges for Fiscal Year 2009 and 2010 are to continue to eliminate avoidable remands and to reduce the backlog of pending appeals. In fiscal year 2008, the Board focused on methods to increase decision output and the quality of the decisions rendered. The Board's efforts to eliminate avoidable remands and increase decision output included the use of voluntary attorney overtime and production incentives for attorneys.

As of June 30, 2009, there were 4,320 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 2007. The American Legion has custody of approximately 750 pre-2006 original appeals. Quality remains our first priority. However, due to the increase in productivity by the BVA, The American Legion Appeals and Special Claims unit is faced with the challenge of meeting the demands of the Board's increase in productivity. Currently each American Legion appeals representative at the Board of Veterans' Appeals is required to review and complete three (3) appeals per day. This standard yielded positive results, increasing productivity by 9.4% in 2007. At the beginning of July 2008, The American Legion Appeals Unit production trend was 3 original appeals to one remanded appeal. Although this trend remained consistent over the previous two years, the increased productivity by the Board caused this ratio to shift to 3 original appeals to 2 remanded appeals, along with our effort to review the remaining original appeals that pre-date 2006. Currently the

BVA unit is engaged in a Board-wide initiative to identify all appeals in our possession belonging to appellants 75 years and older and advance them on the Boards docket so that these appeals can be adjudicated most expeditiously (per CFR). Since May 2009 The American Legion BVA Unit has identified and returned and completed over 1,100 appeals to the Board for review and final decision. This is an on-going project that will continue throughout the remainder of the year with many of our veterans (and appellants) turning 75 during this calendar year.

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 for each branch of our armed services. The American Legion was instrumental in the creation of these boards shortly after World War II and has actively assisted former service members petitioning them since.

During the period 1 July 2008 through 30 June 2009 the staff of the Military Review Boards Unit provided counsel, guidance and representation to former service members seeking correction of their service record by the Army, Air Force, Navy/Marine Corps and Coast Guard discharge review and correction boards. These requests involved a wide variety of issues including character of service upgrades, reason for discharge changes, entitlement or amendment of physical disability severance or retirement, issuance or reissuance of military awards and decorations, requests for service and medical records, and administrative corrections to military records.

The following is breakdowns of the individual administrative actions taken by the staff in assisting former service members prepare their cases for review.

Administrative Actions: Hearing Preparation: 447, Initial Interviews/Guides: 575, Telephone/Returned Calls: 2037, Email Inquires/Request: 1020, Status Checks: 348, Development Letters: 271, DSO/VSO Inquiries: 229, Board/Agency/Congressional Contacts: 212, Walk-ins/Appointments: 117, Application Package Reviews: 468, Awards/Decorations/Medals: 109, Other Correspondence: 301.

The following classifies the types of reviews that were presented to the respective service boards.

Military Discharge Review Boards: Army record reviews 23, hearing reviews 99, reconsiderations 10; Air Force record reviews 18, hearing reviews 48, reconsiderations 1; Navy record reviews 40, hearing reviews 36, reconsiderations 02; Marine Corps record review 38, hearing reviews 12, reconsiderations 01; Coast Guard record reviews 01, hearing reviews 0, reconsiderations 0.

Boards For Correction Of Military Records: Army record reviews 102, hearing reviews 0, reconsiderations 41; Air Force record reviews 60, hearing reviews 0, reconsiderations 06; Navy record reviews 32, hearing reviews 0, reconsiderations 12; Marine Corps record reviews 22, hearing reviews 0, reconsiderations 08; Coast Guard record reviews 01, hearing reviews 0, reconsiderations 0.

This final breakdown gives the numbers of American Legion cases decided by the boards, the favorable determinations and the percentage of petitions that were granted relief.

Military Discharge Review Boards: Army cases presented 70, corrected 36 (51%); Air Force cases presented 42, corrected 06 (14%); Navy cases presented 46, corrected 09 (19%), Marine Corps cases presented 24; corrected 05 (20%); Coast Guard presented 0, corrected 0 (0%).

Boards For Correction Of Military Records: Army cases presented 56, corrected 09(16%); Air Force cases presented 35, corrected 04 (11%); Navy cases presented 38, corrected 04 (10%), Marine Corps cases presented 23; corrected 02 (08%); Coast Guard presented 0, corrected 0 (0%).

Both the Military Discharge Review Boards and the Boards for Correction of Military Records have been mandated by Congress to adjudicate petitions within 12 months of the date received. All of the boards have been in compliance this past year.

In addition to case work, the staff of Military Review Boards Unit also produces, supplies and presents training material for our Department Service Officers and instructional guides for the applicants that we represent.

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. The actual case workload for each section or office within the VA&R Division is reflected in that office's specific section in this report.

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 his staff; 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 2009 school was held February 25-28, 2009 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 2009 was held July 30-August 1, 2009 at the Sheraton City Center Hotel, Indianapolis, Indiana. There were 120 service officers in attendance.

A full day of training for new service officers was held on July 29, 2009. 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. Twenty service officers attended the training.

Department of Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service

The VAVS National Deputy Representative attended the sixty-third meeting of the VAVS National Advisory Committee (NAC) that was held in Houston, Texas during May 20-22, 2009. The meeting included several volunteer business sessions and educational workshops, and presentations of NAC Volunteer of the Year Awards and the Deputy National VAVS Representative also served as emcee for the James H. Parke Memorial Scholarship Award Luncheon. The James H. Parke Memorial Scholarship 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.

Many NAC Member Organizations continue to have a decline in total number of volunteers and volunteer hours, both Regularly Scheduled (RS) and Occasional (OCC). More concentration and focus on Vietnam, Gulf War and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) is the primary goal this year.

During FY 2008, The American Legion had 6,105 regularly scheduled volunteers contributing 849,839 hours (a decrease of 397 Regularly Scheduled (RS) volunteers and 898 hours), with another 59,641 Occasional volunteer hours (an increase of 1,241 hours), for a total of 909,480 volunteer hours (an increase of 343 hours). For the first time since 2003, volunteer hours in FY 2008 increased by 343 hours, despite losing 397 regularly scheduled volunteers.

The Fiscal Year 2009 goals for The American Legion are the following:

1. Encourage VA streamline volunteer application and training process to be completed online (paperless),
2. Create Volunteer Toolkit (Tri-fold Flyer and Post Poster),
3. Create Volunteer Online Center (All Legion Volunteer Programs),
4. The American Legion Magazine Dedicate an Issue/Cover Flap to Legion Volunteering,
5. Promote Department Training and Recruitment Fairs and
6. 2009 Department Recruitment Goal of 22 new volunteers

National Commander, David Rehbein and Auxiliary National President, Desireé Stoy registered as Regularly Scheduled (RS) Volunteers at the Des Moines VA Medical Center on December 17, 2008. The Director of VA Voluntary Service, Laura Balun, Iowa Department Commander, Adjutant and Service Officer attended volunteer orientation and registration event. The visit included a Director's meeting, volunteer registration and visit to the Des Moines Vet Center. The topics discussed included: the average age of an American Legion volunteer is 75, what assignments are available on nights and weekends and how to outreach and recruit a younger generation of volunteers.

The National Deputy Representative attended the Department of Kansas Convention on May 15-17 and the Department of Georgia Legion College on June 5-7, 2009. A recruitment booth was set up at both conferences with 30 individuals in Kansas and 39 individuals that were registered to volunteer at their nearest VA Medical Center. In

addition, both Departments received training on recruitment and retention strategies and a further understanding of specific strategies to use amongst different generation groups.

A volunteering portal was created on the National Website in 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. Under the redesign of the new website, the VAVS Program will have a dedicated webpage under the How We Serve Banner for The American Legion National Website in 2009. This change will allow more users easier navigation to the page to register as a volunteer and learn more about volunteer opportunities and share VAVS promotional materials.

The American Legion passed Resolution 19, Supporting the Ride to Recovery Program. Ride to Recovery raises money to support spinning and outdoor cycling programs in various locations across the United States. American Legion volunteers were utilized at the East Coast, West Coast and Texas week-long cycling trips by assisting with Legion Riders, donations, volunteer support and use of post facilities and sponsoring meals. The National Deputy VAVS Representative continues to serve as a liaison to The American Legion Departments to coordinate volunteer support for these events.

National Field Service

The National Field Service unit division recently underwent personnel changes in 2008 and 2009. The American Legion added two National Field Service Representatives in 2008. They included Dwayne Thompson and Robert Madden. Andrew Tramontana, National Field Service Representative, was promoted to Assistant Director for Health Policy, which left a vacancy. In 2009, Antonio Merrick was hired to fill the space left vacant by Mr. Tramontana. The National Field Service unit now includes Dwayne Thompson, Robert Madden, and Andrew Tramontana.

From January 2009 to June 2009, the National Field Service Unit and Deputy Director for Health Care conducted site visits throughout the VA Medical Center system with the System Worth Saving Taskforce to collect data for the 2009 System Worth Saving Report. This year's report will focuses on services the trek of old and new veterans as they seek health care at VA Medical Centers. The American Legion has continued to be watchful and inquisitive of veteran issues such as wait times at VA Medical Centers and clinics. There has also been concern over communication between VA facilities. This prompted The National Field Service and A System Worth Saving Task Force to include Vet Centers and Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs) into the site visit agenda. Overall, they conducted 99 site visits, to include 33 VA Medical Centers, 33 Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs), and 33 Vet Centers. During site visits, National Staff and Task Force Members continued their inquest to determine the current status of the 2004 CARES initiative and VA infrastructure, such as adequate funding for construction projects, space availability, and adequacy of personnel.

Data collected from site visits compares data from Fiscal Year (FY)2003 when Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) began, through FY2009. The release date of this publication is August 2009. The American Legion has heightened its awareness of potential shortfalls among the veteran population by interacting with the National Security and Foreign Relations Division of The American Legion to determine the progression of sharing of information between the Department of Defense (DOD) and VA on current servicemembers returning from theater.

As we continue the follow up on veterans who are transitioning from active duty military, we are also keeping in mind the reintroduction of Vietnam veterans as well. With most nearing retirement, Vietnam veterans are showing up at VA facilities in numbers seeking treatment, filing claims, or both.

Among the population of veterans, VA is seeing an increase in their enrollment due to the June 2009 reinstatement of Priority Group veterans. Currently, VA is using an incremental approach to prevent an "Overload" of VA Medical Centers. The initial enrollment includes 266,000 while the overall goal is to enroll 500,000 veterans by 2013. The Deputy Director for Health Care and National Field Service have joined in several roundtables to discuss improvements in the "A System Worth Saving "campaign. They include implementing a onetime "train the trainer" seminar by the Joint Commission Resources, to educate staff on hospital essentials by providing a more profound look at inspection procedures.

Due to VA being a decentralized organization, it is crucial The American Legion interact with those who preside over its policy divisions. The Health Care section including the Deputy Director for Health Care, Assistant Director for Health Policy and National Field Service are assigned to 14 VA Advisory Committees. They have established a rapport with each Committee manager to keep The American Legion abreast of all veteran related shortfalls and accolades stemming policy. This will also maintain The American Legion's proactive stance on all veteran matters in the area of VA health care. The Assistant Director, Denise Williams has currently heightened the awareness of the women veterans by collaborating with the VA's Center for Women Veterans Committee as well as Congressional advisors. Due rising issues among women veterans at VA facilities, The American Legion has increased its presence at VA events to address issues surrounding gender specific 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, 2009, there were 2,146 Accredited Representatives of The American Legion with 15 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, 2008 through July 31, 2009.

New hire for the Field Service Unit was Antonio Merrick. Andrew Tramontana was promoted to Assistant Director for DoD Outreach and heads up The American Legion Heroes To Hometowns Program.

New hires and/or promotions at the BVA Unit included:
Freddie Gessner, Appeals Representative
Rebecca Jonilionis, Appeals Representative
Catherine Trombley, Appeals Representative
Verna Jones, Appeals Representative
Harvey Taylor, Team Leader (Promotion)

The most current table of organization of the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission as of June 30, 2009, 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
Assistant 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..... 13
Secretaries 3
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 40
Insurance Field Office: Philadelphia, PA
Chief of Insurance Activities 1
Secretary/Transcriber 1
Debt Management Center, St. Paul, MN
Supervisor 1
Secretary/Transcriber 1
BDD Representative, Salt Lake City, UT 1
BDD Representative, Winston-Salem, NC 1
VA&R TOTAL **46**

Staff Field Assignments

The staff of the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission, including the director, deputy directors 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 conducted hospital visits along with The System Worth Saving Task Force and the Claims Service section conducted quality review site visits of several VA Regional Offices. 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.

Six Certificates of Appreciation have been awarded during the period July 1, 2008, through June 30, 2009, for an overall total of 1,318 since the program was initiated

Citations for Meritorious Service

This Citation, authorized by the National Executive Committee in May 1956, seeks to recognize the long and faithful service of Post Service Officers and others. Nominations for the Citation are submitted by Department officials to the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Director at any time; the Director, acting for the Chairman and members of the Commission, issues the award.

Thirty-Two Citations For Meritorious Service And Loyal Cooperation In The American Legion's Veterans Affairs And Rehabilitation Program Were Presented During

The Period July 1, 2008 To June 30, 2009. Since This Type Of Recognition And Appreciation Began, 5,056 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 Assistant Director of DOD Outreach recently moved The American Legion Office from the WWRC to the State Liaisons Office under Military Community and Family Policy (MC&FP), to establish a current, functional, and revised Memorandum of Understanding between the Department of Defense and The American Legion. The American Legion representative at the MC&FP Office maintains a presence at the Arlington facility 2 times per week, processing assistance requests forwarded through 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 been hosted around the nation, by the respective Department 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.

Milestones

February 2009

- Supported 'Cell Phones for Soldiers' at George Washington University
- Supported 'Lakeshore Foundation' 2009 Lima Foxtrot Programs for Injured Military Service Members
- Acquired Coordinators for all ten Heroes to Hometowns VA Voluntary Services Pilot Program sites for the first time since the inception of the pilot program in 2008.

- Supported Operation Warfighter in conducting a job fair at Walter Reed Army Medical Center.
- Participated at the Community Reintegration Summit, which focused on Service Members and Veterans returning to civilian life

March 2009

- Participated at the 86th National VA&R Conference and related meetings in conjunction with the Forty-ninth Annual Washington Conference.
- April 2009
- Attended the United States Olympic Committee's Paralympic Division's "Developing Amazing Leaders" in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

May 2009

- Attended The National Coalition for Homeless Veterans 13th Annual Conference
- Attended The American Legion Spring National Executive Meeting and gave briefing on the H2H program to VA&R Commission.
- Granted approval to begin the collection of funds to be allocated directly to the Heroes to Hometowns Program.
- Attended 'Quality of Life Foundation' event in Quantico, VA.

June 2009

- Held initial meeting for the 2009 Heroes to Hometowns Golf Tournament.
- Visited Naval Air Station in Jacksonville, Florida in order to obtain information on Navy Family Programs.
- Revised the Memorandum of Understanding between the Department of Defense and The American Legion's Heroes to Hometowns Program.
- Established reporting 'Standard Operating Procedure' for the processing, oversight and case management of H2H Assistance Request Applications.
- Revised all Heroes to Hometowns materials and provided new content for the revised H2H website that will be accessible in August of 2009.

The American Legion Auxiliary

This was a year of HOPE; a year where amazing things happened by members of the American Legion Auxiliary in our efforts to honor our promises everyday (our promises to America's veterans, America's children, our communities and The American Legion).

Each year the national president selects a special project and this year that project was to secure more volunteers volunteering more hours at VA medical centers across America. Although we remain the largest auxiliary that volunteers at the VA, our volunteer hours have declined. That is why we launched a "Call to Action" this year—to energize more members to become active in volunteering.

In order to assist departments, we budgeted a small amount of grant money to assist with recruiting and retaining VAVS volunteers. Not a give-away, but a process requiring detailed planning to determine tactics to be used in recruiting volunteers and increasing hours. We can be extremely proud of the thousands of volunteer hours provided by auxiliary members.

As well, we are extremely proud of our continued national co-sponsorship of the VA's Creative Arts Festival. Creative arts are an extension of therapy in the visual, performing and creative writing arts and this VA program <u>really</u> works. However, our VA&R efforts go beyond the festival.

As an example, we began the year with a signed MOU with the Corporation for National and Community Service. Since signing that agreement the Auxiliary requested and received a grant from VISTA. With that grant, VISTA volunteers will help the organization develop tools to recruit and engage more members in volunteering. In essence, we have 20 paid, skilled professionals…at no charge to us…to help us fulfill our mission. Now that's "HOPE" turned into reality! The Corporation for National and Community Service has a goal to eliminate poverty in America. The American Legion Auxiliary goal is to eliminate poverty for veterans and their families. What a perfect fit. Serving veterans and their families remains our top priority. This partnership will enable us to recruit more members, increase volunteers, and remain firmly rooted in our heritage of service to God and country.

Adapting to needs demanded of a changing society requires an aggressive strategic planning effort. I'm proud to say that the work of our members engaged in three major areas remains strong.

We are moving from the philosophy of our members doing everything…to a cooperative effort to become THE gateway for information, programs and services. That means, when a veteran or active duty military or their family needs help, the Auxiliary will have the answers. We'll lovingly walk those we serve through the bureaucracy…regardless if help comes from one of our programs or another source.

In the coming months departments will receive an initial compilation of resources to help accomplish just that, the beginning of a long term project that will increase our service outreach.

Training for unit and department operational standards is critical. While we are a grass roots organization we must have a sense of continuity from unit to unit and department to department. The committee right now is developing a model that will work for every department, large or small.

And we're not just talking; we're doing! For example, at Awareness Assembly this year we participated in our own, custom interactive learning session named "Mission: Transition." It featured video clips of current and former military and their families and a series of questions and answers. Each attendee received a copy of the game on an Auxiliary thumb drive. It's a great way to learn.

The final area of effort supports the first two: leverage technology to improve operations and communications. We will soon be launching an updated, enhanced website and a new member information management system.

Our nation and the world have come a long way in communications technology. We are embracing change to meet the demands of tomorrow and to ensure that we remain relevant. Our goal is to remain high touch as well as high tech while securing our rich tradition of service.

All across the United States our members are volunteering in veterans homes providing needed support for older veterans. And their care mirrors that provided by the staff at these homes: It is delivered with respect, dignity and thankfulness, for the service rendered by earlier generations.

This was a historic year in so many ways. It was an honor to represent the American Legion Auxiliary for the historic presidential inauguration; and to mark the 200th birthday of Abraham Lincoln at his tomb in Springfield, Ill.; overseas in remembering the 65th anniversary of D-Day, and walking among the crosses of Flanders Field with reverence.

We have accomplished much since our founding days. However, we MUST continue to stride boldly forward with our passion to serve the needs of a new generation, needs that can only be met by ENERGIZED members who are committed to

RECONNECTING and ENERGIZING others in our never-ending quest to serve veterans, their families and their communities.

AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY
National President Desireé Stoy, Perrysville, Ohio

Only a short time remains in this administrative year. As I reflect on the thousands of dollars and hours volunteered by our members, I continue to be amazed by what we are able to accomplish for America's veterans, military families and our children. This president asked you to Honor Our Promises Everyday and you did just that. Please know that your deeds have had a huge impact on the lives of those you serve.

As the 88th national president of the American Legion Auxiliary, it was a privilege to serve with and for you to accomplish the many goals we strived to accomplish this year.

As a special project this year, we strove to increase the number of volunteers and volunteer hours in VA Medical Centers across the country. Success was achieved in many departments as they put together plans to breathe new life into their recruitment efforts and promoted new levels of volunteering. We remain the largest VSO Auxiliary to volunteer in the VAVS program.

Another tremendous accomplishment was the development of our partnership with the Corporation for National and Community Service. The potential for our organization to help eliminate poverty for veterans and military families while developing tools and training methods to recruit, retain and engage members has the potential to help us meet the challenges of tomorrow. Many departments will benefit firsthand by their participation, and all departments will benefit from the tools and training methods developed.

From a financial standpoint, each and every year our organization raises thousands of dollars in support of many worthwhile programs, and this year was no different. During these hard economic times, we faced some real challenges as we focused our efforts on financial goals to support our own programs (our own scholarships and AEF) and to meet our financial obligation as a national co-sponsor of the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival. As well, we strove to do more with less by controlling expenses and eliminating unnecessary expenses where possible. Kudos to National Headquarters and volunteers who supported our cost-saving goals and successfully implemented additional cost-saving measures.

It truly has been an amazing year, and I look forward to recognizing and celebrating our successes with you during our national convention. But even more importantly, I encourage each of you to share the information provided in this publication with your family and friends, neighbors and members of your community so they too may see our impact in community after community. Congratulations on a job well done!

National Vice President
Rita Navarreté, Albuquerque, New Mexico

The office of vice president is one that I took very seriously and continue to perform to the best of my ability supporting not only the organization's programs but those additional responsibilities that require my participation.

The year reflects work that has enhanced my working knowledge of the operations of both the volunteer and staff levels. I am proud to report that many accomplishments have been made during the year.

The first challenge given was serving as chairman of the Search Committee when former National Secretary Pam Gilley gave notice of her resignation the day after the national convention. An aggressive action plan was developed and followed to have an individual selected by December 2008. The job was accomplished and Mary "Dubbie" Buckler was selected and reported to duty on Jan. 22, 2009.

National vice president assignments provide opportunities that enhance knowledge of the organization and also of the programs of The American Legion. Year-end report is as follows:

- National Commander's Testimony, Sept. 10-11, 2008, Washington, D. C. (The Legislative Agenda with Congress)
- National Commander's Homecoming, Sept. 12-14, 2008, in Des Moines, Iowa, where my husband, Tony and I joined the national president in representing the organization.
- National Veterans Creative Arts Festival in Riverside, Calif., Oct. 24-26, 2008.
- Presidents & Secretaries Conference, Oct. 12-15, 2008.
- National President's Homecoming, Columbus, Ohio,
- Oct. 16-19, 2008. An honor to present at the banquet a gift from the national officers, chairmen and Past National Presidents—a stained glass mural of her official pin—HOPE.
- Veterans Day 2009—represented the national president by attending the events planned by The Veterans Day Council of Indianapolis, which included the morning ceremony, parade and the 44th Annual Veterans Day Banquet. Once again, a networking opportunity to demonstrate support for our veterans at the National Headquarters city.
- Foundation Board Meeting Nov. 15-16, 2008, Indianapolis, to further conduct business and work on strategic plan.
- Inauguration Events in D.C., Jan. 18-20, 2009. What an opportunity for both me and my husband Tony to witness the swearing in ceremonies of the 44th President of the United States, Barack Obama. We joined National President Desi and husband Tim in attending the scheduled events made possible by The American Legion. A highlight was attending the Salute to Heroes Ball, an event sponsored by The American Legion since 1953 where Medal of Honor recipients are honored (47 present).
- Awareness Assembly activities and serving as Hostess at the Public Spirit Award Luncheon where National President Desi honored two guests: Michele Cuppy, president, Sew Much Comfort; and Morrill Worchester, Wreaths Across America.
- U.S. Naval Academy Award Presentation, Annapolis, Md., May 21, 2009. Represented the organization for the presentation of the Women's Swimmer MVP Award to Midshipman First Class Erika Hubbard of Madison, Wisc.

In preparing for the position of national president, pre-planning activities are scheduled and include National Chairman's Meeting 2009-2010 in April 2009; Membership 2009-2010 Workshop in May 2009; site visit for National Veterans Creative Arts Festival, San Antonio, Texas in June 2009; and Finance Committee FY 10 meeting in June 2009. I attended The American Legion Membership Workshop July 31 to Aug. 1, 2009, and remained in Indianapolis to attend the Strategic Planning meeting Aug. 2.

It has been an honor to serve the organization as national vice president and to work with President Desi in a year of Honoring Our Promises Everyday!

National Chaplain
Cherita Potter, Seaside, Oregon

Our theme of faith, hope and love was truly taken to heart by every department. I am proud of the tireless efforts of our units, districts and departments to make the commitment to help others by sharing prayers of faith, promises of hope and love for one another with caring attitudes and giving hearts.

Our prayer chain across America was in service daily, for those in need of prayer, encouraging words or a helping hand. Working together as an American Legion Family was reported in most departments. Junior Auxiliary and SAL members were included in holiday events and memorial services and Chapel of Four Chaplains services.

The chaplains' conference in September was fun and educational for everyone who attended. We discussed the duties and qualities needed in being an effective chaplain. We shared ideas and enjoyed the interaction with The American Legion chaplains. This was a great way to start our year working together and acknowledging the value and importance of each other.

The roundtable presentations at the Presidents & Secretaries Conference gave us a chance to get acquainted and provided an opportunity to gather and pass on information we needed.

The mid-year reports were wonderful to read and see just how busy these ladies are, especially during the holidays.

Year-end reports were received from 48 departments. The 6,866 units reported donations of $17,473 for the Chapel of Four Chaplains and $160,471 in memorial donations to a variety of organizations and many programs of the American Legion Auxiliary.

Charters were draped and memorial services were held. We are saddened by the loss of 7,150 senior members, 26 Junior members 44 Gold Star mothers as well as Past National President Ione Kubby from the Department of Texas.

Some of the challenges seem to be getting contact information for department chaplains and communicating regularly with those who do not have email. The highlight of my year was the new tradition started by Jeri Brooks Greenwell of giving the invocation in the House of Representatives in Washington, D.C.

From the reports I received, the Reflections page in *HomeFront* magazine is a valuable tool and is used by a large number of chaplains.

This has been a very rewarding year and the insight and mentoring by past national chaplains Jeri and Conney was very much appreciated and I hope to follow in their footsteps. This is not a job that can be done by one person alone. I have shared so many wonderful moments with department chaplains from across this nation, and I will cherish each one of you for all you do and will continue to do.

National Historian
Marian Webster, Newaygo, Michigan

HOPE: These four letters are what American Legion Auxiliary historians lived by this administrative year 2008-2009. "Honoring Our Promise Everyday" by recording promises to community, state and nation. Including promises to veterans, children and youth.

I began the year as national historian with the intention to make writing the history of the Auxiliary as simple could be. There seems to be a bit of dread, skepticism and plain fear about one of the most important jobs and responsibilities of this organization. If you were one of the members chosen as historian on any level, you should be proud that your peers are honoring you with this responsibility.

The challenge this year was to have 100 percent reporting. We came close with 47 out of 53 departments filing an annual report. Those reporting had several suggestions to secure facts and figures. Making writing easier by recording day to day, week to week, etc., all that your units, districts and department do. Others suggested a special notebook for recordkeeping. One of the most mentioned was to write "IT" down as soon as it happens. This applies to all historians, not just those of us who are growing a bit in age.

Histories of 838 units were written, 533 being submitted for competition. Junior historians wrote 42 histories with 36 entered in competition.

There were two projects to work on this year as historians.

No. 1, writing/recording the history. No. 2 was taking an active part in the Veterans History Project of interviewing and recording our veterans' experiences during their time of service. Hearing and recording the events that friends, relatives and even strangers were a part of during the wars brought love, respect and an admiration between interviewer and interviewee. One hundred seventy-six units interviewed 360 veterans for this project. Of this number, 317 were interviewed by senior members and 43 were interviewed by Junior members.

The Department of Ohio did a great job with this project. It was titled, "W.O.W., The Wonderful Ohio Women." They interviewed female veterans in the state—what a wonderful idea fulfilled.

The history of HOPE will be compiled from 48 reports of the national president's visit to 48 departments. Among those reports were facts that President Desi does like lobster and tried sharing by phone to husband Tim the sound of the ocean pounding on the beach. She earned her first volunteer hours in the Department of Oregon.

The histories received represent ALL THAT YOU DO. It would take volumes to record it, but I will include much of it in the "National History Book" to honor my promise as national historian to Desi Stoy, national president of the American Legion Auxiliary 2008-2009.

National Secretary
Mary "Dubbie" Buckler, Indianapolis, Indiana

The first six months since I joined the leadership team of the American Legion Auxiliary has been a whirlwind of activity. Facing the realities of a revenue shortfall approaching 15%, ALA Headquarters pulled together to find ways to cut, curtail, and postpone expenditures. We are meeting the challenges of doing more with less, making sacrifices, and saving the organization nearly 20% in budgeted expenses.

It's been a privilege to get to know the terrific people who staff the organization, learning their passion and talents, thinking outside the box, and together coming up with a new team approach for the requisite and developing activities that capitalize on

individual strengths. At your ALA Headquarters, we are indeed ENERGIZED with a renewed esprit de corps, pulling together as the creative solutions and customer service support system for the entire organization.

I am thrilled that we have accomplished a first for the ALA—an infusion of a $ half million-dollar federal grant that is bringing 20 Volunteers in Service to America to launch the American Legion Auxiliary Call to Service Corps. Several departments are enthusiastically participating as field sites in this inaugural effort to reach out to military families and veterans facing poverty. The ALA Call to Service Corps also will bring talented, experienced individuals dedicating a year of service as VISTA volunteers to help the ALA build its capacity to expand our volunteer base, which means developing membership toolkits that will benefit every department and unit to attract, retain, and engage members. The program is fully funded by the federal government with no expenditures required by the organization. The Corporation for National and Community Service is paying the living expenses of the VISTA volunteers, their travel and their training, and also funding and providing valuable training to the supervisors in the departments and at National Headquarters. The passion for the ALA Call to Service Corps among the participating department and National Headquarters supervisors is exciting. We are ENERGIZED as we launch this initiative that provides human resources to implement many elements of our strategic plan and the plans of action!

The design of the new American Legion Auxiliary Management Information System (ALA MIS) is progressing with implementation at test sites scheduled for spring 2010. The Strategic Planning Technology Team, IT experts, and our departments have provided invaluable input via meetings, conversations, online surveys, and site visits. We are maintaining widespread involvement of our members, staff, and experts to ensure this critical project is successful. In concert with the development of the ALA MIS, the ALA Web site is undergoing a much needed redesign with the same level of widespread input. We are working in harmony with The American Legion which also is redesigning the Legion's and Sons of the American Legion's Web sites. We are ENERGIZED to ensure stellar outcomes!

After reviewing the results of our past fundraising efforts, we have now begun a new approach to direct mail that is more cost beneficial to the ALA. Six new member benefits were added and two were enhanced, offering members more opportunities for special services and discounts. And regarding the effectiveness of our communications, I have heard you loud and clear! We have restarted our online news and are taking steps to improve the magazine.

As the American Legion Auxiliary begins to celebrate 90 years of service to veterans, let us reflect on how we are investing our hearts, our time, and our money. Through our outreach programs, we have served more than 930,000 veterans. That's a ratio of more than one veteran helped by EVERY member of the ALA! We have collectively contributed more than $6 million to benefit our veterans. We have collectively volunteered nearly 2 million hours to support our veterans. We have raised nearly $2 million by distributing more than 5 million poppies made by veterans, to benefit veterans. Collectively, we've awarded more than $1 million in scholarships, contributed more than $1 million to Operation Military Kids, volunteered nearly a million hours to youth programs, volunteered more than 2 million hours in community service projects, and awarded more than $200,000 to help our members in crisis through the Auxiliary Emergency Fund.

At the grassroots across this great country, the ALA embodies Service Not Self to honor the sacrifice of those who serve. Our hearts are invested. Our time is invested. I am

proud to be a member of the ALA and The American Legion Family. Let's ENERGIZE and invest in our ability to grow and do more to enhance the lives of our veterans, our military, and their families both at home and abroad!

Americanism Committee
Coral May Grout, Winchendon, Massachusetts

"I know that when I make a positive impact on a girl, it makes a positive impact on the family, and that makes a positive impact on my community."—Madison Burke, 2009 American Legion Girl Scout Achievement Award winner.

Members of more than more than 4,500 units joined National President Desireé Stoy as we "Honored Our Promises Everyday" to our enlisted and veterans, their families, and their communities throughout this past year.

In early March, we welcomed 55 students from 31 departments to the Americanism Youth Conference at Valley Forge. In addition, 12 students representing Operation Military Kids joined the Auxiliary representatives for four days of action-packed learning experiences.

Units across our country responded to our plea for more applications for the Girl Scout Achievement Award. As a result, the judges reviewed 40 top-notch applications, which was more than double the number of applicants from the previous year.

1,527 units participated in the Americanism Essay Contest, involving 8,062 hours and more than $34,000. As a result of everyone's efforts, 19,137 essays were submitted this year.

The pocket flag project has achieved huge success and appreciation from our military. A total of 482 units spent $45,164 and 20,111 hours to make 306,166 flags which were mailed to our servicemen and women. Gold Star and Blue Star Banners also were popular projects, with 1,530 units reporting expenditures of $22,955 and 3,154 volunteer hours. 4,526 banners were presented.

The presentation of flags to schools and organizations involved 3236 units. They expended $54,332 and 7,484 hours of volunteer time to distribute 67,225 flags across our land. Units also participated in numerous Americanism programs and activities in our nation's schools. Examples included voting programs, patriotic activities, and flag education. The number of units participating was 2,313, with expenditures of $96,703 and nearly 39,000 volunteer hours.

Our members supported military families heavily, with 2,239 units spending $624,093 on various projects and activities for military families, including Operation Military Kids. A total of 61,728 volunteer hours were logged in support of this part of our Americanism effort. In addition, 290 units participated in the "Month of the Military Child" with funds expended totaling $16,471 and 3,965 volunteer hours.

1,279 units included Juniors in their programs, spending $27,416 and devoting 7,317 volunteer hours to junior Americanism activities.

Units helped with American Legion programs as well. Sixty-nine units assisted with the junior shooting sports program, spending $7,750 and 3,476 volunteer hours; the oratorical contest with 357 units spending $10,299 and 3,387 volunteer hours; and the baseball program with 392 units spending $60,591 and 11,600 volunteer hours.

The "Get Out the Vote" was popular, given the election year. $18,410 was spent with 24,972 volunteer hours by 1,653 units.

The most popular component of the Americanism program involved support for patriotic holiday observances. Here, 3,906 units spent $188,063 and 73,900 volunteer hours promoting patriotism at holiday gatherings and activities.

Auxiliary Emergency Fund Committee
Martha Corriher, China Grove, North Carolina

If we lived in a perfect world, there would be no floods, no fires, and no sickness. All of God's creatures would have everything they need and would want for nothing. We don't live in a perfect world, and there are floods, fires, sickness, homeless and jobless Americans in every corner of this great nation. Even when people think there is no hope or help, the American Legion Auxiliary can stand tall and be proud knowing the grants we give from the Auxiliary Emergency Fund put Auxiliary members back on the road to happier times.

Thirty-three departments reported activities to raise awareness of the Auxiliary Emergency Fund. As of June 30, 2009, contributions to the AEF totaled $169,616.01, just shy of the goal of $212,155.75. Eighteen departments exceeded their proposed goal for donations. The time and energy shown by our members to this program remind me of the Energizer Bunny. It takes a lickin', but keeps on tickin'. More than 200 grants were awarded with a total amount of $200,812.58 being disbursed. One grant was returned stating, "I was misdiagnosed and feel that I can make it through this time without the money. May God bless all of you for your readiness and commitment to families like mine." We are making a difference in lives all across America. This reminds me of 1 Timothy 6:18, "Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share."

Eighteen reports were received for the 40th Anniversary Award for the Most Creative Fund Raiser. Various events for the AEF included raffles, bake sales, dinner dances, bingo, motorcycle runs, rummage sales and even getting Past Department Presidents involved in the USS Ducklee Do Right Race. You planned and executed successful events and are to be commended for a job well done. It seems you followed the verse from Acts 20:35: In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

This quote by Winston Churchill is one we all should live by: "We make a living by what we get. We make a life by what we give."

Cavalcade of Memories Committee
Katherine Morris, Houston, Texas

The National Cavalcade of Memories has become a lot more meaningful as our organization ages. It is imperative that we preserve the history of the American Legion Auxiliary. Cavalcade of Memories gives us the visual proof of the Auxiliary's accomplishments, past and present.

There is no annual report required. Seven departments—Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Iowa, Indiana and Puerto Rico—shared their department accomplishments:

Florida reported a unit that asked their members to bring in any Auxiliary memorabilia saying, "Let us check it out before you throw it out." They collected many items for their display.

Another unit in Florida displays its Cavalcade of Memories at the public library in May for all the public to see. What an excellent way of showing off the memories of their unit.

Iowa reported the unit's history books and history scrapbooks of memories, way back in time, are on display and safe keeping at the county historical society military

room in the museum. One of the scrapbooks is 50 years old and is checked for any deterioration periodically.

Georgia reported its newly elected department president insisted on cleaning out their storage closet that they would be setting up a Cavalcade of Memories display. The more they cleaned, the more they realized that they had all of those awards, scrapbooks, history books, etc., stored that should be on display. They arranged the awards to be put on the walls of their meeting room. When finished, they had four rows of awards that are each 16 feet long.

Due to the lack of space, when donating to the National Cavalcade of Memories, please follow the Guidelines for Donations.

Children & Youth Committee
Kris Nelson, Baxter, Minnesota

Honoring our promises to children across the country was accomplished in a variety of ways. Units honored young people with 32 Youth Hero Awards and 61 Good Deed Awards. These young people came to the aid of their peers and their communities putting service first. When presented the awards, many were very humble, saying that "anyone would have done it" and that they just happened to be there to offer assistance. Our country is blessed to have young people of this caliber already sharing their leadership skills for the benefit of service not self.

Opportunities were given to students to write letters to veterans on Veterans Day, to crochet squares for afghans to present to children in an oncology ward, and to work with Auxiliary members assisting youth in schools, community centers, and post homes.

Units hosted a variety of fundraising activities for Operation Military Kids, Children's Miracle Network, Child Welfare Foundation, Ronald McDonald House, Songs of Love, Make-A-Wish Foundation and Special Olympics. Units hosted safety forums, adopted classrooms and daycare centers, purchased books for classrooms and libraries, and volunteered their time and treasure to homeless shelters, homes for abused women and children, and local food pantries. One unit donated quilts for crack-babies born in local hospitals. Several units donated stuffed animals to emergency response personnel to use when children experienced trauma. Halloween parties were hosted to offer community children a safe Halloween experience. Military kids were given scholarships to attend "Operation Purple" summer camps. Blankets were donated to newborn babies in local hospitals and distributed to homeless shelters for children and teenagers.

Providing for the basic needs of children was accomplished through donations of warm winter clothing, school supplies and donations to local food shelves. Several families were offered financial assistance. Josh Dogs, stuffed animals and Spinoza Bears were given to hospitalized children across the country. Baby showers were hosted for military moms, angel trees for children's Christmas presents, and backpacks full of goodies for military kids. One unit purchased defibrillators for local schools. Units donated toys and clothing for underprivileged children throughout the holiday seasons. Members donated grants to foster children for special items they otherwise might not have. Units sponsored swimming lessons, school sports fees, membership fees for youth clubs, and funds for music and dance lessons.

Enjoying life is vital to children's development, and Auxiliary members provided this by hosting holiday parties, sponsoring youth groups, Girl Scout and Boy Scout troops, and Legion baseball teams. One unit sponsored an "old-fashioned" Christmas celebration complete with sleigh rides, movies, and a visit from Santa. Going-away

parties were hosted for the families of deployed soldiers. Units hosted pizza parties at school, funded prom and graduations parties, and opened their post homes for sleep-overs for youth groups and holiday parties.

Yes, our members embraced the philosophy that, "A hundred years from now it will not matter what my bank account was, the sort of house I lived in, or the kind of car I drove … but the world may be different because I was important in the life of a child!"

Community Service Committee
Sharon Conatser, Champaign, Illinois

Volunteerism is not new to our members. Our willingness to work on the behalf of others is just a part of who we are. This report is compiled from the 31 department reports received.

With the veterans being the focus of our organization, our units stepped up to the plate with 1,967 volunteers serving 152,165.8 hours showing community support for our troops and 2,928 volunteers served 286,670.02 hours serving the community that veterans secured for us. The total spent on this portion of the program was $680,366.

Proving that each community is unique, our members reported a smorgasbord of activities for their individual community needs. The volunteers numbered 2,755, spent $633,272 and totaled 492,819.5 hours providing volunteer service in their community.

Food pantries, homeless shelters and domestic violence centers numbers reflected the hard economic times of the past year. $654,754.37 was spent with members serving 226,673 hours helping in these areas.

Habitat for Humanity, Make a Difference Day, Adopt-a-Highway, senior citizens center and nursing homes are supported by units across this great country. 5,429 dedicated volunteers served 522,278 hours with $628,095.20 spent by the units.

With the Community Service program, there are many ways to serve your community. The totals that were reported are as follows: 29,060 volunteers; 2,133,274.2 hours served; contributions totaled $3,211,949.65 by the units.

One unit chairman ended her report by saying "You don't have to spend a lot of money to make a difference; you just need to try!" Another says, "Love in our organization for veterans and each other is an important part of Community Service."

Remember: There is no beginning and no end in service for our veterans and our communities.

As you can see, our volunteers are working very hard. Just imagine what our numbers would have been if the other departments would have reported. With our dedicated volunteers, our veterans and our communities will be taken care of.

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."—Margaret Mead

Constitution & Bylaws Committee
Nancy Brown-Park, Novato, California

When each member understands and has her own copy of our governing document the National Constitution & Bylaws committee will have succeeded.

The C&B goals this year were to encourage units and departments to understand and use the governing documents at all levels of our organization. They accomplished this by dividing up the key documents, studied their part and presented them in fun and informative ways during leadership workshops, unit and department meetings.

Department Chairman found that knowledge makes the organization run smoothly. Information was supplied on how members could order their own set of documents, encouraged units to give new members a set of documents and encouraged prizes for those who complied.

Units worked with their American Legion Posts to establish open communication to better understand their governing documents to help create a better working environment.

The Department Constitution and Bylaws Chairman worked hard this year training, re-writing, and working to take out the mystery of our Governing Documents.

Diane Delashmit from the Department of California when asked for a quote shared:

I personally like the quote from Maya Angelou "When you know better, you do better." Everyone should be familiar with their C&B on all levels of our organization. It would solve a lot of problems and issues.

Education Committee
Janet Jefford, Manchester, Connecticut

Education encompasses the imparting of knowledge, good judgment, wisdom and culture from generation to generation. By Honoring Our Promise Everyday, members have been playing a very decisive role in the shaping of our youth and the culture of America.

Through our literacy and reading programs, members demonstrate the importance of reading and share their love of books and a good story. 865 units reported volunteering 82,880 hours and donating more than $47,000 to this effort. In Chula Vista, Calif., Unit 434 participated in Read Across America by visiting 20 local schools and reading Dr. Seuss books to students. In Georgia, students were encouraged to Read For Success for 600 minutes. As a reward, they received a one-day pass to Six Flags amusement park.

Bilingual members in California translated the Auxiliary scholarship and education materials into Spanish and are actively involved in teaching English as a Second Language. Congratulations go to the 154 Junior groups that participated in literacy activities and to the 100 Junior members who earned the new Junior Education Patch.

Realizing that promoting education beyond the high school level is an investment in our future, units and departments have worked to provide financial assistance to students in the form of scholarships. One of our goals this year was to increase the numbers of applications for all national scholarships and to encourage departments and units to provide scholarship opportunities in their local communities. I am proud to report that in the 35 departments reporting, 299 scholarships totaling more than $201,000 were awarded. Units awarded 1,426 scholarships valued at more than $872,000 and donated another $163,000 to other worthy scholarship programs. Donations totaling $35,777 were sent to the National Presidents Scholarship Fund, with the Departments of Wisconsin, Tennessee, New York and Delaware leading the way. To help students and parents learn more about financial aid, more than 8,000 Need-A-Lift? Books and Guides for Students and Parents were distributed to high school students.

All departments reported participating in the Give 10 to Education program. 394 citations were sent to units in recognition of their donations of items ranging from school supplies to hand sanitizers. Units in Ohio even donated bags of socks, underwear and clothing to be used for "those little classroom accidents."

American Education Week continues to be a main focus. More than 1,100 units reported spending more than $67,000 and giving 13,000 volunteer hours to celebrate the week with local schools.

162 units reported answering National President Desireé Stoy's request to include the National Guard in their education programs. In North Dakota, members honored and recognized high school seniors who enlisted in the National Guard.

To support the Auxiliary's mission, 513 units presented Veterans in the Classroom programs in more than 775 schools, spending $67,000. In Osage, Iowa, Unit 278 had five students dress in military uniforms from each branch of the service that were worn by Legion members during wartime. Other students were given the opportunity to try on uniforms and helmets that were part of a special exhibit.

Nelsen Mandela said, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." Through the efforts of our dedicated members, we are making this world a better place—one student at a time.

Finance Committee
Linda Boone, Milford, Delaware

This fiscal year has certainly had traumatic economic issues for our organization and the world. While our investment policies plan for ups and downs by ensuring diversity in types of investments, this economic environment created downturns in so many areas we suffered significant losses at the beginning of the year. Since then, the economic environment has assisted in some recovery but far from re-establishing our previous reserve level.

National Headquarters and volunteer leadership have worked together to reduce spending which has been a challenge to weigh and select options. The annual audit of FY09 will be included in the convention proceedings and I encourage you to review this financial data.

Developing and reviewing financial policies continued to be a priority activity with the committee to assist in eliminating risk with our financial activities. A new process to develop the annual budget was presented by the staff and adopted for the FY10 budget cycle to assist in decision making.

As the nonprofit community learns more about the Internal Revenue Service's new filing requirements, new policies and practices will need to be implemented to ensure compliance. One such requirement is establishing an Audit Committee. For the second year, the Finance Committee will be introducing a proposed Constitution & Bylaws amendment to add the Audit Committee, and we need the convention delegates to understand the significance and need for adoption. An Audit Committee assists the NEC in fulfilling its various fiduciary responsibilities relating to auditing, oversight of financial reports, and overall corporate governance and accountability.

The committee also is proposing a national dues increase to assist in the recovery from the economic downturn impact. The organization has been exceptional compared to other nonprofits by not increasing dues for 14 years. It is now time to ensure our financial future will support our mission of serving veterans and their families through financial stability.

Financial stability provides the organization with the ability to support our many valuable programs that have been the core of our mission for almost 90 years such as veterans affairs, children and youth, and our community involvement.

Girls State Committee
Mary Davis, Lacey, Washington

Once again this year, thousands of dedicated American Legion Auxiliary members all across this great nation honored their promise to make a difference in the future of our country by preparing some of America's best and brightest young women with the tools to better understand our democratic government. These leaders of our Girls State programs helped thousands of young students become informed citizens—better equipped to help preserve our republic.

This year, department Girls State directors and chairmen were challenged to include community preparedness, Salute the Troops, poppy education and military kids in their local programs. They accepted this challenge and achieved notable successes in their Girls State Programs.

In the wake of recent disasters, several states also included community preparedness in their city projects. As one director noted after a successful beginning, "This is such a huge, important project. We have just begun this year but intend to continue to build on this foundation."

Highlighting poppy programs, wreaths made by citizens and taken to VA and local cemeteries as citizens were taught the significance poppy holds for veterans.

Many departments worked to heighten awareness of the sacrifices of military service by awarding Blue Star Banners to Girls State citizens with family members serving in the military. The Department of Minnesota held a solemn and moving ceremony honoring our fallen heroes.

To show our support of our service personnel, many departments conducted a Salute the Troops. Departments invited active-duty members to visit where they were honored for their service. These events, sincerely appreciated by military personnel, gave our citizens a better understanding of sacrifices made by active-duty personnel and our nations' veterans.

Another aspect of the Salute to the Troops included citizens writing letters to our servicemen and women currently serving in Iraq and Afghanistan. One Marine, SSgt Bret Earls, after receiving letters from the Oklahoma Girls State citizens, responded, "I personally read about 50 letters from the girls and it really lifted my spirits…you have touched our hearts in more ways than …I … can express. When the shells are coming in and we are hitting the bunkers, it's letters like these that keep us remembering why we are here and what we are fighting for…"

Thanks to all of you who do so much for our Girls State Programs and the American Legion Auxiliary.

Junior Activities Committee
Kathy Dungan, Wesson, Mississippi

Our Juniors —Our HOPE Our Future—have done an outstanding job this year volunteering in their communities and serving our veterans and youth programs. The Auxiliary provides many avenues for Juniors to volunteer, and they are definitely making an impact. Forty departments reported that more than 800 Juniors participated in the Junior Patch Program, earning 2,100 patches. Two new patches were added this year: Education and National Security.

Juniors are enriching the lives of our veterans and military by assembling Hero Packs for their children, making and delivering cards to veterans hospitals, providing gifts and supplies to their families, hosting welcome-home events for our soldiers,

participating in the Veterans History Project, and honoring veterans in Veterans Day parades.

Approximately 285 Juniors participated in the Leadership Course. More than 2,200 Community Service projects were reported totally 54,454 volunteer hours by Juniors. They are helping build their communities through volunteering. Projects included volunteering at blood drives, collecting/distributing clothing and blankets to the homeless, beautification projects, collecting thousands of pull tabs for the Ronald McDonald House, and participating in the pocket flag project. The list is endless!

An unknown author said, "Volunteers are not paid—not because they are worthless, but because they are priceless." Our Juniors are priceless. They inspire others. Alabama Juniors collected 30 gallons of pull tabs for Joe Lee Griffin Hope Lodge. Iowa Juniors reported more than 10,849 volunteer hours. Juniors from Louisiana sold 400 Auxiliary bears, raising $4,000 for the Deployed Soldiers Family Relief Fund. Our Juniors are energized and ready to serve.

Helen Steiner Rice, said kindness is "someone who's ready by thought, word, or deed to reach out a hand, in the hour of need." To me, that sums up what our great organization is all about. Our Juniors are being trained early to carry on our mission of service, not self. Our future is in good hands.

Leadership Committee
Diane Duscheck, Whitefish Bay, Wisconsin

A Chinese proverb says, "Learning is a treasure that will follow its owner everywhere." Leaders lead by example, being energetic, enthusiastic, excited to learn, and positive. In this ongoing program, units and departments educated and energized members, not necessarily so members would step into officer roles, but so they would be excited about the Auxiliary and increase their participation. Both newer and seasoned members expanded their base of knowledge about the Auxiliary and continued their personal development. That's the basis of leadership.

Leadership annual reports were submitted by 3,786 units in 43 departments. Officer training was done in 1,615 units and program education occurred in 2,115 units. For members who wanted even more Auxiliary background and for those who were not able to attend training sessions, 579 units reported that 1178 members took the Correspondence Courses. At least three leadership mini training sessions were held during unit meetings in 493 units.

Members learn new skills best when those skills are demonstrated and practiced. Mentoring relationships were developed in 1,081 units. Seasoned chairmen spent time with new chairmen explaining programs and how to report volunteer hours--a concept that can baffle even the best members.

Leadership chairmen assessed the needs of their membership and developed resources that would excite and involve participants and keep leadership fresh and exciting. Units developed 592 new activities and 496 new resources. Departments initiated 176 new activities and offered 167 new resources. Serious and lighthearted skits, information fairs, games, member development workbooks, role playing, and Web sites helped to educate members about meeting protocol, the meaning of the emblem and the Preamble, and the many programs the Auxiliary offers.

Oliver Wendell Holmes said, "Man's mind, once stretched by a new idea, never regains its original dimensions." A consequence of holding leadership training sessions has been increased meeting attendance because members are learning and having fun

doing so. As a result, they continue to come to meetings, energized and eager to learn even more.

Legislative Committee
Denise Delaney-Wrolen, Hobart, Indiana

This has been a historical year with the election of our nation's 44th president and the senators and representatives of the 111th Congress. Many of today's legislators are not veterans, and our members are to be commended for their tireless efforts to communicate with elected officials to promote the issues that support the well-being of our veterans and their families as we remain committed to "Honoring Our Promises Everyday." Reports from 3,240 units from 42 departments expressed their commitment and dedication at the local, state and national levels to the importance of the legislative objectives outlined by The American Legion Family.

As our nation prepared for an exciting election, members of the American Legion Auxiliary dug in their heels and went to work—participating in 164 Town Hall meetings, 96 Legislative Rallies and 183 Meet the Candidates Nights. Members overwhelmingly supported and encouraged the Get-Out-The-Vote initiatives. Many members worked at local voting polls, made available Voter Registration Forms, provided transportation to the polls as well as provided babysitting services to ensure America's voices would be heard.

Members were encouraged to promote Military Absentee Voting, and 255 units reported participation by encouraging active-duty personnel to request absentee ballots, sent absentee ballots in packages to troops, encouraged family members to obtain forms to send and placed reminder notices in care packages.

Promoting women veterans was reported by 457 units as they were remembered with care packages, paying their dues, holiday remembrances and recognition dinners. Emails were sent to Congress regarding legislation pertaining to female veterans. Women veterans also were interviewed and had interesting stories to tell.

One member from the Department of New Jersey best summed up the love and admiration our members have for veterans when she said, "We love, honor and respect ALL of our veterans, and we will strive and continue to let them know that we aim to let the lawmakers in Washington know we mean business! We will also continue to serve our veterans' families and veterans agencies that need the support, that our letters, phone calls and e-mails get the attention we've gotten so good in delivering."

Membership Committee
Rene Reese, Brook Park, Ohio

(Did not submit a report.)

National Security Committee
Krisann Owens, North Bend, Oregon

The National Security program has enjoyed an exciting year filled with members dedicating themselves to our veterans, service members and their families. From welcome-home ceremonies to USO shows, our members promote the programs under the umbrella of the National Security program with pride.

Determined members also took the coupon clipping program to new heights by involving their communities with collecting coupons to send overseas. Thousands of pounds of coupons have been collected and sent much to the delight of not only the service members but also to the folks in charge of the commissaries. It is a valuable

program for our military personnel and they appreciate our efforts to ease the burdens of living in foreign countries.

Deployment ceremonies and welcome-home events were attended and coordinated by Auxiliary members across the nation with enthusiasm, assisting families with their needs and giving pocket flags to those who are deploying. For those returning, Auxiliary members created welcome-home parties and provided everything from coffee and doughnuts to childcare.

One of the most exciting programs is the Citizen Emergency Response Training, or CERT, as our members have decided "It's not OK to be a victim." Now they have the tools to be personally prepared in the event of emergency as well as important information that will help those in their communities.

As always volunteering at blood donation sites is a large part of many units and strutting their stuff in USO shows has become a favorite project. The Landstuhl Hospital Project is growing, and our units are becoming more active with this program.

The Blue Star Banner program is going strong, and Gold Star Banners are being distributed with honor. At unit meetings, Auxiliary members always remember the sacrifices of our POW/MIAs with the placement of the POW/MIA flag.

The level of activity within the National Security program is a testament to our dedication to God and Country.

Poppy Committee
Vickie Koutz, Boonville, Indiana

A special thanks to the 40 departments that sent in their reports. Congratulations to the Northwestern Division for 100 percent reporting.

Junior and senior Auxiliary members in Michigan traveled to the VA facilities and learned how to make poppies from the veterans in the facility.

A chairman from Wisconsin threaded more than 800 Girls State charms onto poppies. These were taped onto Girls State brochures and presented on the last day to all citizens and counselors.

Ohio units used their funds to prepare welcome-home picnics, parties and family gatherings for returning troops and their families.

Units in California, Colorado, New Hampshire, South Dakota, South Carolina and Wyoming reported having successful interviews with radio and television stations, along with articles in the newspaper.

A proclamation from the local mayor was reported by a New Mexico unit.

Minnesota and Montana unit members included poppies in greeting cards and letters sent to members.

A Connecticut unit participated in Relay for Life and chose a team name of "Junior Poppies."

The House of Representatives received a resolution declaring May the official Poppy Month in Delaware.

Puerto Rico had a Little Miss Poppy Contest, with three little girls who represented their island. Other departments that also had participation were Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, New York, Vermont, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Tennessee and Texas.

The Departments of Idaho, Oregon and Utah presented poppies to elected officials.

Certificates of appreciation were presented by the Departments of Hawaii, Iowa, West Virginia, Maine, Arkansas and Kentucky.

The American Legion Auxiliary poppy earned great publicity in May 2009 when Fox Business Network aired a segment featuring National Secretary Mary "Dubbie" Buckler promoting the program and its history.

What a wonderful year we've had in our Poppy Program as we Honored Our Promises Everyday, in the HOPE of helping more veterans.

Public Relations Committee
Virginia Nelsen, Valentine, Nebraska

Organizing and following a project to successful completion includes getting the word out to community via all media outlets. It is simple, basic communication. A compressed view of Auxiliary public relations in action follows (48 departments reported):

Units: 9,385
Units reporting:.....4,620
Interviews: 2,697
Articles: 20,598
Letters to Editor:.....3,910
Aired events:.....2,792
TV announcements:.....3,702
PSAs:.....5,888
Printed ads:.....10,173
Letters of appreciation:.....11,379
Department Websites: 28, hits:.....1,250,472
Unit Websites: 415
Press books assembled: 30
Press books entered to National: 19
Unit newsletters:.....1,360
Legion Family newsletters:.....1,371

Outstanding work was received from the following departments: Arizona, California, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Maryland, Minnesota, Mississippi, Montana, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Carolina, Texas, Virginia and Wisconsin.

Ohio's chairman printed a newsletter for units showcasing information with a positive spin.

Maryland's hard work is a perennial legacy to their motivation, organization and success.

Arizona does media bios of its district presidents.

California provides a press kit with a contact list.

Florida featured five great projects in its report, including the progression of how to make it happen.

Georgia showcases The American Legion Family statewide through its Old Soldiers Day.

Idaho proudly promotes patriotism and goodwill by partnering the Liberty Flag project.

Kansas' goodwill in providing a Braille flag for an injured soldier was widely reported in TV media.

A Montana unit that understands good public relations sponsors a Star Student Award each month.

Oklahoma worked with its VA to promote stand-downs in five state newspapers and with Congressman Shelton during Awareness Assembly to help promote the Year of the Military Family.

Wisconsin's goal to effectively promote programs via cyberspace was met in an easily understood format that would meet any organization's future electronic objectives.

I am proud of your leadership and reports. Your efforts tell the story of a wonderful organization. So, huzzah! Huzzah! (as they said in colonial days) for all those members in the trenches who did exemplary work to support veterans, children and communities.

A report highlighting many wonderful projects, including all stats, Web sites, and email addresses will be presented to each department.

Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Committee
Carlene Ashworth, Pasadena, Texas

The mission of the Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Committee states in part, "We endeavor, through our efforts, to help ensure those who need assistance can restore and or transition to a normal functioning life, physically, mentally, socially and vocationally."

The goal of this committee was to further enhance the lives of our veterans and their families by increasing the number of Regularly Scheduled volunteers by 20 percent across all departments. Thanks to all of you who came on board, we accomplished our goal and more with a total increase of 1,151 new senior and Junior volunteers. Field Service and Home Service volunteers increased by 3,064. This growth in numbers, strength and energy increases our opportunities to Honor Our Promise Everyday to those we serve.

3,138 members from 930 units assisted VA Medical Centers with local competitions for the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival, which culminated in the participation of approximately 175 veterans at the national show held in Palo Alto, Calif., in October 2008. Auxiliary members from many areas of the country take the time each year to volunteer during this occasion to help make the festival a success. Auxiliary volunteers from the Department of California did an outstanding job as hostesses in the hospitality room, open to all of the festival participants throughout the week.

As a major co-sponsor of the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival, the American Legion Auxiliary has committed to contribute at least $100,000 each year toward this program sponsored by the Department of Veterans Affairs. As of this date, the Auxiliary has received $71,775 for NVCAF. Funds contributed by units to local NVCAF programs total $26,025. The VA recognizes those departments contributing $1,000 or more each year during the NVCAF with a beautiful plaque. There's still time for units and departments to support this worthy program.

Homeless veterans initiatives also were a major factor in the VA&R program to the 716 units and 5,890 volunteers who assisted with stand-downs, support of food and care items to homeless shelters, and other activities. A total of 44,255 hours and $246,716 were donated to this program to assist our homeless veterans.

Units also contributed $38,273 for welcome-home celebrations where 922 volunteers helped to provide services for the returning military and their families in addition to luncheons, picnics, entertainment for the kids and other activities.

Fisher Houses were the recipients of $155,160 in donations from 984 units, and 7,442 volunteer hours were contributed to provide meals and other amenities to the

veterans and their families to help make this home away from home a more pleasant place to be during adverse times.

Collaborative program efforts with The American Legion were participated in by 399 units and 2,214 volunteers who gave 27,090 hours and $173,317 for various activities that involved our veterans, from picnics and other fun outings, to ceremonies and dinners honoring fallen heroes.

745 units and 2,475 volunteers participated in the National Salute to Hospitalized Veterans with expenditures for gifts, favors, dinners and other activities in the amount of $19,378.

314 units held dinners and presented awards, flowers, and certificates to 997 volunteers to thank them for their service in our VA facilities during National Volunteer Month.

VA&R legislative efforts of writing letters, emails and making phone calls to our state and national representatives and other government officials were reported by 870 volunteers who answered the call to assist in getting our veterans the care they deserve.

Additional statistics shown below prove American Legion Auxiliary volunteers are diligent in their duties and passionate in their cause. Their efforts give energy to our activities and this energy becomes electrifying when it touches the lives of our veterans.

A look at the numbers:

Number of departments report	47
Number of units report	8,763
Number of volunteers who served	78,365
Total of volunteer hours served	1,971,371
Total dollars contributed for program	$6,010,086
Number of volunteers at VA facilities	20,367
Number of volunteer hours at VA	538,725
Dollars contributed to ALA for NVCAF	$71,775
Dollars contributed by units to local NVCAF programs	$26,025
Dollars donated to homeless veterans initiatives	246,716
Number of veterans served	930,263

Report of Independent Auditors

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, 2008 and 2007 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 2008 and 2007 financial statements of Haynes & Partners Communications, Inc., a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Legion, which statements reflect total assets of $1,855,741 and total revenues of $4,162,777 for the year ended December 31, 2008 and total assets of $1,927,251 and total revenues of $7,657,726 for the year ended December 31, 2007. Those statements were audited by other auditors whose report has been furnished to us, and our opinion, insofar as it relates to the 2008 and 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, 2008 and 2007, 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 1, during 2008 the Legion adopted new accounting guidance related to endowment funds. As disclosed in Note 18, 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 Horwath LLP

Indianapolis, Indiana
June 2, 2009

The American Legion National Headquarters
Consolidated Statements of Financial Position December 31, 2008 and 2007

	2008	2007
ASSETS		
Cash and cash equivalents	$ 2,049,362	$ 2,907,165
Accounts receivable	2,025,137	2,892,478
Prepaid expenses and deposits	828,408	637,724
Deferred membership expense	2,306,766	8,429,801
Inventory	2,610,762	2,356,847
Investment in affiliate (CFA)	23,345	49,407
Beneficial interest in trust	389,000	377,000
Prepaid pension expense	221,413	6,157,129
	10,454,193	23,807,551
Investments		
General	24,726,658	18,826,354
Segregated for Restricted and Reserved funds	26,218,794	24,982,939
Paid-Up-For-Life Membership fund	29,438,344	36,146,083
Samsung scholarship fund	7,534,315	7,553,839
Building funds	3,632,095	3,496,521
Sept. 11 Memorial scholarship fund	2,952,670	2,123,720
Special account - Endowment Fund	2,169,380	2,129,779
General account - Endowment Fund	6,305,337	6,094,055
National Emergency Fund	2,302,634	2,302,890
Other	4,606,562	5,582,790
	109,886,789	109,238,970
Property, plant and equipment, net	6,864,478	6,599,776
	$ 127,205,460	$ 139,646,297
LIABILITIES		
Accounts payable	$ 1,863,765	$ 1,415,590
Scholarships payable	1,092,632	1,001,603
Deposits on emblem merchandise sales	92,150	122,175
Deferred income	454,039	157,555
Deferred dues income	26,785,977	29,968,820
Deferred income - direct membership solicitation	117,667	1,191,152
Accrued vacation benefits	628,167	632,078
Other liabilities	427,010	591,715
Notes payable	2,269,625	2,446,765
Deferred dues income - Paid-Up-For-Life memberships	22,993,502	20,744,774
Life memberships due to state and local posts	25,667,562	23,872,855
	82,392,096	82,145,082
NET ASSETS		
Unrestricted	22,838,589	36,433,593
Temporarily restricted	9,990,610	9,277,500
Permanently restricted	11,984,165	11,790,122
Total net assets	44,813,364	57,501,215
	$ 127,205,460	$ 139,646,297

See accompanying notes to consolidated financial statements.

The American Legion National Headquarters
Consolidated Statement of Activities Year ended December 31, 2008

	Unrestricted	Temporarily Restricted	Permanently Restricted	Total
Revenue, gains and other support				
National member dues	$ 32,327,410	$ -	$ -	$ 32,327,410
Direct membership solicitations	4,087,127	-	-	4,087,127
Member service fees income	1,456,547	-	-	1,456,547
Affinity income	346,632	-	-	346,632
Sales of emblem items	10,674,782	-	-	10,674,782
Advertising	8,766,045	-	-	8,766,045
Contributions	578,791	1,372,724	91,848	2,043,363
Label and printing fees	1,801,855	-	-	1,801,855
Sales - HPC	1,614,695	-	-	1,614,695
Interest and dividends, net of trustee fees of $354,260	2,035,815	899,274	-	2,935,089
Net realized gains (losses)	(90,572)	7,900	97,929	15,257
Other	1,887,281	60	-	1,887,341
	65,486,408	2,279,958	189,777	67,956,143
Net assets released from restriction	1,339,171	(1,339,171)	-	-
Total revenues, gains and other support	66,825,579	940,787	189,777	67,956,143
Expenses				
Salaries	12,604,488	-	-	12,604,488
Employee benefits	3,523,221	-	-	3,523,221
Cost of sales - Legion	7,922,688	-	-	7,922,688
Cost of sales - HPC	1,077,575	-	-	1,077,575
Direct publication	11,840,989	-	-	11,840,989
Executive and staff travel	869,637	-	-	869,637
Commission and committee	1,734,318	-	-	1,734,318
Printing and postage	3,388,321	-	-	3,388,321
Scholarships, grants and awards	1,550,354	-	-	1,550,354
Office and other operating	12,968,602	-	-	12,968,602
Occupancy and usage	2,330,814	-	-	2,330,814
Special projects and programs	3,614,336	-	-	3,614,336
	63,425,343	-	-	63,425,343
Change in net assets from operations	3,400,236	940,787	189,777	4,530,800
Net unrealized gains (losses) - investments	(122,174)	(227,677)	4,266	(345,585)
Net unrealized loss - PUFL	(11,273,623)	-	-	(11,273,623)
Amortization of pension loss	(305,066)	-	-	(305,066)
Pension-related changes other than net periodic pension cost	(5,294,377)	-	-	(5,294,377)
Change in net assets	(13,595,004)	713,110	194,043	(12,687,851)
Net assets, beginning of year	36,433,593	9,277,500	11,790,122	57,501,215
Net assets, end of year	$ 22,838,589	$ 9,990,610	$ 11,984,165	$ 44,813,364

See accompanying notes to consolidated financial statements.

The American Legion National Headquarters
Consolidated Statement of Activities Year ended December 31, 2007

	Unrestricted	Temporarily Restricted	Permanently Restricted	Total
Revenue, gains and other support				
National member dues	$ 22,958,366	$ -	$ -	$ 22,958,366
Direct membership solicitations	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	659,586	1,065,892	93,287	1,818,765
Label and printing fees	1,723,739	-	-	1,723,739
Sales - HPC	854,200	-	-	854,200
Interest and dividends, net of trustee fees of $315,364	2,167,041	905,151	-	3,072,192
Net realized gains (losses)	(170,547)	249	(36,025)	(206,323)
Other	2,038,586	120	-	2,038,706
	58,075,084	1,971,412	57,262	60,103,758
Net assets released from restriction	1,128,520	(1,128,520)	-	-
Total revenues, gains and other support	59,203,604	842,892	57,262	60,103,758
Expenses				
Salaries	12,192,268	-	-	12,192,268
Employee benefits	3,593,958	-	-	3,593,958
Cost of sales - Legion	8,486,117	-	-	8,486,117
Cost of sales - HPC	462,479	-	-	462,479
Direct publication	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	11,808,991	-	-	11,808,991
Occupancy and usage	2,210,753	-	-	2,210,753
Special projects and programs	3,643,882	-	-	3,643,882
	61,913,402	-	-	61,913,402
Change in net assets from operations	(2,709,798)	842,892	57,262	(1,809,644)
Net unrealized gains - investments	863,421	220,523	185,319	1,269,263
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	(18,788,386)	1,063,415	242,581	(17,482,390)
Net assets, beginning of year	55,221,979	8,214,085	11,547,541	74,983,605
Net assets, end of year	$ 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 Statements of Cash Flows Years ended December 31, 2008 and 2007

	2008	2007
Cash flows from operating activities		
Change in net assets	$ (12,687,851)	$ (17,482,390)
Adjustments to reconcile change in net assets to net cash from operating activities		
Depreciation expense	782,234	736,914
Loss on sale of fixed assets	-	4,137
Realized (gain) loss on sale of investments	(15,257)	206,323
Unrealized (gain) loss on investments	345,585	(1,269,263)
Loss on Paid-Up-For-Life annuity	11,273,623	6,593,296
Amortization of pension loss	305,066	512,654
Pension-related changes other than net periodic pension cost	5,294,377	-
Effect of adoption of FASB Statement No. 158	-	9,836,059
Contributions restricted for long-term purposes	(91,848)	(93,287)
Accounts receivable	867,341	333,362
Prepaid expenses and deposits	145,589	158,231
Deferred membership expense	6,123,035	(375,337)
Inventories	(253,915)	146,664
Beneficial interest in trust	(12,000)	5,000
Accounts and scholarships payable	539,204	(430,285)
Deferred income	(11,220,057)	7,528,467
Other accrued liabilities	(168,616)	77,929
Net cash from operating activities	1,226,510	6,488,474
Cash flows from investing activities		
Purchase of property and equipment	(1,046,936)	(630,083)
Purchase of investments	(160,058,013)	(66,539,671)
Sales and maturities of investments	159,079,866	61,471,426
Investment in affiliate (CFA)	26,062	(2,469)
Net cash from investing activities	(1,999,021)	(5,700,797)
Cash flows from financing activities		
Contributions restricted for long-term purposes	91,848	93,287
Payments on loan	(177,140)	(168,016)
Net cash from financing activities	(85,292)	(74,729)
Net increase (decrease) in cash and cash equivalents	(857,803)	712,948
Cash and cash equivalents, beginning of year	2,907,165	2,194,217
Cash and cash equivalents, end of year	$ 2,049,362	$ 2,907,165
Supplemental cash flows information		
Income taxes paid, net of refunds received	$ (18,167)	$ 120,462
Interest paid	125,417	134,541

See accompanying notes to consolidated financial statements.

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 that 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 & Partners Communications, Inc. (HPC), the American Legion Endowment Fund Corp. (ALEF), and the National Emergency Fund (NEF) (collectively, the Legion). All material interorganizational accounts and transactions have been eliminated in consolidation. Haynes & 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. American Legion Endowment Fund Corporation, 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 $250,000 per financial institution. Additionally, the Legion holds funds at financial institutions that are participating in the FDIC's transaction account guarantee program. Under this program non-interest bearing and certain low interest accounts are FDIC insured in full through 2009 in addition to and separate from the coverage available under FDIC's general deposit insurance rules.

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 & 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 which substantially increase the useful lives of existing assets and are greater than $500 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 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 incurred no expense and paid no income taxes in 2008 and 2007.

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 17.

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 amount of time spent by Legion employees performing services for these departments.

Adoption of New Accounting Standards: In 2006, the Financial Accounting Standards Board (FASB) issued Statement of Financial Accounting Standards (SFAS) No. 157, Fair Value Measurements (SFAS No. 157). SFAS No. 157 defines fair value, provides enhanced guidance for using fair value to measure assets and liabilities under current U.S. Generally Accepted Accounting Principles and expands the disclosure of the methods used and the effect of fair value measurements on earnings. The Legion adopted applicable portions of this standard for the year ended Dec. 31, 2008. Additional disclosure is provided in Note 15.

The Legion adopted FASB Staff Position (FSP) 117-1, Endowments of Not-for-Profit Organizations: Net Asset Classification of Funds Subject to an Enacted Version of the Uniform Prudent Management of Institutional Funds Act (UPMIFA), and Enhanced Disclosure for All Endowment Funds. FSP 117-1 provides guidance on the net asset classification of donor-restricted endowment funds for organizations subject to an enacted version of UPMIFA. The Legion adopted applicable portions of this standard, which went into effect July 1, 2007. Additional disclosure is provided in Note 16.

FASB Interpretation No. 48, Accounting for Uncertainty in Income Taxes (FIN 48), issued July 2006, was effective as of Jan. 1, 2007. The Legion has elected to defer adoption of FIN 48, in accordance with the provisions of FASB Staff Position No. FIN 48-3, which permits certain nonpublic enterprises to delay adoption until fiscal years beginning after Dec. 15, 2008.

Upon adoption of FIN 48, the Legion will recognize a tax benefit only if it is more likely than not the tax position would be sustained in a tax examination, with a tax examination being presumed to occur. The amount recognized will be the largest amount of tax benefit that is greater than 50 percent likely of being realized on examination. For tax positions not meeting the more-likely-than-not test, no tax benefit will be recorded. Currently, the Legion accounts for contingencies associated with certain tax positions in accordance with SFAS No. 5, Accounting for Contingencies, which provides the recording of a contingency based on the probability of certain events to transpire that range from probable to remote as opposed to applying a more likely than not recognition threshold. The Legion has examined this issue and has determined there are no material contingent tax liabilities.

Reclassifications: Certain reclassifications have been made to present last year's financial statements on a basis comparable to the current year's financial statements. These reclassifications had no effect on the change in net assets.

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 $26,062 and an increase of $2,469 in 2008 and 2007, respectively. Accordingly, the Legion's investment in CFA has been changed by these amounts and corresponding adjustments have been reflected in unrestricted designated net assets for 2008 and 2007.

NOTE 4 – BENEFICIAL INTEREST IN CHARITABLE LEAD TRUST

The ALEF has been named a beneficiary of a charitable lead trust. Under the charitable trust, the ALEF is to receive quarterly distributions in the amount of $9,919 until December 2020, or until the funds of the trust are exhausted. Based on the terms of the trust and a 3.4-percent discount rate in 2008 and a 5.0-percent discount rate in 2007, the present value of future benefits expected to be received by the ALEF was estimated to be $389,000 and $377,000 at Dec. 31, 2008 and 2007, 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:

2008	Carrying amount	Unrealized gains	Unrealized losses	Fair value
Due within 1 year	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
Due 1-5 years	76,282	5,305	-	81,587
Due more than 10 years	96,000	-	-	96,000
Total	$ 172,282	$ 5,305	$ -	$ 177,587

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

The carrying amount plus accrued interest for these investments was $174,515 and $291,513 at Dec. 31, 2008 and 2007, respectively.

The market and cost values for all other investments held by the Legion at Dec. 31, 2008 and 2007, are as follows:

	2008		2007	
	Cost	Market	Cost	Market
Money market accounts	$ 25,271,409	$ 25,271,409	$ 31,437,549	$ 31,437,549
U.S government obligations	59,378,182	60,832,707	54,441,050	54,468,083
State and municipal bonds	301,383	301,688	669,300	679,509
Corporate and foreign bonds	19,416,221	17,191,281	11,867,715	11,657,987
Common and preferred stocks	6,238,516	5,230,854	8,586,178	9,923,360
Accrued interest	884,335	884,335	780,969	780,969
	$ 111,490,046	$109,712,274	$107,782,761	$108,947,457

NOTE 6 – PROPERTY AND EQUIPMENT

The Legion's property and equipment, and the related accumulated depreciation at Dec. 31, 2008 and 2007, are as follows:

	2008	2007
Washington, D.C., real estate		
Land	$ 80,000	$ 80,000
Building	4,905,977	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	49,715	8,650
Furniture, fixtures and equipment		
National Headquarters, Indianapolis	5,433,091	4,903,328
Washington, D.C.	851,076	863,826
Haynes & Partners Communications, Inc.	1,104,051	1,122,251
	16,424,953	15,581,036
Less: accumulated depreciation	(9,560,475)	(8,981,260)
	$ 6,864,478	$ 6,599,776

Depreciation expense for the years ended Dec. 31, 2008 and 2007, was $782,234 and $736,914 respectively.

NOTE 7 – 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 $2,269,625 and $2,446,765 for 2008 and 2007.

The future maturities of the long-term debt are as follows:

2009	$ 185,939
2010	196,036
2011	206,682
2012	217,907
2013	229,740
Thereafter	1,233,321
Total	$ 2,269,625

Interest expense was $125,417 and $134,541 for the years ended Dec. 31, 2008 and 2007, respectively.

NOTE 8 – LEASES

The Legion has several non-cancelable operating leases, primarily for facilities, computer equipment and copiers that expire at various dates through 2012. HPC leases equipment under operating leases that expire at various dates through 2012. Rent expense under these leases for the years ended Dec. 31, 2008 and 2007, was $502,505 and $506,321, respectively.

Minimum lease commitments are as follows:

2009	$ 472,392
2010	469,215
2011	459,861
2012	353,978
	$ 1,755,446

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 2008 and 2007 was approximately $623,000 and $608,000, respectively. Insurance coverage is included in the Legion's general insurance policy.

NOTE 9 – PAID-UP-FOR-LIFE MEMBERSHIP FUND

The National Executive Committee approved the establishment of a life membership plan available to any member of a participating department. In accordance with the plan, the assets of the Paid-Up-For-Life (PUFL) Membership Fund are segregated in a trust account from which funds equal to the annual dues of life members are withdrawn for current operations each year. The trust agreement provides that the Legion has the right to withdraw part or all of the assets of the trust account and to modify or terminate the trust agreement at its discretion.

Under the terms of the PUFL program, participating member's national, state and local dues are paid by the Legion for the remainder of the individual's life. Management has estimated and recognized a liability for the future payments to state and local Legion organizations. Likewise, management has deferred recognition of the national dues portion of the members' payment. Deferred PUFL dues are recognized in annual amounts equal to the national dues in effect each year. The liability and deferred revenue amounts are estimated by the Legion's actuaries using PUFL membership summaries and discount rates comparable to the Legion's recent investment performance.

NOTE 10 – RESTRICTED AND RESERVE DESIGNATED FUNDS

The restricted fund is designated for use by the National Finance Commission and National Executive Committee of the Legion. 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 2008 and 2007.

The reserve fund is also designated for use by the National Finance Commission and 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 11 – 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 Dec. 31, 2008, $1,062,000 in funds had been approved for use in designated programs during 2008.

NOTE 12 - TEMPORARILY RESTRICTED NET ASSETS

Temporarily restricted net assets are donor-restricted for specific purposes. At Dec. 31, 2008 and 2007, the restricted purposes are as follows:

	2008	2007
Buick Scholarship	$ 623,476	$ 736,450
Overseas Graves Decoration	1,039,431	971,910
Samsung scholarships	2,534,316	2,553,839
Legacy Scholarship Fund	2,980,461	2,148,971
National Emergency Fund	2,259,434	2,311,796
Others	553,492	554,534
	$ 9,990,610	$ 9,277,500

NOTE 13 – PERMANENTLY RESTRICTED NET ASSETS

Permanently restricted net assets represent donor-restricted gifts that have been invested and are to be maintained in perpetuity. Income from the Samsung scholarship fund is to be used to fund undergraduate scholarships for descendants of Korean War veterans and other wars in which U.S. servicemembers participated. Income from the American Legion Endowment Fund is to be used to support the Legion's Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation and Children & Youth activities.

At Dec. 31, 2008 and 2007, the permanently restricted net assets are as follows:

	2008	2007
Samsung scholarships	$ 5,000,000	$ 5,000,000
American Legion Endowment Fund	6,984,165	6,790,122
	$ 11,984,165	$ 11,790,122

NOTE 14 - 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.

	2008	2007
Purpose restrictions accomplished		
Overseas graves decoration	$ 5,600	$ 24,540
Scholarships and grants (including relief aid)	1,039,505	703,402
Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation and Children & Youth programs	294,066	400,578
	$ 1,339,171	$ 1,128,520

NOTE 15 – FAIR VALUE OF FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS

Statement of Financial Accounting Standard No. 157, Fair Value Measurements (SFAS No. 157), defines fair value as the price that would be received for an asset or paid to transfer a liability (an exit price) in the Legion's principal or most advantageous market for the asset or liability in an orderly transaction between market participants on the measurement date.

Statement 157 establishes a fair value hierarchy which requires an entity to maximize the use of observable inputs and minimize the use of unobservable inputs when measuring fair value. The standard describes three levels of inputs that may be used to measure fair value:

Level 1: Quoted prices for identical assets or liabilities in active markets that the entity has the ability to access as of the measurement date.

Level 2: Significant other observable inputs other than Level 1 prices such as quoted prices for similar assets or liabilities, quoted prices in markets that are not active, or other inputs that are observable or can be corroborated by observable market data.

Level 3: Significant unobservable inputs that reflect a reporting entity's own assumptions about the assumptions that market participants would use in pricing an asset or liability.

In many cases, a valuation technique used to measure fair value includes inputs from multiple levels of the fair-value hierarchy. The lowest level of significant input determines the placement of the entire fair-value measurement in the hierarchy.

The Legion holds an investment portfolio described in Note 5. Investments classified as

Level 1 all have publicly traded daily values which may be obtained. Investments classified as Level 2 are publicly traded in a quoted market although not necessarily on a daily basis.

The fair value of beneficial interest in trust assets (or any type of beneficial interest) is based on a valuation model that calculates the present value of estimated distributed income. The valuation model incorporates assumptions that market participants would use in estimating future distributed income. The Legion is able to compare the valuation model inputs and results to widely available published industry data for reasonableness (Level 2 inputs). If not readily comparable to published data, then the Legion would have to develop a model similar to the above for a level 3 input.

Assets and Liabilities Measured on a Recurring Basis: Assets and liabilities measured at fair value on a recurring basis are summarized below:

	Fair Value Measurements at Dec. 31, 2008, using		
	Quoted Prices in Active Markets for Identical Assets (Level 1)	Significant Other Observable Inputs (Level 2)	Significant Unobservable Inputs (Level 3)
Assets:			
Beneficial interest in trust	$ -	$ 389,000	$ -
Investments	92,219,305	17,667,484	-
	$ 92,219,305	$ 18,056,484	$ -

NOTE 16 – ENDOWMENT COMPOSITION

The Legion's endowments include donor-restricted endowment funds and is comprised of two separate funds: the American Legion Endowment Fund and the Samsung scholarship fund. In accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles, net assets associated with endowment funds, including funds designated by the NEC to function as endowments, are classified and reported based on the existence or absence of donor-imposed restrictions.

Interpretation of Relevant Law: The National Executive Committee has interpreted the Uniform Prudent Management of Institutional Funds Act (UPMIFA) as requiring the preservation of the fair value of the original gift as of the gift date of the donor-restricted endowment funds absent explicit donor stipulations to the contrary. As a result of this interpretation, the Legion classifies as permanently restricted net assets (a) the original value of gifts donated to the permanent endowment, (b) the original value of subsequent gifts to the permanent endowment, and (c) accumulations to the permanent endowment made in accordance with the governing documents of the Legion. The remaining portion of the donor-restricted endowment fund that is not classified in permanently restricted net assets is classified as temporarily restricted net assets until those amounts are appropriated for expenditure by the Legion in a manner consistent with the standard of prudence prescribed by UPMIFA. In accordance with UPMIFA, the Legion considers the following factors in making a determination to appropriate or accumulate donor-restricted endowment funds:

(1) The duration and preservation of the fund
(2) The purposes of the Legion and the donor-restricted endowment fund
(3) General economic conditions
(4) The possible effect of inflation and deflation
(5) The expected total return from income and the appreciation of investments
(6) Other resources of the Legion
(7) The investment policies of the Legion

Endowment net asset composition by type of fund as of Dec. 31, 2008:

	Unrestricted	Temporarily restricted	Permanently restricted	Total
Donor-restricted endowment funds	$ -	$ 2,534,316	$ 11,984,165	$ 14,518,481
Total funds	$ -	$ 2,534,316	$ 11,984,165	$ 14,518,481

Endowment net asset composition by type of fund as of Dec. 31, 2007:

	Unrestricted	Temporarily Restricted	Permanently Restricted	Total
Donor-restricted endowment funds	$ -	$ 2,553,839	$ 11,790,122	$ 14,343,961
Total funds	$ -	$ 2,553,839	$ 11,790,122	$ 14,343,961

Changes in endowment net assets for the year ended Dec. 31, 2008:

	Unrestricted	Temporarily restricted	Permanently restricted	Total
Net assets, beginning of year	$ -	$2,553,839	$11,790,122	$14,343,961
Investment return:				
Investment income, net of fees	-	628,260	-	628,260
Net appreciation (realized and unrealized)	-	(62,275)	102,195	39,920
Total investment return	-	565,985	102,195	668,180
New gifts	-	-	91,848	91,848
Appropriation of endowment assets for expenditure	-	(585,508)	-	(585,508)
Net assets, end of year	$ -	$2,534,316	$11,984,165	$14,518,481

Changes in endowment net assets for the period of July 1, 2007, to Dec. 31, 2007:

	Unrestricted	Temporarily restricted	Permanently restricted	Total
Net assets, beginning of period	$ -	$ 2,332,176	$11,523,392	$13,855,568
Investment return:				
Investment income, net offees	-	341,405	-	341,405
Net appreciation (realized and unrealized)	-	219,223	212,599	431,822
Total investment return	-	560,628	212,599	773,227
New gifts	-	-	54,131	54,131
Appropriation of endowment assets for expenditure	-	(338,965)	-	(338,965)
Net assets, end of year	$ -	$2,553,839	$11,790,122	$14,343,961

Funds with Deficiencies: From time to time, the fair value of assets associated with individual donor restricted endowment funds may fall below the level that the donor or UPMIFA requires the Legion to retain as a fund of perpetual duration. In accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles, deficiencies of this nature that are reported in unrestricted net assets were $97,200 and $156,195 as of Dec. 31, 2008 and 2007, respectively.

Return Objectives and Risk Parameters: The Legion has adopted investment and spending policies for endowment assets that attempt to provide a predictable stream of funding to programs supported by its endowment while seeking to maintain the purchasing power of the endowment assets. Endowment assets include those assets of donor-restricted funds that the Legion must hold in perpetuity or for a donor-specified period(s). Under this policy, as approved by the National Executive Committee, the endowment assets are invested in a manner that is intended to produce income while assuming a low level of investment risk.

Strategies Employed for Achieving Objectives: To satisfy its long-term rate-of-return objectives, the Legion relies on a total return strategy in which investment returns are achieved through both capital appreciation (realized and unrealized) and current yield (interest and dividends). The Legion targets fixed income securities to achieve its long-term return objectives within prudent risk constraints.

Spending Policy and How the Investment Objectives Relate to Spending Policy: Distributions will be limited to interest, net of fees. Capital appreciation (realized and unrealized) is added to the principal of the American Legion Endowment Fund, however, capital appreciation from the Samsung scholarship fund is temporarily restricted and can be spent according to the spending policy. Endowment fund principal, unless otherwise directed by the donor, shall not be disbursed except for emergency situations. In order to make a principal disbursement, a majority vote by the National Executive Committee will be required.

NOTE 17 – INCOME TAXES

The provision (benefit) for income taxes consists of the following:

Income tax expense	2008	2007
Currently payable		
Federal	$ (71,530)	$ 78,452
State	(25,756)	21,106
Deferred		
Federal	(12,700)	15,000
State	1,500	(5,700)
	$ (108,486)	$ 108,858

The components of the net deferred tax (liability) asset are as follows:

	2008	2007
Asset		
Net operating loss carry-forward	$ 19,900	$ 16,900
Liability		
Other	(54,500)	(62,700)
	$ (34,600)	$ (45,800)

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 (benefit) is lower than the statutory provision due primarily to the effect of non-deductible expenses, non-taxable income and the effect of state taxes.

NOTE 18 – 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.

In May 2008, the Legion voted to freeze the plan effective June 30, 2008, and voted to adopt a 401(k) savings plan with a qualified automatic contribution arrangement effective July 1, 2008. The result of the freeze is that current employees will still receive the benefits they have earned as of June 30, 2008, but no future benefits will be earned and no new employees will be added. As a result of the plan freeze, the benefit obligation decreased by $1,192,643. The 401(k) savings plan calls for a 100-percent match of the first 1 percent contributed by the employee and a 50-percent match of the net 5 percent contributed by the employee. Thus, the maximum matching percentage an employee will receive is 3.5 percent.

The defined benefit 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 2008 and percentage of plan assets at Dec. 31, 2008 and 2007.

Asset category and target allocation	2008	2007
Equity securities (30-40%)	30%	34%
Debt securities (50-70%)	70%	64%
Other (0-10%)	0%	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.

Weighted-average assumptions	2008	2007
Discount rate	5.80%	5.91%
Expected return on plan assets	9.00%	8.00%
Rate of compensation increase	0.00%	2.00%

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, 2008 and 2007.

	2008	2007
Benefit obligation	$ (45,786,609)	$ (45,271,515)
Fair value of plan assets	46,008,022	51,428,644
Funded status	$ 221,413	$ 6,157,129
Service cost	$ 1,343,110	$ 1,443,498
Interest cost	2,612,541	2,407,151
Actual return on assets	3,452,480	(4,232,273)
Amortization of prior service costs	420,337	422,978
Amortization of loss	305,066	512,654
Difference between expected and actual return on assets	(7,492,195)	418,657
Benefit cost	$ 641,339	$ 972,665
Net loss	$ 5,714,714	$ 8,379,005
Prior service cost	(420,337)	1,457,054
Pension-related changes other than net periodic pension cost	$ 5,294,377	$ 9,836,059
Prepaid benefit cost	$ 14,315,132	$ 15,993,480
Accumulated benefit obligation	47,427,798	43,280,204
Vested benefit obligation	46,880,911	42,612,410
Benefit cost	$ 641,339	$ 972,665
Employer contribution	-	396,039
Benefits paid	1,968,142	1,741,017
Measurement date	12/31/2008	12/31/2007

Estimated future benefit payments:

2009	$ 2,768,171
2010	2,969,403
2011	3,027,256
2012	3,104,015
2013	3,179,032
Years 2014 - 2018	16,460,563

The amounts of net loss and net prior service cost expected to be recognized as components of net periodic benefit cost for the year ending Dec. 31, 2009, are $880,835 and $121,085, respectively.

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 2008 and 2007 were $142,742 and $19,537, respectively.

NOTE 19 – FUNCTIONAL EXPENSES

The following represents a functional breakdown of the American Legion National Headquarters' expenses by program and supporting services.

	2008	2007
Program services		
Veterans programs and services	$ 31,940,920	$ 33,428,555
Americanism and Children & Youth activities	3,212,428	3,105,968
Flag education and legislation	6,061	47,531
	35,159,409	36,582,054
Supporting services		
Management and general	18,198,055	16,056,763
Member development	9,977,403	9,189,187
Fundraising	90,476	85,398
	28,265,934	25,331,348
	$ 63,425,343	$ 61,913,402

The American Legion National Headquarters
Notes to Consolidated Financial Statements December 31, 2008 and 2007

Member development includes direct response advertising expense of $7,285,972 and $6,778,822 for the years ended Dec. 31, 2008 and 2007.

NOTE 20 – LITIGATION

The Legion is currently involved in and/or has been mentioned as a defendant or co-defendant in several legal actions. It is the opinion of the national judge advocate that these claims are without merit and any ultimate liability of the Legion with respect to these actions will not materially affect the financial position of the Legion.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

The American Legion National Headquarters Reconciliation of Internal Financial Statements to Audited Financial Statements Years Ended December 31, 2008 and 2007

	2008	2007
Change in net assets - unaudited internal financial statements	$ 3,025,378	$ (1,926,304)
Subsequent adjustments, net	(81,159)	(1,000,000)
Change in net assets before net unrealized gains not included in internal financials		
Unrestricted designated	357,319	216,506
Temporarily restricted	940,787	842,892
Permanently restricted	189,777	57,262
	1,487,883	1,116,660
Net unrealized gains (losses) - investments		
General	(12,751)	95,977
Unrestricted designated	(10,725)	767,444
Temporarily restricted	(227,677)	220,523
Permanently restricted	4,266	185,319
	(246,887)	1,269,263
Net unrealized loss - PUFL	(11,273,623)	(6,593,296)
Amortization of pension loss	(305,066)	(512,654)
Pension-related changes other than net periodic pension cost	(5,294,377)	(9,836,059)
Change in net assets - audited financial statements	$ (12,687,851)	$ (17,482,390)

The American Legion National Headquarters
Consolidating Statement of Financial Position December 31, 2008

	American Legion National Headquarters	American Legion Endowment Fund	National Emergency Fund	Haynes and Partners Communications, Inc.	Eliminations	Total
ASSETS						
Cash and cash equivalents	$ 1,364,442	$ 21,442	$ -	$ 663,478	$ -	$ 2,049,362
Accounts receivable	1,824,125	-	-	602,729	(401,717)	2,025,137
Prepaid expenses and deposits	626,662	1,806	-	199,940	-	828,408
Deferred membership expense	2,306,766	-	-	-	-	2,306,766
Due from American Legion Endowment Fund	2,000,000	-	-	-	(2,000,000)	-
Inventory	2,610,762	-	-	-	-	2,610,762
Investment in affiliate (CFA)	23,345	-	-	-	-	23,345
Beneficial interest in trust	-	389,000	-	-	-	389,000
Prepaid pension expense	221,413	-	-	-	-	221,413
	10,977,515	412,248	-	1,466,147	(2,401,717)	10,454,193
Investments						
General	24,726,658	-	-	-	-	24,726,658
Segregated for Restricted and Reserved funds	26,218,794	-	-	-	-	26,218,794
Paid-Up-For-Life Membership fund	29,438,344	-	-	-	-	29,438,344
Samsung scholarship fund	7,534,315	-	-	-	-	7,534,315
Building funds	3,632,095	-	-	-	-	3,632,095
Sept. 11 Memorial scholarship fund	2,952,670	-	-	-	-	2,952,670
Special account - Endowment Fund	-	2,169,380	-	-	-	2,169,380
General account - Endowment Fund	-	6,305,337	-	-	-	6,305,337
National Emergency Fund	-	-	2,302,634	-	-	2,302,634
Investment in HPC	1,346,608	-	-	-	(1,346,608)	-
Other	4,432,047	-	-	174,515	-	4,606,562
	100,281,531	8,474,717	2,302,634	174,515	(1,346,608)	109,886,789
Property, plant and equipment, net	6,649,399	-	-	215,079	-	6,864,478
Total assets	$ 117,908,445	$ 8,886,965	$ 2,302,634	$ 1,855,741	$ (3,748,325)	$ 127,205,460
LIABILITIES						
Accounts payable	$ 1,840,484	$ -	$ 6,200	$ 344,740	$ (327,659)	$ 1,863,765
Scholarships payable	1,092,632	-	-	-	-	1,092,632
Accounts payable - Legion	-	2,000,000	37,000	37,058	(2,074,058)	-
Deposits on emblem merchandise sales	92,150	-	-	-	-	92,150
Deferred income	454,039	-	-	-	-	454,039
Deferred dues income	26,785,977	-	-	-	-	26,785,977
Deferred income - direct membership solicitation	117,667	-	-	-	-	117,667
Accrued vacation benefits	628,167	-	-	-	-	628,167
Other liabilities	299,675	-	-	127,335	-	427,010
Notes payable	2,269,625	-	-	-	-	2,269,625
Deferred dues income - Paid-Up-For-Life Memberships	22,993,502	-	-	-	-	22,993,502
Life memberships due to state and local posts	25,667,562	-	-	-	-	25,667,562
	82,241,480	2,000,000	43,200	509,133	(2,401,717)	82,392,096
NET ASSETS						
Unrestricted	22,935,789	(97,200)	-	-	-	22,838,589
Temporarily restricted	7,731,176	-	2,259,434	-	-	9,990,610
Permanently restricted	5,000,000	6,984,165	-	-	-	11,984,165
Shareholders' equity	-	-	-	1,346,608	(1,346,608)	-
Total net assets	35,666,965	6,886,965	2,259,434	1,346,608	(1,346,608)	44,813,364
	$ 117,908,445	$ 8,886,965	$ 2,302,634	$ 1,855,741	$ (3,748,325)	$ 127,205,460

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	$ 31,198	$ 8,297	$ 763,114	$ -	$ 2,907,165
Accounts receivable	2,872,879	-	609	475,938	(456,948)	2,892,478
Prepaid expenses and deposits	526,851	1,895	-	108,978	-	637,724
Deferred membership expense	8,429,801	-	-	-	-	8,429,801
Due from American Legion Endowment Fund	2,000,000	-	-	-	(2,000,000)	-
Inventory	2,356,847	-	-	-	-	2,356,847
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						
General	18,826,354	-	-	-	-	18,826,354
Segregated for Restricted and Reserved funds	24,982,939	-	-	-	-	24,982,939
Paid-Up-For-Life Membership fund	36,146,083	-	-	-	-	36,146,083
Samsung scholarship fund	7,553,839	-	-	-	-	7,553,839
Building funds	3,496,521	-	-	-	-	3,496,521
Sept. 11 Memorial scholarship fund	2,123,720	-	-	-	-	2,123,720
Special account - Endowment Fund	-	2,129,779	-	-	-	2,129,779
General account - Endowment Fund	-	6,094,055	-	-	-	6,094,055
National Emergency Fund	-	-	2,302,890	-	-	2,302,890
Investment in HPC	1,501,572	-	-	-	(1,501,572)	-
Other	5,291,277	-	-	291,513	-	5,582,790
	99,922,305	8,223,834	2,302,890	291,513	(1,501,572)	109,238,970
Property, plant and equipment, net	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
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 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	36,589,788	(156,195)	-	-	-	36,433,593
Temporarily restricted	6,965,704	-	2,311,796	-	-	9,277,500
Permanently restricted	5,000,000	6,790,122	-	-	-	11,790,122
Shareholders' equity	-	-	-	1,501,572	(1,501,572)	-
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 Activities Year ended December 31, 2008

	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	$ 32,327,410	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ 32,327,410
Direct membership solicitation	4,087,127	-	-	-	-	4,087,127
Member service fees income	1,456,547	-	-	-	-	1,456,547
Affinity income	346,632	-	-	-	-	346,632
Sales of emblem items	10,674,782	-	-	-	-	10,674,782
Advertising	8,766,045	-	-	-	-	8,766,045
Contributions	1,519,790	91,848	431,725	-	-	2,043,363
Label and printing fees	1,958,034	-	-	-	(156,179)	1,801,855
Sales - HPC	-	-	-	4,145,481	(2,530,786)	1,614,695
Interest and dividends, net of fees	2,428,468	388,906	100,419	17,296	-	2,935,089
Net realized gains (losses)	(122,573)	137,830	-	-	-	15,257
American Legion Endowment Fund income	344,297	-	-	-	(344,297)	-
Net loss in subsidiary	(154,964)	-	-	-	154,964	-
Other	2,084,312	-	-	-	(196,971)	1,887,341
	65,715,907	618,584	532,144	4,162,777	(3,073,269)	67,956,143
Expenses						
Salaries	12,604,488	-	-	-	-	12,604,488
Employee benefits	3,523,221	-	-	-	-	3,523,221
Cost of sales	8,012,877	-	-	-	(90,189)	7,922,688
Cost of sales - HPC	-	-	-	3,167,474	(2,089,899)	1,077,575
Direct publications	11,840,989	-	-	-	-	11,840,989
Executive and staff travel	869,637	-	-	-	-	869,637
Commission and committee	1,734,318	-	-	-	-	1,734,318
Printing and postage	3,388,321	-	-	-	-	3,388,321
Scholarships, grants and awards	1,550,354	-	-	-	-	1,550,354
Office and other operating	12,571,450	26,217	-	877,812	(506,877)	12,968,602
Occupancy and usage	2,255,330	-	-	272,455	(196,971)	2,330,814
Special projects and programs	3,029,246	344,297	585,090	-	(344,297)	3,614,336
	61,380,231	370,514	585,090	4,317,741	(3,228,233)	63,425,343
Change in net assets from operations	4,335,676	248,070	(52,946)	(154,964)	154,964	4,530,800
Net unrealized gains (losses) - investment	(351,137)	4,968	584	-	-	(345,585)
Net unrealized loss - PUFL	(11,273,623)	-	-	-	-	(11,273,623)
Amortization of pension loss	(305,066)	-	-	-	-	(305,066)
Pension-related changes other than net periodic pension cost	(5,294,377)	-	-	-	-	(5,294,377)
Change in net assets	(12,888,527)	253,038	(52,362)	(154,964)	154,964	(12,687,851)
Net assets, beginning of year	48,555,492	6,633,927	2,311,796	1,501,572	(1,501,572)	57,501,215
Net assets, end of year	$ 35,666,965	$ 6,886,965	$ 2,259,434	$ 1,346,608	$ (1,346,608)	$ 44,813,364

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	1,933,424	-	-	-	(209,685)	1,723,739
Sales - HPC	-	-	-	7,626,593	(6,772,393)	854,200
Investment income, net of fees	3,547,396	404,039	89,624	31,133	(1,000,000)	3,072,192
Net realized losses	(175,370)	(30,842)	(111)	-	-	(206,323)
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	-
Other	2,234,286	-	-	-	(195,580)	2,038,706
	59,257,963	466,484	496,057	7,657,726	(7,774,472)	60,103,758
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	(5,538,833)	462,479
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	(1,358,173)	11,808,991
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	(7,577,393)	61,913,402
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