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## Up & Coming:

### 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

### NOVEMBER

- 3-8 - Legion College in Indianapolis
- 5 - Election Day
- 11 - Veterans Day
- 6-9 - Auxiliary Presidents and Secretaries Conference in Indianapolis
- 17-23 - American Education Week
- 24-30 - National Family Week
- 28 - Holiday Donor Blood Drive begins
- 28 - Thanksgiving

### DECEMBER

- 1-31 - Holiday Donor Blood Drive
- 7 - Pearl Harbor Day
- 15 - Bill of Rights Day
- 25 - Christmas

## Troop support still available

Security concerns and the lack of physical facilities at the forward locations to handle the amount of mail anticipated has kept the Department of Defense from establishing Any Servicemember mail addresses for troops participating in Operation Enduring Freedom.

Still, messages of support can still be sent to our troops. Those with Internet access can send a virtual card to servicemembers on the Defend America Web site at [www.defendamerica.mil/nmam.html](http://www.defendamerica.mil/nmam.html).

Personalized e-mail also can be sent to any servicemember at [www.operationdearabby.net](http://www.operationdearabby.net).



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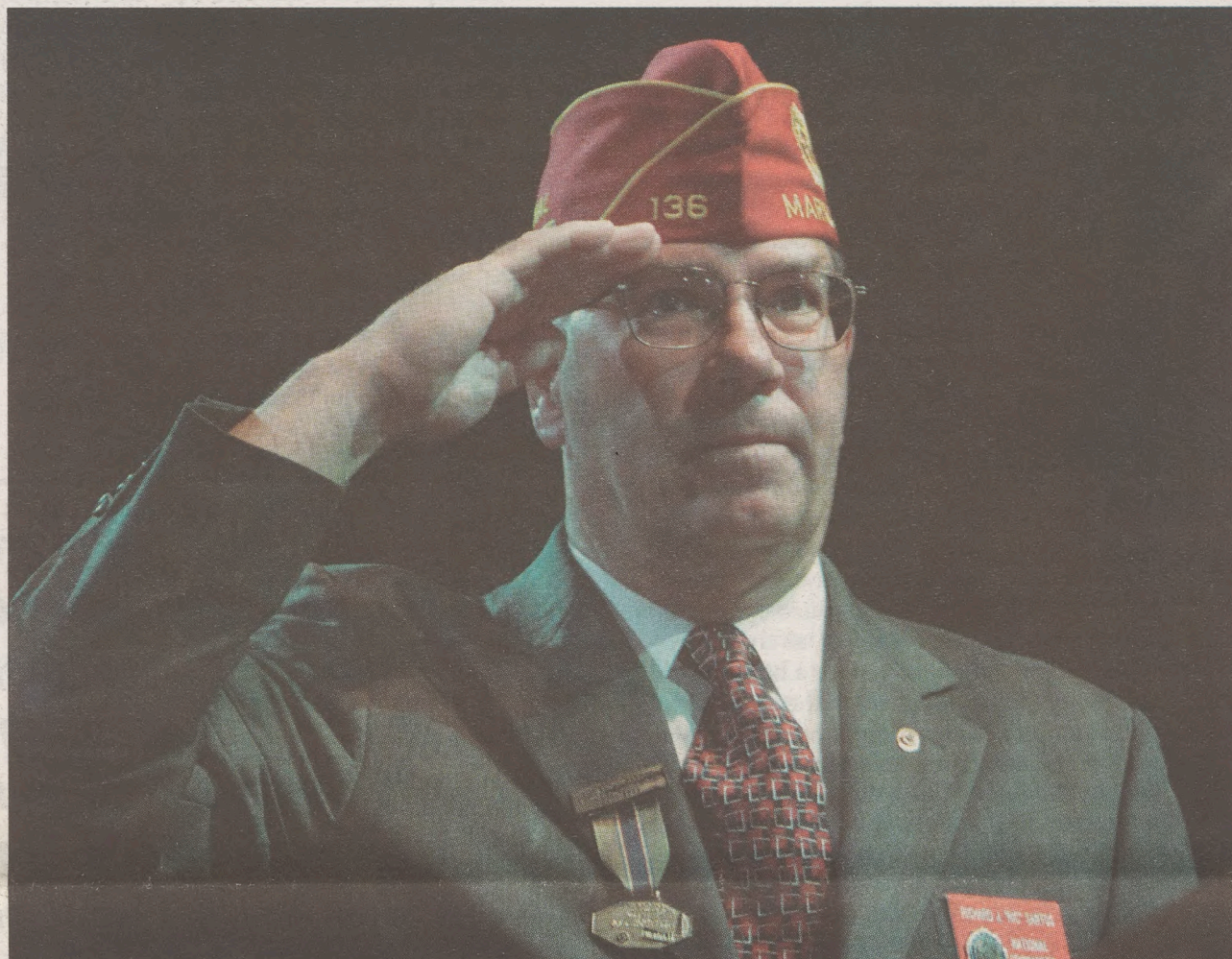
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# THE AMERICAN LEGION Dispatch

A National Headquarters Publication

September 27, 2002

Vol. 12, No. 3



National Commander Richard J. "Ric" Santos salutes the colors during the opening ceremonies of The American Legion's 84th Annual Convention in Charlotte, N.C. Santos praised

Legionnaires for "reaching out in all directions" to keep America strong following the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on New York City and Washington.

## A heart beating strong

*Santos praises Legionnaires for helping heal country in aftermath of terrorist attacks.*

By Steve Brooks  
Editor

As names scrolled across the big screen in Hall A of the Charlotte Convention Center, Legionnaires paid silent respect. Some held hands. Some fought back tears. "Amazing Grace" sounded from bagpipes in the background.

Grandfathers wearing Legion caps stood next to their grandsons in Sons-of-The-American Legion colors. Auxiliary members stood arm-in-arm with their husbands. They came from all over the country and, in some cases, from as far away as Europe and the South Pacific.

Those killed in the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on America and in the war on terrorism that followed received a fitting tribute from those who know personally the sacrifices of service. "It was overwhelming, absolutely perfect," Department of Connecticut Commander Boyd Saxton said of the ceremony. "The room was packed, but it was like everyone was united."

It was an opening ceremony to remember at the end of an unforgettable year for The American Legion.

"Eleven months ago, the American illusion of invincibility was shattered," National Commander

## Convention 2002

Richard J. "Ric" Santos told the 13,000 Legionnaires gathered Aug. 23-29 at the 84th National Convention in Charlotte, N.C. "During that fateful September morning last year, a perverted war sponsored by a faceless enemy was brought to our shores on an unprecedented scale."

Santos was in the nation's capital during the attacks. He was preparing to testify before Congress but did not get the chance. Ultimately, that didn't matter. "Over the course of this year, Americans have provided testimony of their own, a testimony of the American spirit," he said. "Within that spirit, heart beating strongly, is the fortitude of The American Legion."

Santos praised those who put him in office and achieved his goal of "reaching out in all directions."

"It's truly been a very productive year for The American Legion because of the vast number of Legionnaires who have reached out in all directions," he said. "From the grass-roots level to national, Legionnaires have been working together to

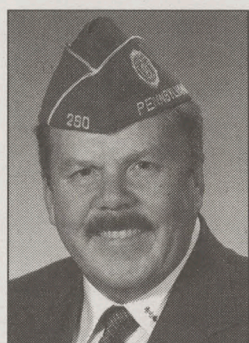
SEE HEART, PAGE 7

A message from the National Commander:

# Mind, heart and hands

*Legion must adhere to principles United States was founded upon.*

When our country was formed, our founding fathers were rebels with a cause. They all were intelligent, dedicated to an idea, workaholics – strong-minded, ordinary men. They



**Ronald F. Conley**

were different ages and from different backgrounds. They had egos, and some had a real dislike for each other. But they had a common cause: freedom. How many men would sacrifice their fortunes, families and homes for a principle today?

If we look back to when The American Legion was founded, we know that four friends gathered in Paris during World War I and discussed forming a veterans group. At the St. Louis caucus, the delegates tried to draft Teddy Roosevelt Jr. as chairman. He said, "We are gathered together for a high purpose. I want every American through the length and breadth of this land to realize there is not a man in this caucus who is seeking anything for himself personally, but that he is simply working for the good of the entire situation."

Roosevelt's words ring true today. That is why you are here: for the good of the entire situation. An organization has been handed down to us that is the foundation for which the citizen soldier fought and some died for.

This organization is based upon the three Ps: patriotism, principles and participation. The American Legion is about real people, real beliefs and love of God, country, family and service.

We have survived as a nation because the mind conceived an idea, the heart believed it and the hands achieved it. By the grace of God and the will and endurance of many dutiful men and women since the Revolutionary War, America has endured.

Today, we are a nation at war once again. Thousands of young children are being taught in radical Islamic schools both overseas and even here in the United States to hate and even kill Americans. We are fighting a war not only of bullets, but of ideas.

In the end, however, we shall endure because we are right. Because we are free. We will do whatever it takes to remain free.

As Thomas Paine once said, "Those who expect to reap the blessings of freedom must, like men, undergo the fatigues of supporting it." We need to re-ener-

gize ourselves and carry the torch for those whose voices are silent, those in the VA hospitals, those who are homeless, and for the security of our nation. We must sustain our mission as advocates for veterans.

One of the eight discussions at the 1919 St. Louis caucus was about using alien status as protection against military service while continuing to reap the benefits of wartime employment. We see that today – both legal and illegal aliens reaping the blessings of our nation while veterans wait in line at VA hospitals and while 40 percent of our homeless are veterans.

Certain groups in this country want to protect noncitizens and use the Constitution to benefit al-Qaida and the Taliban. They have no concern for

mind conceives it, the heart believes it and the hands achieve it.

Our country was founded on the principle of fighting tyranny. Our founding fathers gave up tangible assets to fight for an intangible belief: the right to be free. We will not and cannot forget our fellow veterans and those who gave their very lives for the free nation we are today.

We will support the brave men and women of our armed forces and their families. They are America's newest veterans. We will not fail our country's veterans. We will fight until the promises made to them are fulfilled by a grateful nation.

We shall continue to grow in numbers, recruiting

***"We shall continue to grow in numbers, recruiting the 19 million eligible veterans who still do not carry a membership card for The American Legion. We shall engage America's young people in programs that educate, inspire and grow responsible citizens of our great nation. And we will fight the good fight both in Washington and in our own congressional districts to work with our elected representatives in fielding legislation that will embrace our veterans, their families, national security and our flag. As (Legion founder) Theodore Roosevelt Jr. said, we will work for "the good of the entire situation."***

those who died in the terrorist attacks, those fighting the war, those in VA hospitals or those who cannot get into VA hospitals.

They want God out of our life; they want God out of our Pledge of Allegiance. They believe it's OK to desecrate Old Glory.

Remember that no matter how old you are, how tired you are or how many years you have been involved in The American Legion, you can still contribute to the good of the Legion if you remember how our nation and our organization were founded. It was because people responded to the idea that the

the 19 million eligible veterans who still do not carry a membership card for The American Legion.

We shall engage America's young people in programs that educate, inspire and grow responsible citizens of our great nation.

And we will fight the good fight both in Washington and in our own congressional districts to work with our elected representatives in fielding legislation that will embrace our veterans, their families, national security and our flag.

As Theodore Roosevelt Jr. said, we will work for "the good of the entire situation."

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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:

# 'No one left behind'

*Legionnaires must help solve the mystery of Navy Lt. Cmdr. Scott Speicher.*

On Jan. 17, 1991, the first night of the Persian Gulf War, U.S. Navy Lt. Cmdr. Michael Scott Speicher took off from the USS *Saratoga* with 40 F-18 Hornets to deliver the first air strike of the

## Robert W. Spanogle

war against Iraq. During the attack, Speicher's plane was reportedly hit by enemy fire and disappeared in a fireball over the Baghdad desert. The next day, Speicher was listed as killed in action, the first U.S. casualty of the war. No search for Speicher was conducted.

During the next few months and years, however, conflicting reports regarding Speicher arose. Speicher's jet wreckage was found, its engines, canopy, ejection seat, and a pilot's flight suit still intact. Serial numbers confirmed that the wreckage was Speicher's plane.

Years later, an Iraqi defector claimed to have driven an American pilot from the crash site to a hospital. And in 2001, Speicher was reclassified as MIA rather than KIA.

The Iraqis have a history of keeping POWs for extended periods of time. More than 500 Kuwaiti soldiers are still being held from the Gulf War, and Iranian pilot Hossein Lashgari was held captive from Sept. 18, 1980, to April 19, 1998. We cannot allow an American servicemember to be treated the same way.

At our national convention in Charlotte, the Legion passed Res. 125, calling for Congress to fully investigate Speicher's case and for the U.S. government to take all possible steps to ascertain the truth concerning Speicher's fate. The resolution also insists upon his release from captivity or the repatriation of his remains.

In Charlotte, Legionnaires had the opportunity to hear from Amy Waters Yarsinske, a Naval Reserve intelligence officer and author of a book about

Speicher titled "No One Left Behind." Yarsinske spent eight years interviewing top government and military officials, diplomats, pilots, informers and Iraqi defectors to research her book.

**"Once again, it's time to put the grass-roots power of The American Legion behind a good cause. Contact your members of the House of Representatives and urge support of the Speicher Bill. This shouldn't be about partisan politics, it is, in the most elemental sense, about our nation's honor and the promise to every soldier and their families that none will be left behind."**

Yarsinske questioned why the U.S. government doesn't seem eager to get Speicher back. She called the case a "game in play." She also urged Legion-

naires to stay on top of legislation passing through Congress that seeks to get to the truth of the Speicher case.

"I think (the Iraqis) have him, and I think he is still breathing," Yarsinske said. "And I am not the only one who thinks that."

Already, the Senate has passed the Persian Gulf POW/MIA Accountability Act (S. 1339), more commonly known as the Speicher Bill. The bill provides incentive in the form of asylum in America to natives of the Middle East and their families for delivering any living American Persian Gulf War POW/MIA to the U.S. government. Any costs associated with this legislation would only be incurred when Speicher is returned alive to the United States. The bill is now in the House of Representatives, where it was referred to the International Relations Committee.

Once again, it's time to put the grass-roots power of The American Legion behind a good cause. Contact your members of the House of Representatives and urge support of the Speicher Bill. This shouldn't be about partisan politics. It is, in the most elemental sense, about our nation's honor and the promise to every soldier and their families that none will be left behind.

At every Legion function, we fly the POW/MIA flag. At every Legion breakfast, luncheon or dinner, we set an empty place in honor of those who are still unaccounted for.

As current and former servicemembers, we know that the phrase "no one left behind" isn't just four words strewn together. It's how we honor our comrades, both those fallen and those still missing. We are indebted to them all.

Scott Speicher and his family deserve our strongest efforts to make sure he does return home. Yarsinske says those who have not come home are only forgotten if we forget them.

We must not forget.

## Taps

### Aaron Moody Dalke Bismark, N.D.

Aaron Moody Dalke of Post 1 (Department of North Dakota) passed away Sept. 16 at age 75. He was a World War II Navy veteran with 56 continuous years of Legion membership.

Mr. Dalke served as department commander from 1987 to 1988; National Executive Committeeman from 1992 to 2002; alternate National Executive Committeeman from 1990 to 1992; department vice commander from 1984 to 1985; National Americanism Council vice chairman from 1988 to 1992; National Legislative Council vice chairman from 1993 to 1994, 1999 to 2000 and in 2002; and National Public Relations Liaison Committee chairman from 1996 to 1998.

He was a member of the National Americanism Council from 1971 to 1972 and 1981 to 1984, the National Membership & Post Activities Committee from 1973 to 1974, the National Americanism Commission Liaison from 1998 to 1999, the National Citizens Flag Alliance Advisory Committee from 1996 to 1998, the National Internal Affairs Liaison from 1999 to 2002 and the National Public Relations Liaison from 1992 to 1996.

Mr. Dalke is survived by his wife, Marvel, and one daughter.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions can be made to the North Dakota State Veterans Cemetery or the donor's choice.

### Leonard G. Overmyer Eaton Rapids, Mich.

Leonard G. Overmyer of Post 15 (Department of Michigan) passed away Aug. 28 at age 60. He was a Vietnam War Army veteran with 20 continuous years of Legion membership.

Mr. Overmyer served as department commander from 1995 to 1996, department Americanism chairman from 1992 to 1993 and department Membership & Post Activities chairman from 1993 to 1994.

He was a member of the National Distinguished Guests Committee from 1996 to 1999.

Mr. Overmyer is survived by a wife, Betty, and three sons and three daughters.

### J. Frank Ray Hillsborough, N.C.

J. Frank Ray of Post 452 (Department of North Carolina) passed away July 30 at age 78. He was a World War II Navy veteran with 61 continuous years of Legion membership.

Mr. Ray served as department commander from 1989 to 1990, National Security Council vice chairman from 1990 to 1994, National Distinguished Guests Committee vice chairman from 1986 to 1989, department Internal Affairs chairman from 1988 to 1989, department Constitution and By-Laws chairman from 1990 to 1991 and 1992 to 1995, and department Children & Youth chairman from 1995 to 1997.

He was a member of the National Housing Committee from 1964 to 1965, the National Counter-Subversive Activities Committee from 1965 to 1984 and the National Law & Order Committee from 1975 to 1984.

### Lawrence E. Tiensvold Mustang, Okla.

Lawrence E. Tiensvold of Post 353 (Department of Oklahoma) passed away Sept. 11 at age 73. He was a Korean War Air Force veteran with 29 continuous years of Legion membership.

Mr. Tiensvold served as department commander from 1999 to 2000, department Membership & Post Activities Chairman from 1998 to 1999 and department vice commander from 1996 to 1999.

He is survived by one stepson and three stepdaughters.

Condolences can be sent to Patti Christy, 823 S. Price, Chandler, OK 74834. Memorial contributions can be made to the American Legion Children's Home, 1300 Summers Place, Ponca City, OK 74604.

# National Convention 2002

## Legion gets green light to sue VA, U.S. government

The American Legion has a green light to sue VA or the U.S. government, if necessary, to force timely processing of thousands of undecided veterans' appeals cases now gathering dust in regional VA offices.

According to findings by a Legion quality review board, a main reason "remanded" appeals cases are frequently left unfinished is that no internal incentives exist to move them along.

Approximately 26,000 appeals – some dating back to 1996 – are in a state of "remand," meaning the Board of Veterans Appeals in Washington sent them back to the regional VA offices for further development and re-adjudication. There, however, they have languished because remanded appeals do not count toward monthly VA performance quotas, as do other claims for veterans' benefits. Therefore, the oldest cases in the system – remanded appeals – receive scant attention.

The American Legion will not tolerate that.

"There is an old saying: justice delayed is justice denied," National Commander Ronald F. Conley said during testimony before Congress in September. "When applied to veterans' claims for benefits, justice delayed creates discouragement, which leads to despair, and, I believe, many lose faith in VA's ability to care for them."

Therefore, Resolution No. 1 – submitted by the Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Division and adopted by the National Executive Committee prior to the Legion National Convention in Charlotte, N.C., in August – gives the commander authority to take any action necessary to compel VA to meet its legal obligations and promptly process remanded appeals. If it takes a lawsuit, then so be it.

The resolution is worded as follows:

*Whereas, when a claim for service-connected or nonservice-connected disability or death benefits is denied by a Department of Veterans Affairs regional office, the claimant has the right to appeal to the Board of Veterans Appeals in Washington, D.C.; and*

*Whereas, if the board determines the appeal is not ready*

*for a final decision either granting or denying the benefit sought, because the regional office did not fully develop the case, it will be remanded back to the regional office with specific instructions for additional required development and re-adjudication; and*

*Whereas, if, after the remand action is completed, the regional office continues to deny the claim, the records are to be promptly returned to the board for a final decision; and*

*Whereas, during Fiscal Year 2002, the number of pending appeals rose from 92,000 to more than 96,000 and, of these pending appeals, more than 26,000 were cases that had been remanded by the Board of Veterans Appeals for further specific required development and re-adjudication by the regional offices; and*

*Whereas, a substantial number of these remands have been pending in the regional offices since 1996 and 1997; and*

*Whereas, since January 2001, the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) Central Office has established monthly production quotas for the regional offices, in order to reduce the number of pending claims; and*

*Whereas, in response to The American Legion's concern about the large number of pending appeals and remands, regional office officials have stated that little or no action would be taken on appeals and remands, because, under current VBA policy, the regional offices do not receive work credit toward their monthly production quotas; and*

*Whereas, such lack of action by VBA officials clearly violates the rights of veterans to full due process and prompt and fair decisions on their appeals, which are by nature among the oldest claims in the VA system; and*

*Whereas, during the course of these long-pending appeals, many veterans die, which causes their appeals to also "die" and in a claim for accrued benefits, any eventual payment to the survivors is limited to two years of retroactive benefits, causing great and everlasting harm to the veteran's family; and*

*Whereas, VBA's failure to comply with its statutory and regulatory duty is illegal and creates delays and hardships for disabled veterans, which is totally unacceptable to The American Legion; now, therefore be it*

*Resolved, by the National Executive Committee of The American Legion in regular meeting assembled in Charlotte, N.C., Aug. 26, 2002, that The American Legion take all steps necessary to ensure that the Department of Veterans Affairs meets its statutory obligations and responsibilities to individuals seeking appellate review of their claims for VA benefits; and, be it further*

*Resolved, that, if efforts to achieve a timely and satisfactory resolution to the appeals issue with VA officials are unsuccessful, The American Legion be authorized to take further action, up to and including, but not limited to, bringing a lawsuit against the U.S. government and/or the Department of Veterans Affairs and/or appropriate officials to compel the prompt completion of the action set forth in the remand decisions of the Board of Veterans Appeals; and, be it further*

*Resolved, that the National Commander, in his sole and unfettered discretion, shall have the full power to determine when and if such a lawsuit is necessary and appropriate; and, be it further*

*Resolved, that, as determined by the National Commander, upon the advice and counsel of the National Judge Advocate, The American Legion may collaborate with other parties of like interest, so long as The American Legion remains free to make its own decisions about any case; and, be it further*

*Resolved, that should such legal action be necessary, and The American Legion agrees to collaborate with other parties, The American Legion shall pay no more than one-half of said costs or, if more than one party joins The American Legion, such lesser fraction of such costs, as determined by multiplying the total of said costs by a fraction, the numerator of which shall be the number one and the denominator of which shall be the number of plaintiff organizations, so long as The American Legion has the opportunity to approve the legal steps and discovery action that generate such costs; and, be it finally*

*Resolved, that the National Judge Advocate shall oversee said lawsuit, if any, on behalf of The American Legion, or The American Legion's participation, if any collaboration is authorized, and report to the National Executive Committee as part of his annual report.*

## Downpour can't wash away determined Legionnaires

By Steve Brooks  
Editor

Dark clouds moved in overhead and cast shadows over the streets of Charlotte, a city well into its fourth straight year of drought. Sprinkles began falling onto the hot streets. Soon, those sprinkles became a steady stream of rain that grew into a torrential downpour.

As the storm pounded the city, the bands played on, for those still marching in the 84th American Legion National Convention Parade in August.

When lightning flashed across the skies, more than an hour into the parade, however, National Commander Richard J. Santos called off festivities for the sake of safety.

"Veterans have been through rain, snow, the cold, everything," said Jerry Hedrick, president of the North Carolina Convention Corp. and North Carolina's National Executive Committeeman. "A little rain wasn't going to stop them. And it wasn't the rain that stopped it. It was an electrical storm that stopped it."

"I sat there and got wet, but I didn't mind. I don't think anyone did."

Two departments in particular did not mind at all. Even after the parade was called off, Legionnaires from Pennsylvania and New Jersey stuck it out. "We were already soaked, so we decided to keep going," Pennsylvania Adjutant Kit Watson said. "We marched on, carrying our banners and everything."

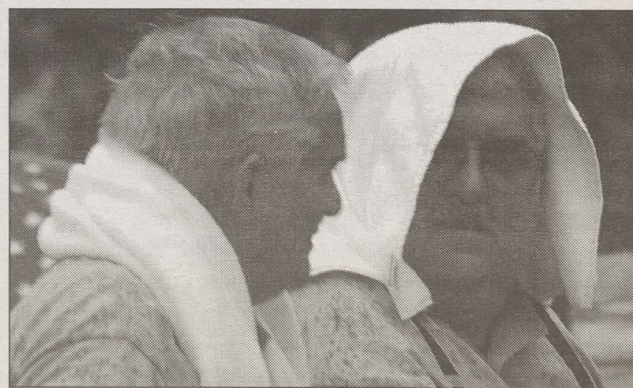
Watson said Pennsylvania's parade contingent initially consisted of 138 members. "I know that some dropped out, but we still had a good amount marching at the end of the parade," he said.

"I hate that the lightning came, because despite the rain, I think everyone would have finished up the parade," said Hedrick, attending his 25th straight convention. "I wasn't surprised a few departments kept going."

More than 100 entries were registered to march in the parade, with Air Force Brig. Gen. Charles E. McCartney as grand marshal and Past National Commander Ray G. Smith, honorary grand marshal.



National Commander Richard J. "Ric" Santos ignores the rain and waves to spectators during The American Legion National Convention Parade. Below, Jerry Hedrick, right, president of the North Carolina Convention Corp. and North Carolina's National Executive Committeeman, keeps a little dry while watching the parade.



**"Veterans have been through rain, snow, the cold, everything. A little rain wasn't going to stop them."**

— Jerry Hedrick  
president, North Carolina Convention Corp.

## National Convention 2002

# Osmonds 'exemplify' spirit of Good Guy award

By Steve Brooks  
Editor

The Osmonds have sold millions of albums and entertained people around the world. But there is much more to this quintessentially American family than song and dance. Their offstage work is just as impressive, and because of that, they received The American Legion's James V. Day "Good Guy" Award at the annual Past Department Commanders Club luncheon during the Legion's 84th National Convention in Charlotte, N.C.

"The Osmond family is the recipient of this award because of their actions off the stage," PDCC President Jerry L. Hedrick said. "With their perseverance and genuine spirit of giving and their commitment to family values, the Osmonds exemplify the spirit of the award."

Olive Osmond, mother of the celebrated family, launched the Osmond Foundation, which sponsors the Children's Miracle Network. Her daughter,



National Commander Richard J. "Ric" Santos", left, and North Carolina NECman Jerry Hedrick presented Merrill, Jay and

Wayne Osmond with the James V. Day "Good Guy" Award at the 2002 Past Department Commanders Club luncheon.

Marie, serves as chief executive officer of CMN and as chairperson of the network foundation.

Alan Osmond, who has multiple sclerosis, and his wife, Suzanne, founded the One Heart Foundation, which seeks to strengthen families by providing guiding principles with the advice

of experts, live events and activities for children.

The foundation also supports TheFamily.com and Deaf.net Web sites.

In 1991, Merrill Osmond produced "Operation Family Front," a special television variety show to assist families of Utah servicemembers fighting in

Operation Desert Storm. He also is the co-founder of the annual Freedom Festival in Provo, Utah.

In accepting the family's award, Merrill, Wayne and Jay Osmond were quick to thank Legionnaires for what they do for America.

"What's really important to us is being around individuals like yourselves who understand the meaning of dedication to community and country," Jay Osmond said. "We're deeply touched we can be involved in some way."

"I see many unsung heroes among you," Wayne Osmond said. "People who donate time are giving away pieces of their lives. You are the people doing that."

"I think it's an honor to stand in front of so many good guys," Merrill Osmond said. "The Osmonds love America. We love being Americans. And it's neat to be called a 'good guy' in this country today."

## Legion praised for support of Children's Miracle Network

*Marie Osmond: CMN's critical service only possible through continued help from organizations like the Legion.*

By Steve Brooks  
Editor

Entertainer Marie Osmond says that no matter where we are in life, we all start out as helpless children, dependent upon others for support. That is why it is essential, she says, for The American Legion to keep delivering assistance for the Children's Miracle Network.

Osmond is co-founder and chief executive officer for CMN, a nonprofit corporate partner of the Legion that raises funds and awareness for 170 children's hospitals around the world. Last year, those hospitals treated 17 million children regardless of their families' abilities to pay.

That sort of service is possible only because of organizations like the Legion, which raised about \$2.6

million last year for CMN and has produced about \$6 million in the past four years. "I was taught by my parents of the importance of giving through service," Osmond said. "There are thousands of you out there who are heroes in everyday life. You may never get a place in the spotlight, but you will always have a place in my heart."

As part of her presentation, Osmond introduced Legionnaires to young Sam Wise, son of Perry and Crystal Wise of Concord, N.C. Sam was born 16 weeks premature in August 2001.

Thanks to care he received at a CMN hospital, he recently celebrated his first birthday and now weighs more than 13 pounds.

His survival is nothing less than a medical miracle, made possible through charitable contributions. The American Legion's support for such miracles was not lost on the boy's mother, Crystal, who told the crowd, "Thank you, from the bottom of a grateful mother's heart."



Marie Osmond introduces young Sam Wise to Legionnaires. The baby boy is one of millions who have benefited from the Children's Miracle Network.

## Numerous yearly awards presented during convention

The following awards were presented during the 84th National Convention of The American Legion.

### Spirit of Service Awards

Enlisted armed services members honored for volunteering in their local communities

Army - Spc. Eric D. Hall

Navy - Engineman 2nd Class Jesse J. Givens

Marine Corps - Sgt. Charles A. Cloud

Air Force - Staff Sgt. Christopher J. Culbreth

Coast Guard - Yeoman 2nd Class Francine Sak

### Youth Program Honorees

Boys Nation President - Bradley Johnson

Junior Shooting Sports Champion - Jamie Beyerle

National Oratorical Contest Champion - Candice Neal

### Fourth Estate Award for Outstanding Journalism

Christine Willmsen and Mike Wagner of the *Dayton Daily News* for the two-year investigative project "The Foreign

Game," which brought to light the exploitation of young foreign athletes.

### William Randolph Hearst Americanism Trophy

Department of Ohio

### Frank N. Belgrano Trophy

For support of the Boy Scouts - Department of California

### Ralph T. O'Neil Education Trophy

For showing the greatest Americanism activity in use of The American Legion School Medal Awards - Department of Wyoming

### Employer of the Year

For companies and businesses dedicated to hiring veterans

Small Business - Wal-Mart Distribution Center, Winter Haven, Fla.

Mid-Size Business - M&T Company, Manchester, N.J.

Large Business - Basic Water Company, Henderson, Nev.

### National Law Enforcement Officer of the Year

Lincoln County Sheriff Deputy Casey Nelms, North Platte, Neb.

### Local Veterans Representative of the Year

Barbara Phillips, Fort Payne, Ala.

### William F. Lenker National Service Trophy

For best supporting and implementing programs to benefit veterans and their families - Department of Minnesota

### Garland Murphy Award

For providing the most contributions to the Child Welfare Foundation - Department of Alabama

### CWF Legacy Award

For contributing the most funds to the Children's Miracle Network by the department's entire Legion family - Department of New York



# A Military Tribute to Bob Hope

In special tribute from our Military and all Americans whose hearts swelled, laughed so hard it hurt, and tears fell, we honor this man for keeping home alive over five generations. A military tribute is planned. This man who brought joy, laughter and comfort to so

many Americans in uniform he referred to as "his kids" around the world. World War II, Korea, Vietnam, Cold War to Desert Storm, America's veterans know how much it means to hear the voices of home—when they are so far

*"America's only  
Honorary Veteran."*

away and how much Bob Hope gave to them and being there with them.

***"Now it's time for us to tell Bob 'Thanks for the Memories'"***

***— Dan Ludwig, Past National Commander***

**Dedication**  
May 29, 2003  
Bob's 100th Birthday

***An American Hero...***

## The Military Tribute to Bob Hope

will cover three-quarters of an acre on the western shore of San Diego Bay with the backdrop of North Island Naval Air Station. This \$4.9 million parcel of land has been donated by the Port District of San Diego. It is one of the most beautiful sites on the Pacific.

*Endorsed by The American Legion  
by Resolution of the  
National Executive Committee*



**In appreciation for your contribution, the name of every donor will be logged and placed in a time capsule which will be permanently set within the stage of the Tribute.**

Online contributions are accepted at **[www.hopetribute.org](http://www.hopetribute.org)** using your credit card or complete this form.

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Taffy III is a 501(c)(3) non-profit tax deductible organization.

Contribution: ☐ \$25 ☐ \$50 ☐ \$100 ☐ \$250 ☐ \$500

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***Thanks for the Memories***

To **send** your contribution please include check made payable to: **Military Tribute Bob Hope** and mail to:

Military Tribute to Bob Hope  
P.O. Box 919012  
San Diego, CA 92121



# HEART FROM PAGE 1

serve our nation.

"For more than 84 years, our organization has proven time and time again that we care about American veterans, their families and the communities where we live. This year was no exception. In the face of (the terrorist attacks), Legionnaires from all over the country mobilized, creating triumph in the wake of tragedy.

"You rushed to the blood banks and hospitals, donating your blood to help keep up with the sudden surge in demand. You renewed your dedication to the Family Support Network, ensuring that families of active-duty and Reserve servicemembers suddenly facing long deployments had what they needed to survive."

While doing its part in the war on terrorism, the Legion didn't neglect any of its other missions, Santos said. "We've stood tall in protecting the American flag from desecration," he said. "It was a banner year for The American Legion's Child Welfare Foundation. We raised money for our Sept. 11 fund and met and exceeded the \$500,000 goal set for the National Emergency Fund, proving once again The American Legion indeed does care for its own."

Santos also praised the Legion's membership efforts, up 60,000 from 2001, its work toward gaining concurrent receipt for disabled military veterans, and its steadfast effort in improving quality of life for U.S. servicemembers.

Santos was not alone in his praise of the Legion. Several distinguished guests at the event - including Office of Homeland Security Director Tom Ridge, Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary Anthony J. Principi, Secretary of the Army Thomas E. White and World War II Memorial Fund Co-Chairman Bob Dole - all thanked the Legion for its support while speaking on a variety of issues.

**Protecting the Homeland.** Ridge, a member of Post 773 in Erie, Pa., said that through the tragedy of Sept. 11, Americans found a way to grow. "I have been asked if America lost its innocence Sept. 11," Ridge said. "Maybe we didn't lose it. Maybe we traded it for awareness. We're still getting used to the idea that we are vulnerable to enemies. Americans saw what The American Legion has always known: freedom is never free. Although we are safe and better prepared, we still have work to do."

Ridge said Legionnaires can help.

"Our homeland is secure when our hometown is secure," he said. "As veterans, we have some pretty unique talents, some pretty extraordinary experiences to call upon. We know how to give orders, and we know how to take orders. Your communities look to you for leadership."

Ridge outlined the many responsibilities of the new office and why it merits Cabinet-level status. One responsibility is to closely monitor foreigners coming into the country. "We are a nation of immigrants, and we don't want to lose sight of that," he said. "But we need a new entry-and-exit policy."

"This is a new kind of war against an enemy who turns innocent citizens into combatants and our cities into battlefields. Just to move boxes around on an organizational chart and then call it a day will not be enough. The new agency or department must be as agile as the enemy."

**A Mixed Bag for Veterans.** Inadequate funding for the Department of Veterans Affairs continues to be a critical concern of The American Legion. With a budget that barely keeps up with inflation, the department has an overwhelming backlog of disability compensation claims and long waiting times for patients in the VA health-care system.

Santos said the situation is unacceptable. "Once again, veterans have been placed between Congress and the president for the sake of saving money," he said. "Affordability was not an issue when we were called to active duty. It should not be an issue when



After receiving a Bronze Star, Special Forces Capt. John P. Spanogle gets a kiss from his mother, Ruth, while his father,

fulfilling the promises to those who served."

Gail Wilensky, co-chair of the Presidential Task Force to Improve Health-Care Delivery for Our Nation's Veterans, said the task force is charged with helping fulfill those promises. "What's different about this task force is that it's the president's task force," she said. "Our mandate is clear. We have been directed to improve and determine how VA and the Department of Defense can work together to improve access and quality health care to veterans and military retirees. We've already been able to knock down a number of barriers."

Wilensky said many obstacles still exist, including lack of communication between the two departments. "The transition from military health care to VA health care should be seamless. If we can put a man on the moon, why can't we get computer-records software from the DoD and VA to talk to each other? We must have a clear commitment to collaboration ... We're looking for recommendations that transcend personalities."

The task force also is examining the budgeting processes, timely billing, cost accounting, information technology and reimbursement. But Wilensky said the task force would not recommend slicing health-care funding. "We will not scale back military or veterans' health-care budgets," she said. "We will not balance the budget on the backs of veterans."

Kay Coles James, director of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management, said her office will continue

National Adjutant Robert W. Spanogle, watches proudly onstage.

to fight for the employment rights of veterans, thanks in part to the support of President George W. Bush.

"The debt that we owe to you, the defenders of freedom, can never fully be repaid," James said. "But I want you to know that our president is taking an aggressive role in seeing to it that veterans are treated with the respect, fairness and dignity befitting their service and sacrifice to the nation."

"When our new veterans return home from their tours of duty, they deserve to be greeted with doors wide open in welcome at the employment offices of federal agencies throughout America. Veterans' preference is one very tangible way that we can show our gratitude as a nation to those now serving and to the 25 million living veterans in whose footsteps they follow in selfless sacrifice."

James said despite necessary civil-service reforms, veterans' preference will remain a priority. "Efforts to modernize the civil service are long overdue, but reform must be consistent with our ongoing commitment to offer opportunities to returning veterans who want to use their skills and talents in public service," she said. "Veterans' preference isn't just the law. It's the right thing to do."

While VA Secretary Anthony J. Principi talked about doing the right thing, his speech undoubtedly alarmed many veterans. The Legion has encouraged Category 7 veterans - no service-connected disabilities and not indigent - to enroll in the VA system. Congress has mandated that VA accept them. But Principi said increased Category 7 numbers is one reason for the long waits for VA health-care services.

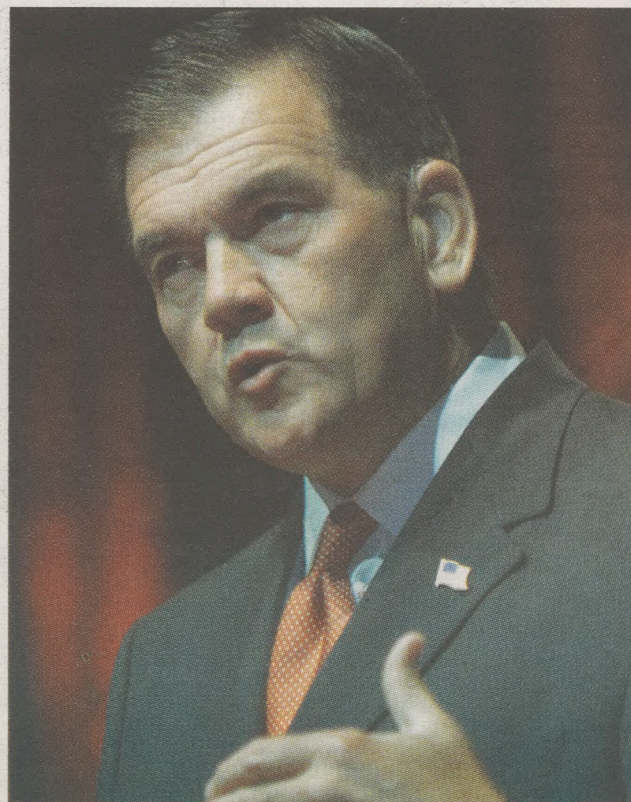
"Veterans are coming into VA in record numbers," Principi said. "We're a victim of our own success. Since 1996, the number of Category 7 veterans (in the system) has risen 500 percent, from 200,000 to more than 1 million. They'll make up 45 percent of our workload by the end of the decade. Without an increase in money, that will be a recipe for failure."

"Service-connected veterans are the very reason VA exists. We actively must focus on them and establish a priority for care. Veterans waiting weeks or months or years (for care) are not impressed by the praise for that care."

VA has made strides in reducing the backlog of claims and the processing time for each claim, Principi said. He also defended Bush's decision to not release \$275 million in supplemental funding intended for VA, saying Congress tied an additional \$5.1 billion to the amount, forcing Bush to spend either all or none of it.

"The president decided not to add \$5.1 billion to the deficit," Principi said. "But with (the \$142 million), we were able to add nurses and expand clinics."

Principi said a stronger partnership with DoD,



Homeland Security Director Tom Ridge told Legionnaires that national security begins by protecting America's hometowns.

## HEART FROM PAGE 7

using Medicare as a VA provider and using recommendations from the presidential task force are steps in the right direction, VA improvement isn't going to happen overnight.

"VA has a tough climb in front of it, and the climb is only beginning," he said. "We will stay the course with strong leadership and a focus on accountability."

**The War on Terrorism.** Army Secretary Thomas E. White expressed confidence that America will win the war on terrorism "because it has national leadership committed to victory. We will win because we have the best armed forces the world has ever known. Our soldiers are flat-out the best soldiers I've ever seen. We collapsed the al-Qaida machine and put the Taliban on the run. Technological advances, as we all know, are happening at a blistering pace. But we fully understand that technology does not change the fundamental challenge of war."

"War remains a personal and brutal experience, and man's ability to prevail through this ordeal will always be the ultimate challenge in securing victory."

White said the Legion can – and does – help. "We have the complete support of the American people, but we must sustain that support," he said. "You, The American Legion, have a critical role in sustaining that support as leaders, role models and mentors in your communities. We will win this war and future wars because of those like you."

U.S. Army Lt. Gen. Bryan D. Brown, commanding general of the Army's Special Operations Command, provided insight into the war in Afghanistan and the soldiers fighting it.

"In the earliest days of conflict in Afghanistan, only a few weeks after the first U.S. Special Forces had been covertly inserted into the country, a radio message was relayed to the Army Operations Center in the Pentagon," Brown said. "It came from a Special Forces captain who had linked up with soldiers of a group of the Northern Alliance. The message stated, 'We have not slept in four days. Have not eaten in two days. Water is running low, and we have only about 10 rounds of ammunition per man. Tonight we attack.'"

"Special Forces has been preparing for this fight, and our forces are the best trained in the world. They have been proving that since the start of Operation Enduring Freedom."

Brown presented the Bronze Star to U.S. Army Capt. John P. Spanogle, son of Legion National Adjutant and Mrs. Robert W. Spanogle, for, according to the citation, "His peerless leadership of operations of strategic significance directly contributed to the establishment of a secure and stable environment in Kandahar. Capt. Spanogle's incisive Special Forces skills, as well as his astute understanding of military-political dynamics of the incredibly complex environment he operated in, reflect great credit upon him, 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne) and



Past National Commander John Geiger, right, swears new National Commander Ronald F. Conley into office, while Conley's wife, Barbara, stands proudly at her husband's side.

the United States Army."

Capt. Spanogle is a member of Post 225 in Michigan.

**Getting the Word Out.** Ret. Maj. Gen. Patrick H. Brady, chairman of the Citizens Flag Alliance, told Legionnaires the time is right to get the flag-protection amendment passed in the Senate. The key, he said, is voter awareness and creating a public outcry similar to that which occurred when the San Francisco 9th Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that the Pledge of Allegiance was unconstitutional because of the phrase "under God."

"There's not a shred of difference between the pledge ruling and flag ruling," said Brady, a Medal of Honor recipient. "Both fly in the face of common sense. The public was outraged because it was aware of the pledge ruling. The three keys in our fight to protect the flag are voter awareness, voter awareness and voter awareness."

"No senators would vote against the flag if they thought it would cost them the election. They hide behind the ignorance of the voters."

**World War II Memorial.** The American Legion family presented World War II veteran Bob Dole with a check for \$4.6 million, bringing the total raised by private citizens for the World War II Memorial Fund to more than \$187 million.

Dole said the memorial, to be dedicated in Washington in spring 2004, isn't only for those who fought in the

war. "World War II veterans don't need a memorial," he said. "It's not for us. Most of us have passed away. And between now and the time of the dedication, we'll lose another 1.5 million. But sometimes we need to remember the past if we're going to make sure we're on the right path for the future."

Dole said fund-raising support from the Legion is critical in getting the memorial built. "We didn't want to ask the government for any money; save that money for the veterans who need it. We raised \$187 million, and less than \$10 million came from the government. The rest came from private individuals across the country."

**Stump Honored.** The American Legion awarded U.S. Rep. Bob Stump, R-Ariz., its highest honor, the Distinguished Service Award.

Santos thanked Stump, a World War II Navy veteran and 26-year member of Congress, for his staunch support of the Legion on many issues, including the flag-protection amendment.

Unable to attend the convention due to health reasons, Stump in turn thanked the Legion via a videotaped presentation.

"Without the strong support of The American Legion, we couldn't have won legislative battles to fulfill promises to our veterans," Stump said. "The award you've honored me with today is very humbling."

**Membership Gains.** On the way to last year's membership gains, seven

departments hit all-time highs: Arizona, South Carolina, Nevada, Utah, Virginia, Delaware and Florida. Five departments recorded 100-percent marks through traditional efforts: Arizona, France, Georgia, South Carolina and Delaware.

The Harold D. Lindsley Trophy went to the Department of Delaware for the second straight year for the greatest percentage increase in membership in a domestic department. The North Carolina Trophy, which is the foreign equivalent of the Lindsley Trophy, went to Puerto Rico.

W.C. "Gene" Franks, of Palmer, Alaska, was named the Legion's National Recruiter of the Year. Franks, commander of the Department of Alaska, brought in 392 new members last year.

**Conley Takes Command.** Ronald F. Conley of the Department of Pennsylvania was unanimously elected by delegates to serve as national commander for 2002-2003.

Conley, who served in the Air Force during the Vietnam War, was joined by his wife, Barbara, at the lectern when he was sworn in.

A member of Scott Township Post 290, Conley has held numerous Legion leadership positions, including post and department commander and National Executive Committeeman. In 1988, he founded and still serves as president of The American Legion for Homeless Veterans Corp., which operates eight veterans' homes in Pennsylvania. He also was appointed to the Vietnam Veterans Herbicide Commission.

In his acceptance speech, Conley said, "No matter how old you are, how tired you are or how many years you have been involved in The American Legion, you can still contribute to the good of the Legion if you remember how our nation and The American Legion were founded. It was because people responded to the idea that the mind conceives it, the heart believes it and the hands achieve it."

Conley said the principles upon which America was founded are carried out every day by The American Legion. "Our country was founded on the principle of fighting tyranny," he said. "Our founding fathers gave up tangible assets to fight for an intangible belief: the right to be free."

"Fellow Legionnaires, we will not and cannot forget our fellow veterans and those who gave their very lives for the free nation we are today."

"We will support the brave men and women of our armed forces and their families. They are America's newest veterans. We shall not fail our country's veterans. We will fight until the promises made to them are fulfilled by a grateful nation."

Legionnaires also were introduced to new American Legion Auxiliary National President Elsie Bailey of Whiting, N.J., and Sons of The American Legion National Commander Steve Laws of Hickory, N.C.

Bailey replaced Sherry McLaughlin, while Laws takes over for Clifford Smith.



While the bagpipes played for victims of the Sept. 11 attacks and for late Past National Commander Daniel Foley, Legionnaires paid their respects at the convention's opening ceremony.

# Convention resolutions support Legion platform

These are summaries of the 194 resolutions passed at the 84th National Convention of The American Legion in Charlotte, N.C., in August. For the full text, contact the Legion Library at (317) 630-1366, e-mail [library@legion.org](mailto:library@legion.org) or visit the Web site at [www.legion.org](http://www.legion.org). Written requests for all approved resolutions, in booklet form, can be sent to: The Library, The American Legion, P.O. Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206.

## Americanism

Res. No. 200 – Seeks the appropriate legislation or presidential proclamation to alter, amend, or modify provisions of the U.S. Flag Code, Title 4, U. S. Code, Chapter 1.

Res. No. 292 – Expresses support for the Pledge of Allegiance in its current form.

Res. No. 293 – Urges the president and Congress to strengthen federal intelligence and security agencies.

Res. No. 294 – Asks Congress to mandate that the English language be the official U.S. language.

Res. No. 295 – Urges return of patriotic holidays to traditional dates.

Res. No. 296 – Encourages Congress to conduct oversight hearings of the naturalization process to ensure comprehensive background checks are made on all applicants for U.S. citizenship.

Res. No. 297 – Supports heavy penalties for employers who knowingly hire illegal aliens.

Res. No. 298 – Supports injured or disabled noncitizen veterans applying for naturalization.

Res. No. 299 – Supports a constitutional amendment permitting voluntary prayer in public buildings.

Res. No. 300 – Requests awarding Medal of Honor to the Four Chaplains.

Res. No. 301 – Supports a constitutional amendment to protect the U.S. Flag.

Res. No. 302 – Opposes foreign manufacture of American flags.

Res. No. 303 – Opposes legislation that would give conscientious objectors a voice in diverting monies from military spending.

Res. No. 304 – Oppose changes to "Title V of the Immigration and Nationality Act."

Res. No. 305 – Opposes illegal immigration and urges state and federal government to take necessary action to stop the massive flow of illegal immigration into this country.

Res. No. 306 – Urges law-enforcement agencies to work together to apprehend, detain and deport those who are in the United States illegally.

Res. No. 307 – Opposes amnesty for illegal immigrants.

Res. No. 308 – Oppose financial aid for illegal alien students.

Res. No. 309 – Urges reform of the student visa system.

Res. No. 310 – Urges Congress to improve U.S.-Canada border security.

Res. No. 311 – Urges Congress to adopt immigration policy for the 21st century.

Res. No. 312 – Urges Congress to amend the "Temporary Protected Status" portion of the Immigration Act of 1990.

Res. No. 313 – Urges Congress to provide agencies of the federal government with the necessary resources to track the arrival and departure of foreign visitors to the United States.

## Children & Youth

Res. No. 99 – Seeks legislative action to amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to provide equal treatment in admission of all children of U.S. citizens.

Res. No. 239 – Opposes depiction of children in pornographic literature.

Res. No. 240 – Opposes any attempt to weaken laws governing the penalties for the

production, sale and distribution of pornographic or obscene materials.

Res. No. 241 – Reaffirms position of supporting the fullest use of any licensed vaccine to combat communicable diseases.

Res. No. 242 – Recommends school boards and state education agencies develop a balanced and effective program and provide community support to reduce and prevent violence and vandalism in educational institutions.

Res. No. 243 – Urges the president and Congress to establish "National Family Week" during the week of Thanksgiving as an annual observance.

Res. No. 244 – Urges Congress to provide appropriate sufficient funds for school nutrition programs to reflect the increased cost of food and to provide needed facilities and trained personnel in an adequate school lunch program.

Res. No. 245 – Reaffirms position in urging federal and state governments to enact the necessary legislation to assist financially those individual families faced by the catastrophic illness of one of their children.

Res. No. 246 – Urges the president and Congress to fully support with adequate funding all border state, federal and military drug trafficking prevention programs.

Res. No. 247 – Supports the Office of Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention.

Res. No. 248 – Supports protecting children from the unrestricted media.

Res. No. 249 – Supports comprehensive health care for children and youth.

## Constitutional Amendment

Res. No. 170 – Authorizes the National Legislative Commission to petition Congress to further amend Section 5 of the act entitled "An Act to Incorporate The American Legion, Public Law No. 47, 66th Congress" regarding Legion membership eligibility.

## Economics

Res. No. 21 – Requests adequate funding for Local Veterans Employment Representatives and the Disabled Veterans Outreach Program.

Res. No. 24 – Supports Veterans Preference in the federal and state work forces.

Res. No. 107 – Amends the Internal Revenue Code for qualified veteran definition.

Res. No. 111 – Supports any legislative or administrative initiative that will give preference to American veterans and their families in obtaining housing through the programs of the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Res. No. 132 – Opposes any weakening of the Disabled Veterans Outreach Program and Local Veterans Employment Representative Programs.

Res. No. 151 – Supports full funding for small business loans in VA.

Res. No. 169 – Supports VA's Home Loan Guaranty Program.

Res. No. 189 – Urges adding active Reservists to those eligible for certain job training service.

Res. No. 254 – Reaffirms support of the Small Business Administration's Office of Veterans' Business Development.

Res. No. 255 – Support preference for vet-

eran-owned businesses.

Res. No. 256 – Supports priority of service for veterans in all State Employment Services Agencies (SESA) One-Stop Centers.

Res. No. 257 – Reaffirms support for the Transitional Assistance Program (TAP) for all separating and retiring personnel.

Res. No. 258 – Supports full funding for Veterans Employment and Training Service (VETS).

Res. No. 259 – Supports improvement of VETS.

Res. No. 260 – Supports licensure and certification of active-duty service personnel.

Res. No. 261 – Supports improvements of VETS performance standards.

Res. No. 262 – Support the National Veterans Training Institute.

Res. No. 263 – Continued support of Veterans Preference in hiring by federal contractors.

Res. No. 264 – Urges that VA's Home Loan Guaranty limit be raised to at least \$300,000 and be geographically adjusted as local market conditions require.

Res. No. 265 – Opposes the transfer of VETS to VA.

Res. No. 266 – Supports retaining the 10-year delimiting period for veterans to use Montgomery GI Bill educational benefits.

Res. No. 267 – Supports major enhancements for the Montgomery GI Bill.

Res. No. 268 – Opposes eliminating or outsourcing VETS programs.

Res. No. 270 – Amends Veterans Employment Opportunities Act of 1998.

Res. No. 271 – Supports Congress establishing "Hire a Veteran Week" during the week of Veterans Day each year.

Res. No. 272 – Supports staffing Local Veterans' Employment Representatives (LVERs) as required by law.

Res. No. 273 – Reaffirms support for Service Members Occupation Conversion and Training Act.

Res. No. 274 – Supports tax credits for employers who either pay regular salaries to employees called to active duty or who make up the difference between an employee's military pay and regular civilian salary.

Res. No. 275 – Supports recognition of military service and pay when calculating starting federal civilian salaries.

Res. No. 276 – Urges the president to enforce Veterans Preference in all federal agencies and urges Congress to conduct oversight investigations of all federal agencies to determine equitable application of Veterans Preference.

Res. No. 277 – Supports disabled veterans as priority under Americans with Disabilities Act.

Res. No. 278 – Supports job protection for service-connected veterans requiring visits to VA facilities.

Res. No. 279 – Urges state employment security agencies to report veterans' wages at placement.

Res. No. 280 – Seeks and supports legislation to allow military retirees entering federal service to credit all military service to accrual of annual leave.

Res. No. 281 – Urges Congress to amend the covered groups by removing the terms "Vietnam era" and "special disabled" and

replacing with "veteran" and "special emphasis on disabled veterans."

Res. No. 282 – Supports veterans hiring preference from employers with federal grants.

Res. No. 283 – Renews Legion commitment to assisting homeless veterans and their families through a variety of methods.

Res. No. 284 – Supports reimbursement for correspondence and distance learning courses.

Res. No. 285 – Petitions Congress to open up homestead privileges to U.S. military veterans on a priority basis.

Res. No. 286 – Supports job protection for service-connected disabled veterans requiring medical treatment or examinations at VA facilities.

Res. No. 288 – Supports the development of veterans' on-the-job training opportunities.

## Foreign Relations

Res. No. 1 – Supports bringing pressure to bear on North Korea to immediately cease its efforts to develop nuclear weapons, chemical and biological weapons and long-range ballistic missiles.

Res. No. 2 – Supports and encourages the continued sales of sophisticated American weapon systems to the armed forces of the Taiwan.

Res. No. 8 – Condemns the cowardly attacks on America by terrorists and urges the president to use any and all means necessary to determine who is responsible for the attacks on America and punish the perpetrators.

Res. No. 10 – Supports robust American diplomacy.

Res. No. 12 – Petitions for Japanese compensation and equity to American POWs.

Res. No. 33 – Urges the president and Congress to develop a comprehensive bipartisan U.S. policy that identifies the areas where the United States can make a difference in Africa.

Res. No. 93 – Urges the president and Congress to speak out to expedite the return of U.S. servicemen who are still prisoners of war or missing in action.

Res. No. 94 – Advocates that several objectives should be incorporated into U.S. foreign policy in order to maintain peace with freedom while preserving and promoting democracy.

Res. No. 95 – Urges the government to seek several reforms in the United Nations and to use American leverage to obtain the desired ends.

Res. No. 96 – Calls for comprehensive hearings to ascertain the influence that foreign governments and their agents have in the nation's capital, particularly in financial contributions to political campaigns.

Res. No. 98 – Supports legislation that would authorize the flying of the POW/MIA flag at federal facilities and installations, including post offices, every day of the year.

Res. No. 125 – Petitions Congress to fully investigate the circumstances surrounding the downing of Lt. Cmdr. Michael Scott Speicher and urges the government to insist upon his release from captivity or the repatriation of his remains.

## RESOLUTIONS FROM PAGE 9

Res. No. 120 – Supports current U.S. policy on Cuba.

Res. No. 122 – Supports policy on ending drug trafficking in Latin America.

Res. No. 123 – Supports current policy on aid to Central American nations.

Res. No. 180 – Urges the administration to ensure that pledges made by Vietnam are honestly fulfilled and that in the absence of fulfillment of these pledges, the Legion opposes any further economic and political steps to improve bilateral relations between the United States and Vietnam.

### Internal Affairs

Res. No. 4 – Supports National D-Day Museum exhibit.

Res. No. 113 – Encourages proper maintenance for memorials and monuments.

Res. No. 250 – Expresses appreciation to the host city of the 2002 National Convention.

Res. No. 251 – Supports amending tax-exempt status of posts.

Res. No. 252 – Supports legal immunity for volunteers.

Res. No. 253 – Supports awarding Medal of Freedom to Harry Colmery.

### National Security

Res. No. 56 – Urges notification of TRICARE for Life eligibility.

Res. No. 59 – Recognition of Merchant Marine Service.

Res. No. 60 – Supports upholding several national-security principles as fundamental to the best interests of the United States.

Res. No. 61 – Supports establishment of Department of Homeland Security and the war on terrorism.

Res. No. 63 – Supports a national missile defense system.

Res. No. 65 – Supports adequate funding and human resources for American Battle Monuments Commission.

Res. No. 66 – Urges government to include clearly defined principles as an integral part of its national security and foreign policy decision-making process when considering the commitment of U.S. military forces.

Res. No. 67 – Opposes foreign investments in American defense industries.

Res. No. 68 – Resolves to continue to closely monitor the progress of the Anthrax Vaccine Immunization Program.

Res. No. 69 – Urges that the DoD require commanders to institute proper protective measures for personnel working with or around depleted uranium munitions.

Res. No. 70 – Supports collegiate and high school ROTC programs.

Res. No. 71 – Supports retaining and expanding the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences.

Res. No. 72 – Urges support and funding of the Armed Forces Retirement Homes.

Res. No. 73 – Urges Congress to retain National Guard units at reasonable levels so that in addition to their active-duty missions they may continue to perform non-federal functions.

Res. No. 74 – Urges that several measures be considered by municipal, state and federal authorities for application to repeat youthful offenders, including more frequent charging of juveniles as adults.

Res. No. 75 – Supports the Second Amendment.

Res. No. 76 – Supports Firefighter of the Year Award Programs.

Res. No. 77 – Urges Congress and DoD to support and fund military quality-of-life features.

Res. No. 78 – Seeks concurrent receipt of military retired pay and VA disability compensation.

Res. No. 79 – Supports Selective Service System.

Res. No. 80 – Urges guidelines be incorporated into DoD health care for military beneficiaries.

Res. No. 81 – Supports DoD authorizing TRICARE eligibility for members of the Reserve components and their dependents.

Res. No. 82 – Supports coordination, not integration, of VA and DoD health services.

Res. No. 83 – Urges reforming the military absentee voting system.

Res. No. 84 – Urges codifying burial eligibility for Arlington National Cemetery.

Res. No. 85 – Urges Congress to mandate and appropriately fund DoD and military services, to include reimbursing the National Guard, so as to provide military honors upon request at veterans' funerals.

Res. No. 86 – Urges DoD and Congress to continue full federal funding of the military commissary system.

Res. No. 87 – Supports the exclusion of military women from direct ground combat roles, including special operations units as well as permanent assignment on submarines.

Res. No. 89 – Urges congressional hearings on the Uniformed Services Former Spouses Protection Act and supports the principle that spouses of military personnel have the right to adequate support.

Res. No. 90 – Supports the Korean Defense Service Medal.

Res. No. 91 – Supports retention of the Vieques Weapons Range.

Res. No. 92 – Supports funding to maintain readiness of the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps.

Res. No. 115 – Urges that all future Status of Forces Agreements negotiated, renegotiated, or revised with host countries should allow for the unimpeded use of all U.S. military facilities by retired U.S. military members and their dependents.

Res. No. 131 – Commends President George W. Bush for his steadfastness in pursuing the terrorist enemies of the United States in the war on terrorism.

Res. No. 149 – Supports naming next guided-missile destroyer the USS *Charles G. Abrel*.

Res. No. 162 – Supports the national space program.

Res. No. 163 – Supports aeronautical research.

Res. No. 164 – Urges the United States to maintain its hard-won status as the world leader in aeronautics and aircraft production and in space exploration and research.

Res. No. 197 – Petitions naming a ship the USS *American Legion*.

Res. No. 229 – Supports a strong national defense.

Res. No. 230 – Supports Total Force Policy and viable National Guard and Reserve Forces.

Res. No. 231 – Supports awarding a Cold War Victory Medal.

Res. No. 232 – Urges Congress and the administration to pursue further development of domestic sources of energy.

Res. No. 233 – Calls on the president and Congress to compel the Department of Energy to comply with the requirements of the Nuclear Waste Policy Act.

Res. No. 234 – Supports rebuilding America's defense industrial base.

Res. No. 289 – Urges Congress to appropri-

ately support the U.S. Air Force's commitments.

Res. No. 290 – Supports the Jones Maritime Act and Related Cabotage Laws.

Res. No. 291 – Supports the U.S. Coast Guard.

Res. No. 314 – Supports the retention of the U.S. Maritime Administration.

Res. No. 315 – Supports modernization of the U.S. Army.

Res. No. 316 – Urges Congress to act early and vigorously to stop the erosion of our vital maritime capability.

Res. No. 317 – Supports the transformation of the armed forces into a modern force capable of providing for the security of all Americans.

### Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

Res. No. 31 – Seeks legislation to pay accrued benefits in a pending claim to date the deceased veteran's claim was filed.

Res. No. 32 – Petitions for all veterans to receive "wartime" benefits for active military service between Feb. 28, 1961, and Aug. 5, 1964.

Res. No. 34 – Supports the establishment of amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) as a Gulf War presumptive disease.

Res. No. 35 – The American Legion policy on VA compensation.

Res. No. 36 – The American Legion policy on Agent Orange.

Res. No. 37 – Supports special pension for World War I veterans.

Res. No. 51 – Urges improvement in VA procedures for the issuance of Veterans Preference letters.

Res. No. 100 – Extends presumptive period for ALS to seven years.

Res. No. 102 – The American Legion policy on Gulf War veterans illness.

Res. No. 103 – Supports open-ended presumptive period for undiagnosed illnesses for Gulf War veterans.

Res. No. 133 – Seeks priority treatment for World War II veterans.

Res. No. 141 – Supports enacting additional components of the GI Bill of Health through the "GI Bill of Health – Medicare Reimbursement" and the "GI Bill of Health – Dependents in VA."

Res. No. 142 – Affirms a strong commitment and support for the mutually beneficial affiliations between the Veterans Health Administration and the medical schools of this nation.

Res. No. 143 – Restore and increase burial and plot allowance.

Res. No. 144 – Supports the establishment of additional national and state veterans cemeteries and columbaria wherever a need is apparent.

Res. No. 145 – Supports project "Shipboard Hazard and Defense."

Res. No. 146 – Urges amending Title 38, U.S. Code, to remove the specific date for the awarding of DIC benefits for surviving spouses of former POWs.

Res. No. 154 – Supports legislation to permit states to place supplemental guide signs relating to veterans national cemeteries on federal-aid highways.

Res. No. 159 – Supports VA benefits and services for eligible WWII veterans of the Philippine Commonwealth Army, Recognized Guerillas and New Philippine Scouts.

Res. No. 181 – Supports exempt VA benefits and services from pay-go provisions.

Res. No. 187 – Supports amending legislation regarding the Geographical Means Test.

Res. No. 191 – Opposes any initiative to establish a deductible for Priority Group 7 vet-

erans on a provision to receive VA health care.

Res. No. 193 – Allows veterans to retain \$90 of their compensation while in Medicaid-covered nursing homes.

Res. No. 194 – The American Legion policy on VA National Service Life Insurance.

Res. No. 195 – Supports providing Emergency Response Service for independent-living veterans.

Res. No. 196 – Supports increasing the amount of authorized per-diem payments (40 percent) for nursing home and domiciliary care provided to veterans in State Veterans Homes.

Res. No. 202 – Supports legislation to provide for periodic cost-of-living adjustments in DIC at the same percentage rate to both current-law and prior-law DIC recipients.

Res. No. 203 – Supports Medicare reimbursement for the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Res. No. 204 – Requests The American Legion be appointed to serve as a member on the CARES Commission to ensure that the implementation of CARES does not jeopardize VHA's ability to carry out its responsibilities as part of the government's response to disasters and national emergencies.

Res. No. 205 – Supports legislation to provide presumptive service connection for several conditions, including hepatitis or other infectious diseases of the liver, in the absence of demonstrable inter-current disease or injury.

Res. No. 206 – Urges that appropriate action is taken in support of legislation to amend title 10, U.S. Code, so as to eliminate all time limitations for the correction of military records.

Res. No. 207 – Supports providing full funding for VA construction program.

Res. No. 208 – Supports improving the disability and death pension program.

Res. No. 209 – Supports presumption of service connection for hepatitis C.

Res. No. 210 – Seeks legislation to eliminate the radiation dose estimate requirement in claims of veterans who were exposed to ionizing radiation during their military service.

Res. No. 211 – Supports legislation to restore entitlement to service connection for disability or death related to veteran use of tobacco products during the period of active military service from June 9, 1998, the date of the enactment of Public Law 105-178, the "Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century."

Res. No. 214 – Seeks legislation to plainly identify and further clarify "service in the Republic of Vietnam beginning Jan. 9, 1962, and ending May 7, 1975" to include those who served in the territorial waters offshore.

Res. No. 221 – Requests Congress provide adequate funding for medical and prosthetic research activities.

Res. No. 222 – Supports the automatic waiver of VBA debts of \$250 or less.

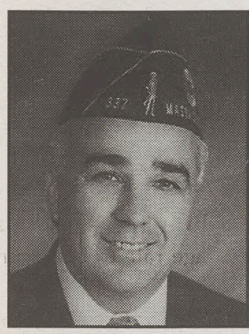
Res. No. 223 – Supports protecting disability rating after 10 years.

Res. No. 318 – Urges that The American Legion, The American Legion Auxiliary and Sons of The American Legion become actively involved in the CARES process at the local, VISN and national level and formally requests that The American Legion have representation on the CARES Commission.

Res. No. 319 – Urges that Congress designate VA medical care as mandatory spending and urges Congress to continue to provide discretionary funding required to fully operate other programs within VHA's budgetary jurisdiction.

# Mandatory funding for VA medical care eyed

**T**imely access to quality health care continues to be a struggle for veterans seeking care through the Department of Veterans Affairs. VA estimates 4.9 million unique patients in fiscal 2003, vs. the 3.7 million veterans projected only one year ago



**Paul A. Morin**

for fiscal 2002 – a 31.5-percent increase overall. Continued budgetary shortfalls, combined with rising medical-care costs and increased demand for care, have resulted in unprecedented waiting times. More than 300,000 veterans currently are waiting for medical appointments, half of which are waiting six months or longer for an appointment. The system simply is not equipped to handle this kind of workload at current funding levels. As more and more veterans turn to VA for their

health care, the need for adequate funding is becoming increasingly important.

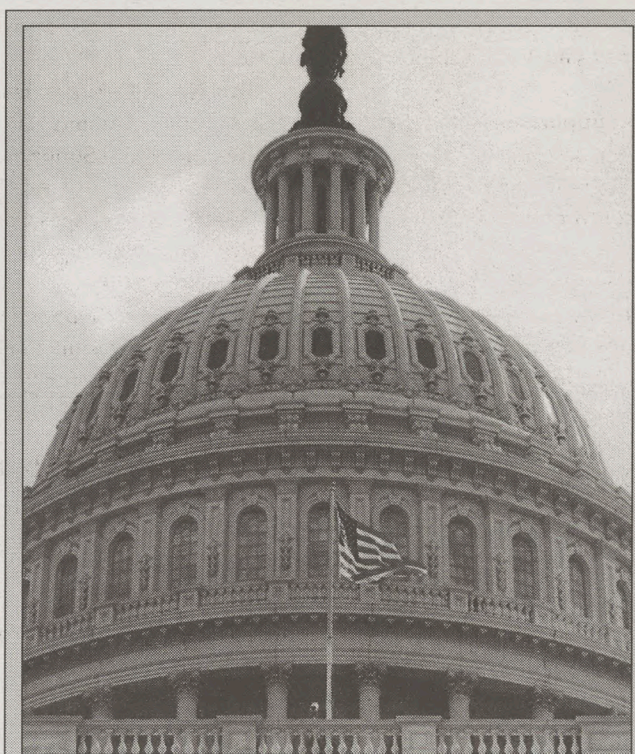
On July 26, House Veterans' Affairs Committee Chairman Chris Smith, R-N.J., introduced H.R. 5250, while Sen. Tim Johnson, D-S.D., introduced a companion measure, S. 2903, on Sept. 5. Both measures carry the title "Veterans Health-Care Funding Guarantee Act of 2002." This legislation would change VA health care from discretionary spending to mandatory spending.

Currently, veterans' benefits administered by the Veterans Benefits Administration, which include VA disability compensation, pensions and home loans, are scored as mandatory funding by the federal government. In other words, a set formula is used to determine the amount of money needed for these programs. Under the rules of discretionary spending, the VA health-care budget competes with other agencies and programs for federal dollars each year. The funding requirements of health care for service-disabled veterans are not guaranteed under discretionary spending. Under mandatory spending, however, VA health care will be provided funding by law for all enrollees who meet the eligibility requirements. Making funding for veterans' health care mandatory spending would guarantee yearly appropriations for the earned health-care entitlement of veterans.

Under the terms of H.R. 5250 and S. 2903, several things would occur. First, a base funding year would be established. Under these measures, that year would be fiscal 2002. Second, VA would receive 120 percent of the amount enacted for fiscal 2002 for medical-care funding. VA received \$21.3 billion for medical care in fiscal 2002. Therefore VA health care would be allocated \$25.6 billion for fiscal 2004. Third, in each fiscal year after 2004, the funding amount provided will be adjusted based on the total number of enrolled veterans and the number of others eligible for and provided care and the percentage increase in the Consumer Price Index.

Year after year, federal funding has failed to keep pace with medical-care inflation and the mounting financial burden for veterans' health care caused by rising costs and increased demand for medical services. The effect has been to severely hamper, or to outright deny, timely access to quality health care for this country's sick and disabled veterans.

The American Legion believes it is disingenuous for the federal government to promise health care to veterans and then make it unattainable because of inadequate funding. Rationed health care is no way to honor America's obligation to the brave men and women who have, and continue to, unselfishly put the nation's priorities before their own personal needs. Mandatory funding for VA health care will help ensure timely access to quality health care for



**Dateline: Capitol Hill**

America's veterans.

During its 84th National Convention at Charlotte, N.C. in August, The American Legion passed Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Res. No. 319. This resolution states the organization's support for designating VA medical-care funding as mandatory spending. The resolutions also asked that Congress continue providing discretionary funding to other VA accounts and to provide supplemental funding when necessary. All members of the Legion family should contact their lawmakers and urge them to support and cosponsor H.R. 5250 in the House and S. 2903 in the Senate.

***"The system simply is not equipped to handle this kind of workload at current funding levels. As more and more veterans turn to VA for their health care, the need for adequate funding is becoming increasingly important."***

## Concurrent receipt update

A House-Senate conference committee is still meeting to reconcile differences in the competing versions of H.R. 4546, the fiscal 2003 Department of Defense authorization bill. One of the major sticking points is the language addressing concurrent receipt. Bush administration officials have recommended that the president veto any bill that contains concurrent receipt language in any form.

The two versions of H.R. 4546 contain differing approaches to concurrent receipt. By current law, service-connected disabled military retirees must subtract the amount of VA disability compensation from their retired pay. Under the provisions of the House bill, there would be an annual percentage increase in the adjusted amount of retired pay that disabled military retirees currently receive. The amount of the retired pay would be adjusted each of the next five fiscal years, with a 30-percent increase authorized in 2003, increasing to 45 percent in 2004, to 60 percent in 2005, to 80 percent in 2006 and finally to 100 percent in 2007.

Under the House version, concurrent receipt would be applied to those service-connected disabled

retirees with a VA disability rating of 60 percent or higher.

However, under the Senate provisions, all disabled military retirees would receive both their military retired pay and their VA disability compensation without deductions. This would affect about 550,000 disabled veterans in this country. The Senate version would go into effect Oct. 1.

Public Law 107-107, the fiscal 2002 DoD authorization bill passed last year, supported the concept of concurrent receipt but authorized no funding for it. Concurrent receipt would become effective only after the president proposed legislation in the annual budget request and Congress enacted that legislation to expressly offset the costs of this initiative. The Legion strongly supports the Senate version of concurrent receipt.

For too many years, service-connected disabled retirees have been the victims of a government that does not wish to give them all that they have earned. Simple fairness should motivate the federal government to allow these former servicemembers to receive their retired pay and VA disability compensation without deduction from either.

## Fiscal 2002 VA supplemental funding update

Enacted on Aug. 2, PL 107-206, the fiscal 2002 emergency supplemental spending measure, contains \$417 million for VA's medical-care account. However, on Aug. 13 Bush announced that he would not spend \$275 million of the \$417 million approved by Congress in PL 107-206.

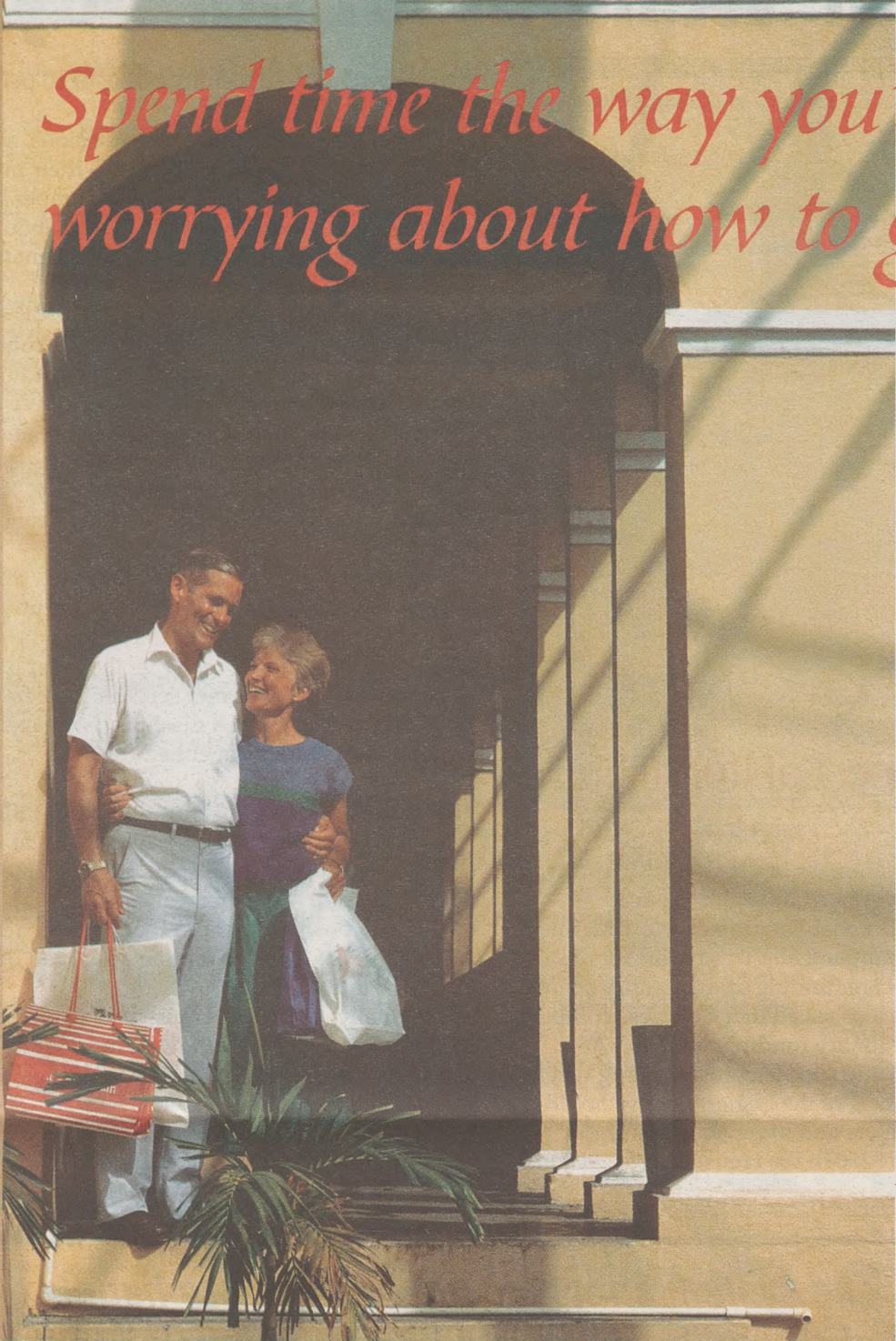
Originally, the White House had requested only \$142 million in order to allow VA to continue to enroll Priority Group 7 veterans in the health-care system, and that amount will be allocated. However, the additional \$275 million mentioned above will not. These funds were added by Congress after the administration made its original request and were

designated as emergency funds. VA had re-estimated its patient workload and available resources for the remainder of the fiscal year, which ends Sept. 30, and determined that the department would need additional funds greater than the \$142 million originally requested.

The Legion is gravely concerned with this turn of events. The president had until Sept. 1 to use the extra funding. Now the only way in which the additional \$275 million will be available before the end of fiscal 2002 is for another supplemental funding bill to be introduced and passed by Congress and signed by the president. The chances of this happening are remote.

In the past, Bush has made many statements about how this country needs to take care of its veterans. His actions on P.L. 107-206 seem to contradict those pronouncements. More veterans are signing up for VA health care every day, and withholding this vitally needed funding will exacerbate VA's already-overworked systems. This country's veterans need VA, and VA needs this funding.

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



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