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Up & Coming:

JULY

- 4 - Independence Day
- 15 - Department Children & Youth "Chairman of the Year" award nominations due to National Headquarters
- 15 - Department "Hearst Americanism Trophy" due to National Headquarters
- 19-27 - American Legion Boys Nation in Washington
- 20-27 - Auxiliary Girls Nation in Washington
- 24-27 - Department Service Officers School in Indianapolis
- 26-27 - National Membership Workshop in Indianapolis

AUGUST

- 6-11 - 12th Junior Shooting Sports National Championship in Colorado Springs
- 15-19 - American Legion Baseball regional tournaments
- 15 - Child Welfare Foundation grant applications due to National Headquarters
- 23-29 - 84th American Legion National Convention in Charlotte, N.C.
- 23-29 - 82nd Auxiliary National Convention in Charlotte, N.C.
- 23-29 - 31st SAL National Convention in Charlotte, N.C.
- 23-29 - American Legion Baseball World Series in Danville, Va.

SEPTEMBER

- 2 - Labor Day
- 15 - Deadline for History Book Contest entries due to National Headquarters
- 17 - Citizenship Day
- 20-22 - National Information Conferences in Dallas (Region 4) and Boise, Idaho (Region 8)
- 22-28 - Employ the Older Worker Week

OCTOBER

National Disability/Employment Awareness Month

- 5-6 - SAL Fall NECs in Indianapolis
- 6 - Child Welfare Foundation board of directors meeting
- 6-9 - Auxiliary Presidents and Secretaries Conference in Indianapolis
- 7-10 - National Executive Committee Fall Meetings in Indianapolis
- 16 - Notification of Child Welfare Foundation Grant recipients for 2003
- 25-27 - National Americanism Conference in Indianapolis
- 25-27 - Auxiliary Department Chaplains and Girls State Directors Conference in Indianapolis



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THE AMERICAN LEGION Dispatch

A National Headquarters Publication

June 21, 2002

Vol. 11, No. 20

Legion: Don't ignore present while planning for VA's future

Santos: CARES can't overlook needs of today's veterans.

The American Legion believes that in planning for the future, we must not ignore the present dilemma. The Legion asserts that a Department of Veterans Affairs' plan to serve the needs of future veterans does not overlook the needs of today's veterans.

According to VA, the department's Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Service, or CARES, program is designed to realign the use of VA properties to provide the space and resources to serve the health-care needs of veterans in the years 2010 to 2022. But the Legion wants to ensure that the process does not overlook gaps in service to today's veterans.

"CARES has an admirable objective. But in its forward-thinking approach, the process could have the unintended side effect of overlooking the needs of today's veterans," National Commander Richard J. "Ric" Santos said. "Many of these veterans wait months for a medical appointment or drive more than an hour to receive VA treatment. As American men and women fight the war on terrorism, more and more veterans are being created.

"Because VA does not have the financial and human resources to turn its buildings into fully utilized health-care facilities for today's veterans, many

of VA's wards are closed today. The American Legion wants VA to consider converting unused or under-utilized space into quality health-care access points.

"Veterans desperately need outpatient clinics, long-term care, and other specialized services."

Santos said the recommendations from the study must not take away from facilities needed to fulfill VA's other responsibilities.

"VA must be careful not to eliminate space that otherwise could be used to fulfill VA's role in homeland security, as a health-care option for the Department of Defense in wartime and for the Federal Emergency Management Agency in times of natural disaster," he said. "CARES must remain open to input from the veterans community who are the system's stakeholders. We in The American Legion stand ready with our service officers, mechanical engineers, architects and medical-space planners to cooperate with VA for the best possible outcome for the continued quality health care for America's veterans."

The Legion's National Executive Committee passed a resolution during the 2002 Spring Meetings calling for the entire Legion family to become actively involved in the CARES process at the local level.

The road to revitalization

Connecticut efforts signal membership success.

By Steve Brooks
Editor

They hit the streets and travel door to door, similar to salesmen.

But these men aren't selling vacuum cleaners, magazine subscriptions or encyclopedia. They're selling The American Legion. And they do it in cities and towns across the country on a weekly basis.

One such effort occurred this spring in Connecticut, when Legionnaires from National Headquarters and the Department of Connecticut joined together to revitalize old posts and create new ones across the state.

Two of the stops included Woodbury, a bedroom community of 9,180 residents, and Gales Ferry, in the southeast corner of the state just north of the New London Submarine Base and the



National Membership & Post Activities Committee Chairman Dan Dellinger, center, and Department of Connecticut Vice Commander Boyd Saxton, right, tell a Woodbury, Conn., veteran about the benefits of The American Legion. The pair were part of a revitalization effort that took place across Connecticut.

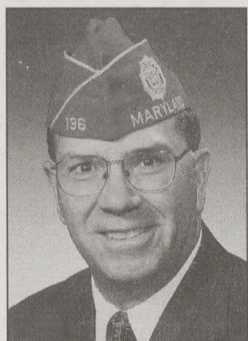
SEE ROAD, PAGE 4

A message from the National Commander:

Making security the top priority

Office of Homeland Security deserves cabinet-level status.

July 4 will be America's 226th birthday. We celebrate July 4 because of those who fought for America's independence. More than 1 million have died defending our way of life, making the supreme sacrifice in the name of democracy and freedom.



Richard J. Santos

In the wars of the 20th century, the sting of battle hit the homeland only once – when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor Dec. 7, 1941. We tended to feel safe as we went through our daily rituals. Up to Sept. 11, 2001, safety from foreign enemies within the boundaries of the United States was taken for granted. We went about our business without danger and incident.

We felt that we were invincible.

On Sept. 11, we learned that America, like any other country in the world, can be a victim of terrorism. We found that we are as much of a target at home as anywhere else in the world. We learned from Sept. 11 and vowed never to let it happen again.

The first step in preventing future attacks was President George W. Bush's creation of the Office of Homeland Security. Its mission is to develop and coordinate the implementation of a comprehensive national strategy to secure the United States from terrorist threats or attacks. The office coordinates the executive branch's efforts to detect, prepare for, prevent, protect against, respond to and recover from terrorist attacks within the United States. Former Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Ridge was appointed by Bush to lead the effort.

After the creation of the Office of Homeland Security, I sent a letter to Ridge, offering him the Legion's full support. At the 2001 Fall NEC Meetings, the National Executive Committee adopted Resolution No. 4, fully supporting the Office of Homeland Security. In reality, the resolution calls for a cabinet-level position. A department armed with "the legal powers and fiduciary tools to harmonize the many agencies and offices with homeland security responsibilities into a viable and credible deterrent to those who seek to inflict violence on the United States and the American people."

The president is now proposing a cabinet-level position – the Department of Homeland Security, which would realign the Office of Homeland Security

Resolution No. 4: Support For Homeland Security

National Executive Committee of The American Legion
Indianapolis, Ind.
Oct. 10-11, 2001
Submitted by National Security

WHEREAS, the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on American soil have made Americans painfully aware of their vulnerability to violence from international terrorism; and

WHEREAS, these terrorists were able to carry out their attacks because emphasis by the U.S. government on homeland security and intelligence collection, while improving over recent years, has been inadequate and incapable of preventing such attacks; and

WHEREAS, the multiple federal and local government agencies responsible for safeguarding the United States homeland are disjointed, have had multiple chains of command, inadequate communications links and were incapable of effective coordination; and

WHEREAS, On Sept. 20, 2001, President Bush announced the establishment of the Office of Homeland Security, a new cabinet position designed to be the single source of authority, at the highest levels, for all homeland defense programs and policies; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, by the National Executive Committee of The American Legion in regular meeting assembled in Indianapolis, Ind., Oct. 10-11, 2001, that The American Legion strongly supports the establishment of the Office of Homeland Security and urges the United States government to make the security of the United States the top national priority; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, that The American Legion urges the president to arm the Office of Homeland Security with the legal powers and fiduciary tools to harmonize the many agencies and offices with homeland security responsibilities into a viable and credible deterrent to those who seek to inflict violence on the United States and the American people.

and many other agencies and offices into a single department with a clearly defined mission. During my June 12 meeting with President Bush, I offered the Legion's support for his proposal as defined by our Resolution No. 4.

The Department of Homeland Security would have a clear and efficient organizational structure consisting of the following divisions:

- Border and transportation security.
- Emergency preparedness and response.
- Chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear countermeasures.
- Information analysis and infrastructure protection.

Homeland security is worthy of a cabinet position. The events of Sept. 11 are proof that we are not invincible. Every effort should be made to ensure that day does not repeat itself. Elevating the Office of Homeland Security is a logical step in that direction.

Congress and the president must act, in a bipartisan effort, to establish the Department of Homeland Security. Most importantly, Legionnaires must let their senators and representatives know that this is the right thing to do and that a safe homeland has no

substitute. America's safety always has been at the forefront of our organization's priorities. For years, the National Executive Committee has adopted resolutions calling for the government to tighten its immigration laws and more closely monitor foreign visitors. Five such resolutions were passed at the 2002 Spring NEC Meetings.

In 1989, The American Legion was a proponent for and led efforts to elevate the Veterans Administration to cabinet-level status as the Department of Veterans Affairs. It was the right thing to do then. Veterans deserved, and still do, representation in the highest councils of government.

In 2002, The American Legion supports the elevation of the Office of Homeland Security to cabinet-level status as the Department of Homeland Security. It is the right thing to do now. The people of America deserve the protection that can be afforded by the highest councils of government.

The establishment of the department and our efforts will make that happen. They will go a long way to ensure that July 4, 2003, America's 227th birthday, will be a safe celebration, absent the threats of terrorism and attacks.

THE AMERICAN LEGION Dispatch

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Still Serving America

Does your post have an ongoing program or activity that serves your community and can be implemented at posts across the country? Does your post have methods of boosting membership and spreading the Legion message that will work at any post?

Drop us a line and tell us what your post and its members

are doing to demonstrate they are *Still Serving America*.

In submitting your information, please be sure to include your full name, address and telephone number.

Send your news items to: *Still Serving America*, The American Legion Dispatch, P.O. Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206.

From the desk of the National Adjutant:

Reconnecting across the ocean

Colorado Legion family unites to sponsor entire crew of USS Denver.

When we talk about The American Legion's Reconnect program, we're not just talking about spending a weekend on one of America's military installations talking with the troops serving there.

We're talking about actually reconnecting with these men and women, finding out about the challenges facing them in today's military. Hearing about quality-of-life shortcomings they're facing on a daily basis. Letting them know that our organization is here for them now, not just when they leave the service.

Robert W. Spanogle

Reconnect is a chance to bridge the gap between those who served 30, 40, 50 or 60 years ago and those serving today.

For the past two years, the Department of Colorado has done just that, reconnecting with more than 360 members of both the Navy and Marine Corps. The department sponsors memberships for the entire crew of the USS *Denver*, a

troop transport for amphibious operations. The ship, which travels all over the world, was chosen because it bears the name of the state capital.

As long as a crewmember is assigned to the *Denver*, the department sponsors his or her Legion membership. If a servicemember transfers to another duty location or leaves the service, the sponsorship is discontinued and the individual's newly assigned replacement is then picked up as a Legion member.

"(Crewmembers) are temporarily assigned to our Headquarters Post 211 until an individual post pays for a crewmember's sponsorship," Department Commander Daniel DuMiller said. "Besides Legion posts sponsoring members, we have individual Auxiliary units, Sons of The American Legion squadrons and individuals paying for sponsorships. When this is done, the credit for the membership goes to the home post of the unit, squadron or individual. I feel this creates the Legion family atmosphere of working together for the benefit of the organization."

DuMiller says the hope is that crewmembers will either pay to renew their memberships within the department or transfer into Legion posts in their hometowns. But the primary objective of the program is to reconnect with those now in uniform.

"It is a winning situation for The American Legion in that it is allowing active-duty military members exposure to the Legion, members who may be the future

leaders of our organization," DuMiller said. "Besides paying dues, posts are creating a pen-pal rapport with the members of the *Denver* by sending letters, e-mails and newsletters. And it's Colorado's way to say 'thank you' for serving our country and maintaining our safety and way of life as Americans."

It's a win-win situation. Active-duty servicemembers are finding out there are veterans here looking out for them, veterans who care. And it opens up membership possibilities from a previously untapped reserve.

While the routines, the tools and the training of today's military have changed somewhat since many of us served, one thing has not changed: the bond between comrades.

That bond will never change. And it's a bond that can be shared between those who stormed Normandy and those fighting the war on terrorism in Afghanistan.

That's why it's important we reconnect with today's servicemembers. They need to know we'll be there for them long before they leave the service. We're there now. Colorado Legionnaires are making sure their servicemembers know this.

Assistant sergeant-at-arms recommendation sought

Department adjutants are reminded to submit their recommendations for national convention assistant sergeants-at-arms to National Headquarters Executive Director Daniel S. Wheeler, P.O. Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206.

A letter of appointment will be sent to each nominee, so a complete mailing address of each nominee should be included in the recommendation.

"While the routines, the tools and the training of today's military have changed somewhat since many of us have served, one thing has not changed: the bond between comrades."

ADT introduces citizens' preparedness guide

The American Legion's newest benefit partner, ADT, has partnered with the National Crime Prevention Council, the U.S. Department of Justice and the White House Office of Homeland Security to create a helpful booklet called "United for a Stronger America: Citizens' Preparedness Guide." It offers U.S. citizens valuable tips on emergency preparedness at home, at work and in their communities.

President George W. Bush unveiled

the 24-page booklet during a recent speech in North Carolina as part of the United for a Stronger America campaign. The campaign also includes a Web site and will be supported by nationally televised public-service announcements featuring Ed McMahon. As the cornerstone of the campaign, the "Citizens' Preparedness Guide" offers valuable security information, including:

■ Tips on emergency preparedness

at home, at work and when out and about in the community;

■ Ideas for developing evacuation plans;

■ Tips on reporting emergencies or suspicious activities;

■ Information on traveling safely at home and abroad;

■ Ideas about voluntary civic activities to strengthen community; and

■ A list of resources, including phone and fax numbers and Web sites.

As a leader in electronic security services, ADT is offering this comprehensive booklet to customers as a public service and as a way to help keep security and safety of neighborhoods, communities and the nation at the forefront of the country's consciousness.

For more information about ADT and to receive a free copy of "United for a Stronger America: Citizens' Preparedness Guide," contact a local ADT representative at (877) 212-6509.

Dairy Queen paying tribute to military, veterans July 6

Members of The American Legion family are reminded to support the partnership between the Legion and Dairy Queen to show both patriotism and gratitude for our nation's military and veterans.

On July 6, members of The American Legion family, active-duty, National Guard and reserve military personnel and veterans showing proper membership or military identification cards will receive a free five-ounce sundae at participating Dairy Queen stores. The Dairy Queen system is partnering with the Legion family and the Children's Miracle Network to honor U.S. troops fighting the war on terrorism, and veterans who fought in past wars for America, as well as to raise \$1 million for Children's Miracle Network hospitals.

In addition, the "Red, White & Blue" promotion will feature a limited-time All-American Blizzard Flavor Treat, made with Red, White and Blue M&M's candies. In conjunction with this patriotic flavor, participating DQ restaurants will conduct a Blizzard Benefit in which 25 cents from every size/flavor of Blizzard Flavor Treat sold July 4 to 7 will benefit CMN. Many DQ operators will also sell \$1 paper Miracle Flag icons to support CMN. Contributors receive valuable DQ coupons for their donation.

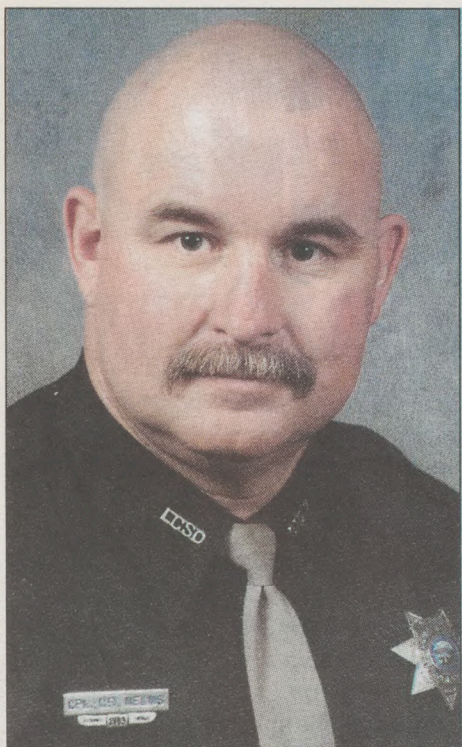
"The American Legion is a proud member of the Red, White & Blue Campaign-sponsored trio," National Commander Richard J. "Ric" Santos said. "Military day will honor our veterans and military personnel as they enjoy a free sundae from Dairy

Queen.

"Best of all, DQ stores will hold a variety of fundraisers during July to support children's hospitals across the nation."

Since World War I, the Legion has worked to increase the quality of life for all children and youth. CMN is a non-profit organization dedicated to helping kids by raising funds and awareness for 170 children's hospitals throughout North America. The Legion has been a national sponsor of CMN since 1998, raising more than \$3 million.

Many DQs will feature military and veterans booths and displays as part of the July 6 festivities. The Red, White & Blue promotion will run from June 29 to July 31.



Lincoln County, Neb., Sheriff's Deputy Casey R. Nelms is the recipient of The American Legion's 2001 National Law Enforcement Officer of the Year Award. He will receive the award at the national convention in Charlotte, N.C., in August.

Nebraska deputy Legion's top law enforcement officer for 2001

The American Legion will honor a Lincoln County Sheriff's Department deputy as one of "America's Finest" law-enforcement officers. Deputy Casey R. Nelms of Sutherland, Neb., will be awarded The American Legion National Law Enforcement Officer of the Year Award at the organization's 84th National Convention in Charlotte, N.C., on Aug. 28.

Nebraska's American Legion Post 208 nominated Nelms, who also earned The American Legion Department of Nebraska Law Enforcement Officer of the Year Award.

"Deputy Nelms is a dedicated law enforcement officer and is a devoted volunteer in his community," National Commander Richard J. "Ric" Santos said. "I will be honored to present him with the Legion's Law Enforcement Officer of the Year Award."

Nelms is an 18-year veteran of law enforcement with a track record for courageous acts and off-duty community service. His extensive volunteerism includes coaching youth football, wrestling, baseball and soccer. He volunteers more than 100 hours per year to Sutherland schools. He spent 10 years on the Sutherland Volunteer Fire Department.

Through keen investigative work, Nelms' theft investigation at an alcohol plant in 1999 cleared an innocent man of possible charges.

Nelms was one of five regional winners of the award. Other regional winners were Mike Bare of Indiana (Central Region), Dave Gregory of Georgia (South), Sam Hill of Vermont (Northeast) and Brad Smith of Oregon (West).

A total of 19 departments competed in the contests.

ROAD FROM PAGE 1

Coast Guard Academy.

Canvassing neighborhoods wasn't the extent of their efforts. The groundwork had been laid in advance, with news of the revitalization appearing in local newspapers and members of the local government and business community being contacted in advance.

"It's more a matter of working smarter than harder," said National Membership & Post Activities Committee Chairman Dan Dellinger, who took part in the Connecticut efforts. "We had central locations set up in advance, and we made sure people in the community knew we were coming."

Woodbury's Post 155 was founded in 1946 but has been slowly dying.

"I call it a 'last man standing' post," said Department Vice Commander Boyd Saxton, one of the Legionnaires taking part in the Connecticut efforts. "You've got an old guard that has been responsible for most of the post's involvement in the community. When those members start to pass on, no one is left to take the reins."

Saxton, along with Dellinger, National Membership Assistant Director Dave Elmore and several other department Legionnaires, obtained a list of addresses of local veterans and spent the good portion of a day in Woodbury going door to door to speak with them.

"The key point is to increase the awareness of the Legion in these towns," Saxton said. "You have to tell them about the benefits of being a member of The American Legion, but you also need to tell them what the organization is doing for all veterans, not just its members."

Dellinger said, in many cases, Legionnaires have chosen to join the department's headquarters post rather than a local one because of the post's inactivity.

"If you ask them to transfer to a local post, most of them will," he said. "We try to encourage all headquarters post members to transfer to ones within their communities. It makes for a stronger local post."

Later that day, the Legion hosted an open house, providing veterans with such information as how to file claims with the Department of Veterans Affairs. Department service officers were on hand to answer questions, as were other department officers.

"This gives those veterans we might have talked to briefly during the day a chance to come in, maybe ask some more questions and find out a little bit more," Saxton said. "It also gives them a chance to talk with other veterans that might be here."

When all was said and done, the revitalization efforts produced 30 new post members.

"I'm very happy to see this (revitalization) happening," said Woodbury First-Selectman Richard Crane, who transferred from the headquarters post to Post 155. "I can see this doing a lot in developing a more patriotic theme in this community."



Department of Connecticut Vice Commander Boyd Saxton signs up Woodbury resident Paul H. Mansfield to Post 155. Mansfield was a transfer from Connecticut's headquarters post.

Starting Fresh. Elmore said the town had never had a Legion post before, but after hosting an open house and hitting the neighborhoods once again, the efforts resulted in 20 new members for Post 205.

Department Commander Edward Barry, Department Adjutant Chuck Berry and Alternate National Executive Committeeman K. Robert Lewis were on hand during the open house, providing answers to questions from prospective members.

Again, Dellinger, Saxton and others

went door to door, list of veterans in hand, to spread the news about what the Legion is doing and how a Legion presence in the community can benefit everyone involved, not just veterans.

"We're selling the Legion as a whole, every part of it," Dellinger said. "The benefits of the Legion reach out to everyone in a city or town. That's what we need to make people understand."

To organize a post revitalization with National support, contact The American Legion Internal Affairs Division at (317) 630-1328.



Department of Connecticut Commander Edward Barry, left, assists Gales Ferry, Conn., resident Joseph M. Wread in signing up to become a member of Post 205. Wread, a Vietnam veteran, was the first member of the new post.

The Remedy . . .

For Finding Health Insurance

Choosing a health insurance plan you can be confident in can be difficult, especially with the variety of plans there are to choose from. The American Legion Health Insurance Mart is available to bring you health insurance choices that match your needs and offer economical and quality coverage.



The American Legion Health Insurance Mart offers you a way to find the health insurance you're looking for. Whether you're looking for coverage for you, your family, or your small group, the Health Insurance Mart will give you the options that are available in your particular area. You'll provide some basic information that the Health Insurance Mart representatives will use to narrow down the number of alternatives to the health insurance plans that closely match your specific needs.

Take advantage of this sponsored program two different ways. Use <http://aml.healthinsurance.com> to get instant online quotes and information on the plans available to you. You can also call The American Legion Health Insurance Mart at 1-877-886-0110 and talk to a representative, or visit www.seaburychicago.com.

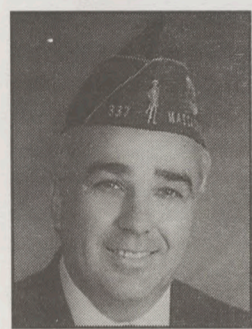
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Dateline: Capitol Hill

Congress mulls over plans for Medicare reimbursement

The Department of Veterans Affairs has more than 6 million veterans currently enrolled in its health-care system – that's twice as many as six years ago. After struggling with tight budgets, substantial additional funding has become available to VA in the past several years. Despite budgetary increases, many Medicare-eligible veterans older than 65 with nonservice-connected disabilities are still not



Paul A. Morin

fully served by VA because Medicare will not reimburse VA for medical care rendered for nonservice-connected medical conditions.

The American Legion supports the concept of Medicare reimbursement. This would allow Medicare-eligible veterans with nonservice-connected disabilities to receive medical care through VA for those ailments. The funds coming into VA coffers would allow the department to continue to offer the high quality of medical care that veterans using the system have come to expect. It also would relieve some of the pressure VA has experienced from years of consistent underfunding. While VA is an earned benefit, Medicare is a prepaid health insurance program. Under current law, VA continues to subsidize Medicare with scarce discretionary funds.

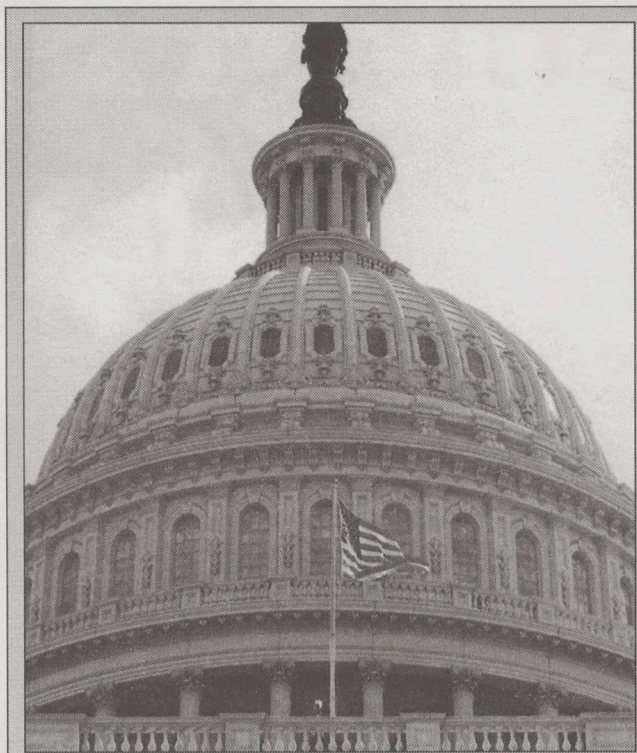
Four measures currently in Congress address Medicare reimbursement for health-care services provided to eligible veterans in VA facilities. Each is briefly outlined below.

The first is **H.R. 1911**, the Veterans Medicare Reimbursement Demonstration Act. It was introduced by Rep. Jim Saxton, R-N.J., and currently has 41 cosponsors. This measure would create a demonstration project at eight VA facilities. The project would require VA to set up two health-care plans: a coordinated health plan and a fee-for-service plan. The coordinated health plan would offer a full spectrum of VA health care to eligible veterans at reduced costs on a premium basis. The fee-for-service plan would be for eligible veterans who would use VA only on rare occasions. The Legion supports Saxton's bill as a good approach to Medicare reimbursement for VA.

The Legion is closely monitoring **H.R. 4890**, the Veterans Medicare Reimbursement Act of 2002, introduced by Rep. Sue Kelly, R-N.Y., on June 6. This bill will reimburse the VA 100 percent for Medicare services provided to veterans, minus amounts for disproportionate share hospital adjustments, direct graduate medical payments and indirect medical education adjustment. Further, this bill is not a demonstration project or test and would be effective on the date signed by the president.

In the Senate, two pieces of legislation address this issue. **S. 2232**, the Veterans Health-Care Reimbursement Act, was introduced by Sen. Mark Dayton, D-Minn. This measure is similar to Saxton's bill, as it would set up demonstration projects in 10 VA facilities. It also would require the implementation of a coordinated-care health plan but makes no provision for a fee-for-service plan. Further, **S. 2232** contains a sense of Congress provisions that any Medicare funds collected through this demonstration project should not reduce any funds appropriated by Congress, a provisions firmly supported by the Legion.

The other Senate measure is **S. 2233**, the Medicare Equity for Veterans Act. It was introduced by Sen. Craig Thomas, R-Wyo., and currently has 12 cosponsors. Among those cosponsors are Sen. John Rockefeller, D-W.Va., chairman of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, and Sen. Tom Daschle, D-S.D., the



Dateline: Capitol Hill

Senate majority leader. This measure would set up 10 sites for the demonstration project, with at least three located in rural VA facilities. It also would require, similar to **H.R. 1911**, that VA offer either a preferred provider option or a Medicare+Choice option. In addition, **S. 2233** would require that VA maintain its current services to Medicare-eligible veterans systemwide.

The Legion feels the time is right for passage of Medicare reimbursement legislation. Rockefeller said on the day the Senate measures were introduced, "Veterans deserve the opportunity to come to VA facilities for their care and bring their Medicare coverage with them. It makes sense for all parties."

Legion testifies before subcommittees

During the week of June 10, Legion spokesmen presented the organization's views on various issues, notably veterans' benefits and national defense, to Congress on three occasions. Each hearing is outlined below.

June 11 – On this date, the House Veterans' Affairs Benefits Subcommittee heard the views of the Legion regarding several pieces of legislation. They included:

■ **H.R. 3173**, the Servicemembers and Military Families Financial Protection Act. This measure would amend the Soldiers and Sailors Civil Relief Act of 1940 to prohibit the eviction, during a servicemember's period of military service, of the spouse, child or other dependent of that member from any housing for which the rent does not exceed \$1,950, an increase from \$1,250. It also would increase the available amount covered under the Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance and the Veterans' Group Life Insurance from \$200,000 to \$500,000, \$750,000 or \$1 million. While the Legion has no resolution on this bill, the provisions of the bill are a solid step toward improving the quality-of-life issues of National Guard and Reserve members.

■ **H.R. 3735**, the Department of Veterans Affairs Overpayment Administration Improvement Act. This bill will make changes to VA's procedures for recovering overpayments of benefits to veterans or their dependents. This would include changing the date for requesting a waiver of repaying the excess amount to the date of the final determination of the amount of the overpayment, and allowing VA to waive recovery of these overpayments when the amounts are so small that the cost of further collection efforts are likely to exceed the amount being sought. The Legion

supports these efforts to streamline the administration of veterans' benefits.

■ **H.R. 3771** – This legislation would make changes to federal law that determines if veterans who are totally and permanently disabled from nonservice-connected disability and are subsisting at or below the poverty level, are eligible for a special pension. The annual amount of such a veteran's pension is reduced by other income from certain sources. **H.R. 3771** would add money paid to the veteran from state and local governments to the list of excluded income, as long as the funds are paid as a veteran's benefit. The Legion supports this bill.

■ **H.R. 4042**, the Veterans Home Loan Prepayment Protection Act. This measure would prohibit financial institutions making VA home loans from making additional daily interest charges following in-full prepayment of VA home loans.

The Legion also testified about two draft bills before the subcommittee that have not yet been introduced in the House. Arlington National Cemetery Burial Eligibility Act is draft legislation to clearly define and codify criteria for burial eligibility in the nation's most hallowed burial ground. The proposed measure would restrict burial to servicemembers who die on active duty; highly decorated veterans, to include recipients of the Purple Heart; former servicemembers separated from the military with a physical disability of 30 percent or greater before Oct. 1, 1949; qualified retired veterans and their spouses and eligible children; former prisoners of war; and (6) the president or former presidents as commanders in chief of the armed forces.

A second draft bill would provide for the payment of Dependency and Indemnity Compensation to the surviving spouse of veterans who die from a nonservice-connected cause while totally disabled as a result of service-connected residuals of cold-weather injury. The Legion supports each of these draft measures.

June 12 – On this date, Legion spokesmen testified before the Senate Appropriations Defense Subcommittee on the Department of Defense authorization measure for fiscal 2003. The annual DoD authorization bill is the blueprint for military spending each fiscal year. In the congressional testimony, our organization stressed that, "A decade of overuse of the military and its underfunding ... will necessitate sustained investments, and this budget proposal ... represents a good first step."

Among the more important needs for this country's military forces are:

- Continued modernization of equipment and strategy.
- Funding to allow readiness training to take place.
- Increasing the size of U.S. armed forces.
- Continue procurement of state-of-the-art weapons systems, as well as keeping spare parts inventories up to date.
- Enhance quality-of-life issues for servicemembers and their families to ensure retention of trained personnel, including pay raises, commissary privileges, increases in the Montgomery GI Bill program and improving substandard housing.
- Improve working and living conditions for members of the Guard and Reserves and their families.
- Pass legislation to allow full concurrent receipt for all 20-year veteran retirees.
- Improve provision of health care for military beneficiaries.
- Make needed changes to the Uniformed Services Former Spouses Protection Act.

June 13 – On this date, the House Veterans' Affairs Health Subcommittee received the views of the Legion regarding health care for Filipino World War II

Legion receives special invite to 'Spirit of America'

The U.S. Army Military District of Washington has recognized the service of The American Legion by presenting the organization's Washington office with a personalized invitation to the Army's production of "Spirit of America."

The Legion was honored with a ceremony in Washington for perpetuating 100-percent Americanism, preserving the memories and incidents in the great wars, and instilling a sense of individual obligation to communities, states and the nation.

Col. Richard Breen, Army Military District of Washington director of public affairs, presented Legion Executive Director John Sommer with an oversized "Spirit of America" admissions ticket and letter from the Military District of Washington's commanding general, Maj. Gen. James T. Jackson.

Breen thanked The American Legion Washington office for supporting the Army and invited its members to attend the free performances of "Spirit of America" at the MCI Center Sept. 26 to 29. The show is a part of the Army's community-relations program and is the largest community outreach program in the Army worldwide.

"Spirit of America" is scheduled for shows at Nationwide Arena in Colum-



Col. Richard Breen, U.S. Army Military District of Washington director of public affairs, presents Executive Director John Sommer of the Legion's Washington office with a framed admission ticket to the Army's production of "Spirit of America." The invitation honors the Legion for its support of the Army.

bus, Ohio, on Sept. 20 to 21. The show will travel for only the third time in its 25-year history.

The show is free and open to the public, but tickets are necessary for

admission.

For more information about "Spirit of America" and to reserve tickets, visit www.mdw.army.mil or call (866) 239-9425.

Taps

E. Thomas Cammarota Fountainville, Pa.

E. Thomas Cammarota of Post 933 (Department of Pennsylvania) passed away May 8 at age 79. He was a World War II Marine Corps veteran with 47 continuous years of Legion membership.

Mr. Cammarota served as National Executive Committeeman from 1972 to 1974, department commander from 1970 to 1971, department vice commander from 1968 to 1969, department Civil

Defense chairman from 1969 to 1970 and department Spirit of '76 chairman from 1972 to 1976.

He was a member of the National Membership & Post Activity Committee from 1976 to 1977, the National Security Commission Liaison Committee from 1973 to 1974, the National Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Liaison Committee from 1973 to 1974 and the National Counter-Subversive Activities Committee from 1965 to 1969.

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veterans. Two bills are pending action in the House and Senate. The first is **H.R. 491**, the Filipino Veterans' Equity Act, which would repeal Section 107 of Title 38, U.S. Code, and grant equal benefits to Filipino World War II veterans. The other measure is **S. 1042**, the Filipino Veterans Benefits Improvement Act, which would provide eligibility for VA health care and permanent-disability pension benefits to Filipino American veterans. It also would provide additional benefits to Filipino veterans residing in the Philippines. The Legion fully supports both of these bills.

Legion indicates concern with VA's CARES program

VA has implemented the second phase of a process called Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services, or CARES. Its intent is to prepare the VA medical-care system for the future, but the Legion has grave concerns that the present needs of America's veterans may be ignored.

In 1999, the General Accounting Office issued a report that VA was spending too much money to operate and maintain its buildings and other capital assets, perhaps 25 percent of its funds. As a result of this report, the CARES program was instituted.

CARES is designed to realign the use of VA properties to give VA the necessary space and resources it will need to serve the health-care needs of America's veterans between 2011 to 2022, years when the veterans population is expected to peak. The first phase of CARES took place last year on a

local level.

After making some adjustments to the process, VA recently has begun implementing the second phase of CARES on a nationwide basis. However, the Legion is dubious about the whole process and concerned that veterans currently using the VA health-care system may be adversely affected.

One of the Legion's fears is that VA will lease out or eliminate unused space that could be used for quality health-care access points, such as outpatient clinics, long-term care facilities or other specialized services. Many veterans using the VA health-care system are experiencing long waiting periods for doctor's appointments, closed specialty wards due to lack of proper staffing or traveling excessive distances to nearby VA facilities to receive proper treatment.

Further, VA should be careful not to eliminate space that could be used to fulfill one of VA's secondary roles. These include VA's role in homeland security, as a health-care option for DoD in wartime or for the Federal Emergency Management Agency in times of natural disaster.

In its attempt to save money now and plan for the future, VA could cause even greater harm to its current operations through a flawed process. The Legion has been consulting with VA officials and testifying before Congress regarding CARES. National Commander Richard J. "Ric" Santos offered the assistance of the Legion "to cooperate with VA for the best possible outcome for the continued quality health care for America's veterans."

Paul A. Morin is chairman of The American Legion Legislative Commission.

NEF Commander's Challenge		
Department	Goal	Contributions
Category 1 (100,000 plus)		
California	\$25,596	\$16,336
Florida	\$21,678	\$6,699
Illinois	\$26,469	\$9,519
Indiana	\$23,775	\$5,932
Minnesota	\$21,753	\$128,772
New York	\$35,443	\$50,976
Ohio	\$27,899	\$12,299
Pennsylvania	\$44,905	\$7,072
Category 2 (70,000 plus)		
Iowa	\$13,332	\$13,982
Maryland	\$14,240	\$40,468
Michigan	\$16,763	\$22,800
New Jersey	\$14,346	\$9,864
Texas	\$15,933	\$11,250
Wisconsin	\$13,604	\$5,888
Category 3 (40,000 plus)		
Georgia	\$8,054	\$13,443
Kansas	\$9,145	\$4,876
Massachusetts	\$11,966	\$2,069
Missouri	\$11,409	\$7,410
Nebraska	\$10,534	\$10,735
North Carolina	\$8,509	\$885
Virginia	\$9,245	\$4,292
Category 4 (25,000 plus)		
Arizona	\$6,966	\$7,856
Connecticut	\$5,638	\$1,985
Kentucky	\$5,832	\$2,575
Louisiana	\$6,781	\$5,550
Maine	\$4,803	\$2,604
Oklahoma	\$5,455	\$7,227
Oregon	\$4,952	\$6,660
South Carolina	\$4,612	\$4,735
South Dakota	\$5,014	\$660
Tennessee	\$6,093	\$2,161
Washington	\$6,838	\$474
West Virginia	\$4,970	\$5,650
Category 5 (10,000 plus)		
Alabama	\$4,483	\$7,390
Arkansas	\$4,054	\$375
Colorado	\$4,427	\$310
Idaho	\$2,004	\$2,080
Mississippi	\$3,411	\$4,890
Montana	\$2,186	\$1,770
New Hampshire	\$4,454	\$1,181
New Mexico	\$2,518	\$1,240
North Dakota	\$4,372	\$2,446
Rhode Island	\$1,853	\$250
Vermont	\$3,110	\$8,720
Category 6 (under 10,000)		
Alaska	\$1,587	\$4,500
Delaware	\$1,778	\$3,633
Dist. of Columbia	\$608	\$898
Hawaii	\$604	\$1,206
Nevada	\$1,276	\$1,680
Puerto Rico	\$1,602	\$1,843
Utah	\$1,676	\$2,374
Wyoming	\$1,445	\$2,398
Totals	\$500,000	\$482,886

NEF support sought

At the Commanders and Adjutants Conference during the NEC Fall Meetings, National Commander Richard J. "Ric" Santos issued a National Emergency Fund challenge to each department commander. Departments were encouraged to contact districts and posts to arrange fund-raising projects. Department commanders with the most donations in each of the six Big Twelve categories will go to dinner with the national commander at the National Convention in August. Also, all departments that meet their assigned goals will receive a plaque from the national commander at the national convention. Donations can be sent to National Emergency Fund, P.O. Box 6141, Indianapolis, IN 46206.

The Commander's Challenge ends Aug. 1. Above is a current breakdown of each department's goal and where each department stands.

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