In his opening speech before the National Executive Committee, American Legion National Commander Paul A. Morin emphasizes the organization's four pillars: taking care of veterans, national security, mentoring youth and promoting patriotism.

Spring meetings guided by the four pillars of The American Legion.

By Steve Brooks

In 1919, veterans of World War I formed The American Legion out of a mutual desire to take care of their own, support a strong national defense, instill patriotism in others, and to provide for the children of the United States. All of these beliefs – the “four pillars” of The American Legion – were touched on during the National Executive Committee’s Spring Meetings in Indianapolis on May 9-10.

During the meetings, the NEC passed Resolution 1, which authorizes The American Legion to file a lawsuit against the Department of Veterans Affairs to compel action on pending claims for VA benefits. It calls for The American Legion “to take all steps necessary to ensure that the Department of Veterans Affairs meets its statutory obligations and responsibilities to individuals pursuing claims for VA benefits.” If those efforts prove unsuccessful, the NEC has given the Legion permission to file a lawsuit to conclude more than 797,000 pending claims and appeals facing VA.

“It’s time for what we’ve always done within The American Legion, and that is to give our organization – if necessary,
COMMANDER’S MESSAGE

Respect Memorial Day

Here’s a surprise: I am not going to defend the Iraq war. I won’t even explain the importance of the war on terrorism. VA budget? Not today. That’s because this column is about Memorial Day, a hallowed day that should be about honoring the more than 1 million men and women who died in the service of this nation in wars and conflicts dating to 1775. This should be above politics, period.

Yet one presidential candidate has blatantly violated the sanctity of this most special day. I recently received an e-mail from the Web site www.supportthetroopsandthetwar.com. It included a video of former Sen. John Edwards, who calls on Americans to use Memorial Day weekend as a time to “bring an end to this war.” Shockingly, the video is titled “A Memorial Day Message from John Edwards,” with the smoking-gun note, “Paid for by John Edwards for President.” Moreover, the e-mail urges Americans to attend local Memorial Day parades with signs saying “Support the Troops, End the War.” Revolting is a kind word for it. It’s as inappropriate as a political bumper sticker on an Arlington headstone.

Edwards is hardly the first politician from either political party to exploit Memorial Day, a holiday consecrated with the blood of American heroes. But the e-mail makes me sick nonetheless. It needs to stop. This isn’t about Edwards; it’s about everybody. As national commander of The American Legion, I implore all candidates to refrain from politicizing on Memorial Day.

The families of those killed in war should not be led to believe that their loved ones died for a less-than-worthy cause. They died because they took an oath to defend this nation and its Constitution. The sacrifice is the same whether it’s for a “popular war” or an unpopular one. Memorial Day should be an occasion to bring Americans together to honor these heroes.

It brings to mind the words of Army Sgt. First Class Jack Robison, who recently wrote from Iraq. “Sometimes I think God must be creating an elite unit in heaven, because He only seems to select the very best soldiers to bring home early.”

If you want to honor these heroes, visit a veterans cemetery on Memorial Day. Attend a parade without divisive political signs. Make cards for the comrades of the fallen who are recuperating in military and VA hospitals. Lay a wreath at the stone of a departed hero.

Americans need to remember why Memorial Day is special. It’s not about picnics or trips to the beach. It’s not about making pro-war or antiwar statements. It’s not about supporting political candidates. It’s about honor, duty and the ultimate sacrifice. It’s about people who decided that the United States is worth dying for.

Paul A. Merlin
National Commander

Dispatch

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In submitting your information, include your full name, address and telephone number. Send your items, labeled Still Serving America, to the correspondence address at left.

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Activating...
NATIONAL ADJUTANT’S MESSAGE

‘Helping people is what we’re all about’

By Robert W. Spanogle

Even at 74, Legionnaire Albert G. “Buddy” Campbell thinks of himself as much younger and operates with the energy of a man 20 to 30 years his junior. And not much gives him more pleasure than devoting that energy to his fellow veterans.

A member of Post 183 in Sneedville, Tenn., Campbell has served as post commander for the past five years. During that time, he’s collected thousands of comfort items and delivered them to veterans homes in the surrounding areas.

“Buddy has a 93- or 94-year-old mother who he takes care of, and he spends most of his other time volunteering for The American Legion,” says Misty Rosenfeld, Post 183 adjutant, historian and public-relations chairman. “He’s constantly in the middle of something.”

Belonging to a family that fought in World War II, Campbell served more than 20 years in the U.S. Army. He considers his current volunteer work simply an extension of his military career.

“It was about service then and is about service now,” Campbell says. “I know that when you are down and out you really appreciate when someone does something for you. I know I did, and that’s why I do what I do.”

One of his projects in the past three years has been to provide more than 600 full-size and comfort blankets to patients at the Mountain Home, Tenn., VA Medical Center. “They weren’t getting everything they needed, so I wanted to make sure they were.”

Campbell didn’t stop there. He delivered more than 300 blankets to VA’s Alvin C. York Medical Center in Murfreesboro, and hundreds of T-shirts to patients at VA centers in Nashville and Knoxville. In addition, Campbell personally delivered 1,400 T-shirts and 780 robes, along with videos, computers, printers and various other items, to Mountain Home. Then there were the 400 rolls of fabric for blankets being sewn by the women of Post 183, donated by a manufacturer who planned to discard the material. “Normally they would have thrown it away,” he says. “But they gave it to us because of how we were going to use it.”

Campbell played a key role in getting a memorial built to honor U.S. servicemembers from his community who had made the supreme sacrifice in war. Veterans from World War I, World War II, the Korean War and Vietnam will have their names etched on the monument, and space is reserved for those serving in Afghanistan and Iraq.

“The monument and its dedication are once again taking place through the efforts and drive of Commander Campbell,” Rosenfeld says. For his efforts, First Vice Commander Larry Cordiron of Post 183 honored Campbell last month with a plaque and certificate of appreciation. He also has been named Post Commander of the Year in Tennessee’s First District. Still, Campbell insists that he doesn’t do what he does for recognition.

“I think it’s my obligation to get things like this started,” he said. “Helping people is what we’re all about. I have the time, so why shouldn’t I try to help? We’re just doing what we can.”

When we’re tempted to think that one person can’t possibly make a difference, think about “Buddy” Campbell. In just three years, he’s made a difference in the lives of hundreds of veterans, and he continues to do so – a model of this organization’s devotion to helpfulness.

THE ARTS

GI Film Festival nears

Washington will host the first annual GI Film Festival on Memorial Day weekend, featuring classic and first-run films from international and domestic filmmakers that celebrate the heroic stories of the U.S. Armed Forces and their worldwide struggle for freedom and liberty. The three-day festival will run at the Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center from May 26-28.

The American Legion plans to staff a booth at the GI Film Festival. The event is open to the public. For more information about the inaugural GI Film Festival, go online to www.gifilmfestival.com.

American Legion family members have been asked to vote for the film that best exemplifies the spirit of U.S. fighting men and women. Voting is now closed, but the winner will be announced at the GI Film Festival. Results will also be published in The American Legion Magazine and on the World Wide Web at www.legion.org.

Tennessee hosts first national gathering

American Legion Riders will roll into Nashville, Tenn., for the first National Romp from July 5-8. The event will be hosted by American Legion Post 88.

Scheduled activities include music, tours, contests, trophies and a timed ride through Music City. Post 88 offers meals, entertainment and five acres of free camping. Ten hotels are within a few minutes’ walk.

REGISTRATION INFORMATION

www.post88riders.com

hwg@greersystems.com

Alliance from Page 1

anyone that a war memorial isn’t merely a rock in a park. It’s a tribute to sacrifice, a testament to the belief that what has made the United States is worth fighting – even dying – for. An attack on America’s memorials is an attack on our freedom to honor those who gave up their lives in our defense.

Legionnaires are asked to locate, identify and report veterans memorials throughout the United States. The information will be cataloged so that a rapid-response legal team supplied by the Alliance Defense Fund and the Liberty Legal Institute can immediately handle any attempts to remove, alter or destroy these monuments.
American Legion calls on Congress to reject immigration legislation

The American Legion is calling on Congress to reject proposed legislation that would grant fast-track citizenship to the 12 million to 20 million individuals who are in the United States illegally. The American Legion advocates aggressive enforcement of immigration laws and stronger border security as a means to reduce the illegal population in the country. During the Spring Meetings in Indianapolis, the National Executive Committee outlined a five-point strategy to address illegal immigration, including:

■ Securing the borders and coastline points of entry;
■ Employing U.S. military resources along the U.S.-Mexico border, with a sufficient number of Defense surveillance equipment should be authorized for use in border-security operations.
■ Build fences or other barriers in certain high-traffic areas, to be feasible to build a fence the entire length of the southern border with Mexico, but fencing is recommended for high-traffic areas.
■ Build or acquire sufficient detention bed space at border locations.
■ Authorize and encourage law-enforcement agencies at all levels to cooperate by entering and sharing database information on individuals considered to be a threat to our nation’s security. Additionally, such agencies should be further authorized and encouraged to arrest and detain individuals, including illegal aliens, who are suspected of violating the immigration laws of the United States.

2. Eliminate the jobs magnet and social-services benefits for illegals.

The second step in immigration reform is the elimination or reduction of employment opportunities for illegal immigrants in the United States. If the number of available jobs is reduced, there will be less incentive for illegals to remain in the country. Native workers are available to work in most jobs currently held by illegal workers, if they are provided a decent wage.

■ Promoting a strategy of attrition through enforcement and
■ Effectively screening and tracking foreign visitors in the United States.

“We are not against legal immigration and never have been,” American Legion National Commander Paul A. Morin said. “It is what made this country what it is today, and no one can dispute that. But the system is broken and needs fixing, and the solutions being tossed around by some members of Congress are not in the best interest of this country.”

The failure of federal authorities to enforce U.S. immigration laws has unwittingly invited a criminal element into American society. Gangs of illegal immigrants operate in most, if not all, major U.S. cities. Human- and drug-smuggling operations are prevalent along the nation’s southern border.

Further, document fraud and identity theft are rampant among the illegal population. And throughout the country, prisons are overcrowded or full, with about 30 percent of men and women incarcerated being illegal immigrants.

The American Legion does not believe the solution to the illegal immigration problem is to legalize illegal aliens, Morin said.

“Rewarding illegal behavior sets a dangerous precedent and only encourages more to ignore our country’s laws,” he said. “It swells our population, puts an undue burden on American taxpayers and presents a significant national security risk.”

The American Legion’s proposal for U.S. immigration reform

1. Secure U.S. borders and other points of entry.

There can be no effective immigration reform without first securing the borders and coastline boundaries of this country. When the United States demonstrates that it has control of its borders, then and only then should Congress consider guest-worker or temporary-worker initiatives.

Securing the borders and coastlines will require additional frontline Border Patrol agents; the newest surveillance technology, fences or barriers in some locales; support from U.S. military units, and a commitment of cooperation from federal, state and local governments. A plan, including legislation for implementation, will not work without funding or enforcement. A painful lesson learned from the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA) amnesty when legalization occurred without securing the borders. The result was a stampede of illegals across our borders to take advantage of the U.S. government’s benevolence.

In a recent five-month period, U.S. Border Patrol agents detained 46,038 non-Mexicans entering along the U.S.-Mexico border, up 12 percent from the 40,953 caught during the same period the previous year. And according to Denver Post article, non-Mexican migrants detained from 2002 to 2004 - the last years from which data is available - included Pakistanis (113), Egyptians (41), Jordanians (55), Iraqis (39), Yugoslavians (13) and Saudis (13).

The American Legion proposes that Congress take the following actions:
■ Hire and train a sufficient number of U.S. Border Patrol agents to meet assigned objectives. It is The American Legion’s position that employment preference be afforded to former members of the U.S. Armed Forces.
■ Utilize the latest technology to monitor border activity and search cargo containers, both on the borders and at our nation’s seaports.
■ Employ U.S. military resources along the borders, whereby units can train in a real-world scenario, in support of the U.S. Border Patrol and local law-enforcement agencies. Department of Defense surveillance equipment should be authorized for use in border-security operations.
■ Build fences or other barriers in certain locales along the border to impede easy access to the United States. It may not be feasible to build a fence the entire length of the southern border with Mexico, but fencing is recommended for high-traffic areas.
■ Build or acquire sufficient detention bed space at border locations.
■ Authorize and encourage law-enforcement agencies at all levels to cooperate by entering and sharing database information on individuals considered to be a threat to our nation’s security. Additionally, such agencies should be further authorized and encouraged to arrest and detain individuals, including illegal aliens, who are suspected of violating the immigration laws of the United States.

2. Eliminate the jobs magnet and social-services benefits for illegals.

The second step in immigration reform is the elimination or reduction of employment opportunities for illegal immigrants in the United States. If the number of available jobs is reduced, there will be less incentive for illegals to remain in this country.

Native workers are available to work in most jobs currently held by illegal workers, if they are provided a decent wage.

The American Legion supports mandatory eligibility verification of all employees and calls upon the federal government to require the Department of Homeland Security and the Social Security Administration to develop a system providing electronic verification of work eligibility and an annual re-verification of aliens.

Employer sanctions put into place following the 1986 amnesty programs were not enforced, a principal reason for the current immigration crisis. The American Legion supports enforcement of immigrant hiring laws and advocates significant civil penalties for employers who knowingly hire illegal workers. The law is clear on the subject.

In simple language, it is unlawful to hire, recruit or refer an alien knowing the alien is not authorized to work in the United States. It is also unlawful to continue to employ an alien if it is known by the employer that the alien is not authorized to work.

Further, it is also illegal for nonprofit or religious organizations to knowingly assist an employer in violating employment-sanctions, regardless of any claims that their religious convictions require them to assist illegal aliens. Harboring or aiding illegal aliens is not protected under the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

The American Legion has long held the position that all legal aliens should be required to carry U.S. government-issued identification documents that are made as secure as technology allows and that are verifiable by any employer or benefit agency through an easy-to-access central database.

Other positions include restricting the eligibility of illegal aliens for certain forms of publicly funded assistance and educational benefits.

3. Do not grant amnesty to illegal immigrants.

The American Legion is opposed to any policy that would give illegal immigrants legal permission to remain in the United States, whether such a policy is referred to as "legalization," "regularization," "a guest-worker program," "earned-status adjustment" or "earned access."

For more than 200 years, the United States has only granted amnesty in individual cases and never once provided a blanket amnesty to large numbers of aliens.

Then, in 1986, Congress passed the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) which legalized all illegal aliens who met certain criteria and resulting in 2.8 million illegal aliens being admitted as legal immigrants. This was supposed to be a one-time-only amnesty, but six more followed:
■ Section 245(i), The Amnesty of 1994 – a
American Legion is included in this problem by simply granting amnesty and a realistic option. However, deportation of workers. 

4. Reduce the number of illegals in the United States.

The resolution calls upon The American Legion to work with CIS to obtain congressional approval and national acceptance of a plan that includes the following objectives:

- Mandatory workplace verification of immigration status.
- Measures to curtail misuse of Social Security numbers and IRS identification numbers.
- Cooperation between federal, state and local law enforcement officials.
- Increased screening of foreign visitors.
- Increased non-criminal removals as part of increased interior enforcement.
- Discourage illegal settlement by adopting additional state and local legislation.

Included in the CIS plan are the following findings, several of which echo previous positions of The American Legion:

- A strategy of attrition through enforcement could reduce the illegal population by as many as 1.5 million illegal aliens each year. Currently, only about 183,000 illegal aliens per year depart without the intervention of immigration officials, according to Department of Homeland Security statistics.
- Voluntary compliance works faster and is cheaper than a borders-only approach to immigration law enforcement.

5. Effectively screen and track all foreign visitors.

Most illegal immigrants in the United States enter by legal means and then overstay their visas or other entrance documents. Such was the case of several of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorists who came into the country via legal means and then dropped off the government’s radar until they flew airplanes into the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and a Pennsylvania farm field, killing nearly 3,000 people.

Historically, it has been, for the most part, those who exploit weaknesses in this country’s legal immigration system who commit acts of terrorism in the United States. That includes several men involved in the first World Trade Center attack, conspirators in plots to bomb the New York subway system, and a plot to destroy New York City landmarks.

The American Legion supports comprehensive screening and background checks on all foreign visitors, as well as a means to track their whereabouts and monitor their intentions while they are in the United States. Turning them loose in our society, as has often been the case in the past, is not in the best interest of our national security.

In 2006, delegates at the American Legion’s 88th National Convention in Salt Lake City approved a resolution to urge Congress to reform the non-immigrant visa program to establish numerical limits, especially for temporary workers. Non-immigrant visas are issued to foreign nationals who come to the United States for a specific period of time for reasons that include study, employment and tourism.

Non-immigrant visas are issued by the State Department. Visitors from 27 countries can enter on a “visa waiver,” meaning their entry into the country does not require an application. That alone is reason to question the NTV program, especially because of the thousands who annually exceed their authorized time in the country and remain as illegal immigrants.

The Diversity Visa Lottery is a program that should be eliminated, especially now, when the United States is challenged with both an increasing illegal population and the threat of terrorism. The program issues 50,000 immigrant visas each year to people who supposedly came from countries with low rates of immigration to the United States.

A computer randomly selects winners from the list of applicants. Winners are able to file for permanent residency and can bring a spouse and unmarried children younger than 21.

Mark Krikorian of the Center for Immigration Studies, testifying before the U.S. House of Representatives Subcommittee on Immigration, Border Security and Claims in June 2005, said, “It’s long past time to get rid of the lottery.” His research indicates that the nation’s total immigrant population - legal and illegal - has actually become less diverse during the course of the lottery program.

Citizenship, permanent residency or just admission into the United States should not be decided by “luck of the draw.” The State Department should compile a thorough background check and, prior to issuing a visa, interview each candidate seeking admittance into the United States. It should also be the State Department’s responsibility to track and, if necessary, arrange for the apprehension of visa recipients who perpetrate fraud and/or overstay their visas. It would be the responsibility of the Department of Homeland Security to then initiate removal/deportation processing.

It is estimated that up to 40 percent of illegal aliens, or more than 4 million people, entered the United States legally but did not leave when their authorized time in country expired.

To obtain a PDF version of The American Legion’s policy paper for immigration reform, visit www.legion.org online.
On behalf of the 800,000 veterans who have claims pending – (the authority to) file suit against VA if that’s the avenue we have to take on behalf of those veterans,” National Commander Paul A. Morin said. “We are hurting our fellow veterans if we don’t stand up for them.”

Morin also called for Medicare reimbursement for veterans who use Medicare at VA health-care facilities, and for mandatory funding for VA health care. “Since 1996, we have not seen a budget passed on time for VA,” he said. “People will lead you to believe they’ve passed a budget for this fiscal year. That’s not true. It is a continuing resolution. That means they continue to operate under 2006 funding. Show me any medical center in America that can continue to operate under the same amount of money from the previous year. Mandatory funding needs to happen. We owe it to those veterans who cannot speak for themselves to make that happen.”

The NEC and Morin also pledged to continue lobbying for full funding for a VA health-care system open to all veterans.

“Mandatory funding needs to happen,” Morin told the NEC. “We owe it to those veterans who cannot speak for themselves to see that happen. A veteran is a veteran, and VA must be open to serve all veterans, because every veteran deserves the best health care that America has to offer.”

Addressing two other pillars of The American Legion, Morin asked Legionnaires to continue their involvement in the organization’s many youth programs and to continue to push Congress for a constitutional amendment that would allow Congress to prohibit desecration of the U.S. Flag. “We’ve never walked away from a child, and we will never will. (And) we are an organization that has never walked away from a battle, and we will never walk away from the greatest symbol of America – our flag,” he said. “We’re not going away until (the amendment) is passed.”

A defense authorization bill that will provide the necessary funding to win the war in Iraq also was on the mind of Morin and the NEC.

“We’re at a challenging time for a strong national defense. It is incumbent upon each and every one of you, as leaders of our great organization, to make those phone calls because we owe those men and women serving the right equipment... the right amount of troops to do the job that needs to be done in fighting this war on terrorism,” Morin said. “We need to see a funding bill passed without any strings attached, without any pork barrel. Who in their right mind gives the enemy their time of withdrawal?”

Morin reiterated that The American Legion is, and always has been, in favor of legal immigration into the United States. “We are not against legal immigration and never have been,” he said. “It is what made this country what it is today, and no one can dispute that. But the system is broken, and it needs fixing, and the solutions being tossed around by some members of Congress are not in the best interest of this country.”

Retired Army Maj. Gen. Patrick H. Brady, board chairman of the Citizens Flag Alliance, told the NEC that while tactics may change, the goal of passing an amendment giving Congress the power to protect the U.S. Flag remains.

“We missed by one vote (in the 109th Congress), and the debate was turning in our favor,” said Brady, a Medal of Honor recipient. “For the first time, people in Congress were using our arguments.” Rep. John Murtha, D-Pa., has introduced the amendment, H.J. Res. 12, in the 110th Congress and “did so without any prompting from us,” Brady said. He said that while the amendment is likely seven votes short in the House and four short in the Senate, support for the amendment in Congress stands at 66 percent – more than for any other issue currently before it.

“For the first time, we’re meeting with Democrats who control the entire Congress,” Brady said. “In the past, it’s been the Democrats who’ve stopped the amendment, and all the losses were under a Republican Congress. It would be a great coup for the Democrats if they could get it passed before the 2008 elections.”

Speaking from Experience. Retired U.S. Army Lt. Col. Ralph Peters didn’t pull any punches when he spoke of the war against terrorism, the political process in the United States and the problem with illegal immigration.

“One of my greatest frustrations I face in Washington-
ton is just can't convince people that we are facing religious fanatics," said Peters, a former intelligence officer and the author of 21 books. "There are some human beings who have to be killed. That's a harsh thing to say, but it's true. I don't think Osama bin Laden can be rehabilitated. The hard-core terrorists we face are true fanatics, and it changes the rules of war. You can't apply Geneva Convention rules 100 percent with the enemies we face today."

If the United States engages in a war, Peters continued, it needs to do so with one clear goal: winning. "We all know that war should be the last resort. But when we go to war, let's try to be on the right side of history. Our troops deserve that. Victory is always possible if you have the courage, the determination, the fortitude, the strength and the will. Our soldiers, Marines, sailors, airmen and Coast Guard — they have that. Our leaders do not."

Support for the Support Unit. Representatives of Freedom Team Salute briefed the NEC on their program, which offers all Army soldiers — active duty, reservists and National Guardmen — the opportunity to recognize parents, spouses and employers for the support they provide U.S. soldiers serving on missions throughout the world. The program also honors veterans for their previous service with a Freedom Team Salute commemorative package. The “people who serve in the military do sacrifice, and it’s important they be recognized for that in a meaningful way,” said John McLaurin, deputy assistant secretary of the Army. "More than 900,000 recognitions have gone out, and we could reach a million by July 4. But it’s not as much as we could do and as much as we’d like to do."

For more information or to register for a commemoration package, visit www.freedomteamsalute.army.mil.

In other business:

- Through various donations throughout the meetings, the NEC helped raise $62,839.55 for the National Emergency Fund, $4,500 for the Child Welfare Foundation, $4,490 for the American Legacy Fund.
- Past National Commander John P. “Jake” Comer thanked Past National Commander Clarence M. Bacon for Bacon's role in keeping Comer abreast of a family member injured in Iraq who received care in Bacon's home state of Maryland at the Bethesda National Naval Medical Center. Comer was able to relay the information supplied by Bacon to the parents of the injured servicemember, who live in Ireland.
- American Legion Auxiliary National President JoAnn Crossin presented Morin with four $10,000 checks, one each for the Child Welfare Foundation, the Children & Youth Fund, the CFA and the Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Fund.
- Department of Utah National Executive Committee—man William E. Christofferson, president of the 2006 National Convention Corp. of Utah, presented Morin with a check for $47,352.76—half the profits from the 2006 National Convention in Salt Lake City. The NEC also approved Indianapolis as the host city for the 2012 National Convention.

RESOLUTIONS OF THE 2007 SPRING MEETINGS

The following are summaries of key resolutions passed at the National Executive Committee’s 2007 Spring Meetings in Indianapolis. For the full text, contact the Legion Library at (317) 630-1366; e-mail Leglibrary@legion.org or visit www.legion.org. Send a written request for a booklet of all approved resolutions to The Library, The American Legion, P.O. Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206.

AMERICANISM

- 4 American Legion Baseball World Series to be played in National Convention cities when feasible.
- 22 Changes the name of The American Legion National High School Oratorical Contest to The American Legion High School Oratorical Scholarship Program — “A Constitutional Speech Contest”
- 23 Strategy to address illegal immigration
- 29 Enters into a three-year agreement, effective in 2007, with the University of Northwestern Ohio to establish The University of Northwestern Ohio American Legion KIA/MIA Scholarship

ECONOMICS

- 13 Supports amending federal financial college aid means tests to make exempt recently separated veterans’ prior-year income
- 14 Calls for mandatory funding for the Department of Housing and Urban Development’s Veterans Supportive Housing Homeless Program
- 15 Supports improvements to Veterans Employment and Training Service training standards

NATIONAL SECURITY

- 16 Authorizes The American Legion to become an affiliate of the U.S. Army Combate-Related Special Compensation program
- 17 Urges the Department of Defense to continually evaluate the Anthrax Vaccine Immunization Program
- 18 Urges the Secretary of the Army to comply with the fiscal 2006 Basic Law/National Defense Authorization Act regarding the placement of the Baker’s Creek Marker and fully consider it for placement in the Arlington National Cemetery
- 19 Calls for increasing the end strengths and readiness of the armed forces
- 20 Urges Congress and the Department of Defense and Military Services to review awarding the Purple Heart for traumatic brain injuries

VETERANS AFFAIRS & REHABILITATION

- 1 Authorizes The American Legion to file lawsuits against the Department of Veterans Affairs to compel action on pending claims for VA benefits
- 24 Support for the Missing in America Project
- 25 Expands the VA Volunteer Services program to include designated Heroes to Hometowns volunteer coordinators at VA medical centers
- 26 Supports funding for communal service shelters through state cemetery grants program
- 27 Supports legislation to remove the ban on the payment of dependency and indemnity compensation benefits to surviving spouses who remarry after age 55

American Legion family eligibility requirements

THE AMERICAN LEGION


Those who have left the service must have received an honorable discharge. Membership also is open to those who were citizens of the United States at the time of their entry into foreign armed forces that served with the United States during any of these periods. Service must have been terminated with an honorable discharge or honorable separation.

AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY

All women who are eligible for membership in the Auxiliary fall into one of these categories: 1. The mothers, wives, daughters, sisters, granddaughters, great-granddaughters and great-grandchildren of members of The American Legion.

2. The mothers, wives, daughters, sisters, granddaughters, great-granddaughters and great-grandchildren of those who served in the U.S. Armed Forces during any of the eligibility periods listed and who died in the line of duty during such service, or who, having received an honorable discharge, died after such service.

3. The mothers, wives, daughters, sisters, granddaughters, great-granddaughters and great-grandchildren of those who were citizens of the United States and who served during any of the eligibility periods in the armed forces of any of the governments who were allies of the United States and who died in the line of duty during such service, or who, having received an honorable discharge, died after such service.

4. Women who are eligible for membership in The American Legion in their own right. Eligibility includes step-relatives.

SONS OF THE AMERICAN LEGION

An eligible member must be a male descendant or stepson of a member of The American Legion. Others eligible to join are:

1. Male descendants, stepsons included, of any veteran who died in service during World War I, World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, Lebanon, Grenada, Panama or the Persian Gulf War. See specific time periods for service during these conflicts.

2. Male descendants and stepsons of a veteran who died subsequent to his or her honorable discharge from service in World War I, World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, Lebanon, Grenada, Panama or the Persian Gulf War. The same eligibility periods apply.
Secretary of Veterans Affairs R. James Nicholson has announced the formation of a formal, 17-person committee – including John Sommer, executive director of The American Legion's Washington office – that will advise him on ways to improve VA programs serving veterans of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and their families.

Nicholson’s announcement about the panel, called the Advisory Committee on OIF/OEF Veterans and Families, comes on the heels of his presentation April 24 of recommendations from a presidential task force to improve services to the nation’s newest generation of combat veterans. (See Page 10)

“A number of panels already have been asking tough questions about our programs for transitioning to civilian life,” Nicholson said. “This committee, to be chaired by retired Lt. Gen. David Barno, consists of OIF and OEF wounded veterans, family members, survivors, leaders of the major veterans organizations and longtime veterans advocates. This group of people has experienced war and our system of care, and can advise me from firsthand experience on how we are doing and what we need to do better.”

The OIF/OEF advisory committee conducted a three-day inaugural meeting earlier this month in Alexandria, Va. The committee discussed its agenda, future meeting dates and plans for site visits to VA facilities around the country.

The schedule includes briefings by senior officials of VA’s key programs, comments from members of the public who register in advance with the committee, discussions about seamless-transition goals and procedures affecting combat veterans who are going from military to civilian life.


Florida to get new national cemetery
The Department of Veterans Affairs has purchased a 295-acre site in Sarasota County, Fla., for a new national cemetery for veterans and their families. The property was formerly a portion of the Hawkins Ranch and has extensive frontage on State Route 72. VA purchased the tract for $14 million on April 26. Miller Legg & Associates of Winter Park, Fla., has been hired to design the new cemetery.

When the cemetery is completed, it will provide another burial option for local veterans. About 400,000 veterans live in southwestern Florida.

VA plans for construction to begin in summer 2008 in an initial 15-acre section where burials are expected to begin later that year. The cemetery staff will work initially from a temporary office, committal service shelter and equipment facility until the construction project is completed. When the cemetery's first phase ends in 2011, its 60 acres will provide 490 gravesites, a 7,000 unit columbarium, scattering garden and 500 in-ground spaces for cremated remains.

The new cemetery will also include an administration and public-information center complex with an electronic gravesite locator and public restrooms, a maintenance facility, a cemetery entrance area, a flag assembly area, memorial walkway and donations area, as well as two committal shelters outfitted with energy-saving solar panels. Other infrastructure design elements include roadways, landscaping, utilities and irrigation.

The closest VA cemetery in Florida, open to casket and cremated remains, is in Bushnell, about 110 miles from Sarasota. In addition to the new national cemetery in Sarasota County, VA is planning another for the Jacksonville area.

Veterans with a discharge other than dishonorable, their spouses and eligible dependent children can be buried in a national cemetery. Other burial benefits available for all eligible veterans, regardless of whether they are buried in a national cemetery or a private cemetery, include a burial flag, a Presidential Memorial Certificate, and a government headstone or marker.

Information on VA burial benefits can be obtained from national cemetery offices, online at www.cem.va.gov or by calling VA regional offices, (800) 827-1000.

Information on the Sarasota County national cemetery is available from the VA Memorial Service Network in Atlanta at (404) 929-3899.

Wheelchair Games set for June 19-23
Five hundred disabled veterans will gather in Milwaukee between June 19-23 to test their agility, athleticism and strength of spirit in the 27th National Veterans Wheelchair Games, the largest annual wheelchair sports event in the world. Veterans from the recent conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq will again join veterans from the Gulf War, Vietnam and other conflicts in 17 competitive events.

The Wheelchair Games, sponsored by the Department of Veterans Affairs and Paralyzed Veterans of America, are open to all U.S. military veterans who use wheelchairs for sports competition due to spinal cord injuries, certain neurological conditions, amputations or other mobility impairments.

For the first time at the games, a demonstration track event will be held for athletes who are able to stand using prosthetic devices.

The Clement J. Zablocki VA Medical Center in Milwaukee and the Wisconsin chapter of the Paralyzed Veterans of America are hosting the 2007 games.

Veterans competing in the 27th National Veterans Wheelchair Games come from nearly all 50 states, as well as the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and Great Britain.

At the games, veterans will compete in track and field, swimming, basketball, weightlifting, softball, air guns, quad rugby, 9-ball, bowling, table tennis, archery, handcycling, a motorized rally, wheelchair slalom, a power wheelchair relay and power soccer. Trap shooting and wheelchair curling will also be exhibition events this year.

Events begin June 19 with a wheelchair basketball demonstration at Red Arrow Park, as well as the 2007 Disabled Sports, Recreation and Fitness Expo.

To volunteer at the 27th National Veterans Wheelchair Games, or to obtain more information about the competitive events, visit the games Web site at www.va.gov/veterent/nrwg/2007/default.cfm.
Free post locator available at www.legion.org

If you are traveling around the country this summer and want to stop by a local American Legion post during your trip, finding one is easy. Go online to www.legion.org, where you’ll find a post locator for 42 American Legion departments.

Using the post locator is both free and simple. Click on "About Us" or type the Web address listed below in the Web browser. Type in the name of a city or a ZIP code, or just click on a department name to view a listing of every post within the department. Again, this service is free.

www.legion.org/section=our_legion&subsection=ol_posts&content=post_locator

**COMING UP**

Children & Youth Conference open to entire Legion family

American Legion family members are asked to attend the annual Children & Youth (C&Y) Conference, which is held in September. One American Legion Children & Youth representative will be authorized as an official call-in from each of the 51 domestic departments, but all interested American Legion family members are encouraged to attend. Authorized attendees will receive a per diem and transportation costs. Contact your department administrators for more information.

Registration packets will be mailed to departments later this month.

**TRAVEL**

Authorization to conduct National Children & Youth Conference

Resolution No. 44, Spring 2007

Whereas, the purpose of The American Legion's National Commission on Children & Youth is to formulate, recommend and implement plans, programs and activities designed to assure care and protection for the children of veterans and to improve conditions for all children and youth with due concern for maintaining the integrity of the family home, preventing social and physical ills of children and youth where possible, utilizing services of and cooperating with sound organizations and agencies for children and youth, and maintaining a balanced program that provides for their physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual needs; and

Whereas, The American Legion's National Commission on Children & Youth is tasked with oversight responsibilities for national Children & Youth programs of The American Legion; and

Whereas, the training of those volunteers who actively participate in the various programs and activities of Children & Youth is vital to achieving program goals and objectives; and

Whereas, the National Leadership and Information Conferences, discontinued by NEC Resolution No. 26 – Oct. 13-14, 2004, were the only vehicles the Commission on Children & Youth had to educate volunteers and provide personal instruction on national Children & Youth programs and on current issues concerning child welfare; and

Whereas, creation of a National Children & Youth Conference would serve as a viable means to educate Children & Youth representatives from all departments, strengthening the national child-welfare advocacy role of The American Legion; and

Whereas, this resolution has the concurrence of the National Finance Commission; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, by the National Executive Committee of The American Legion in regular meeting assembled in Indianapolis, Ind., May 10-11, 2006, That The American Legion does hereby authorize the National Commission on Children & Youth to conduct a Children & Youth Conference for department Children & Youth representatives, beginning in the fall of 2007, and annually thereafter.

**COMMENTS**

Don’t restrict honors to Memorial Day

In "The Ideals Treasury of Faith in America," the Rev. Lyman Abbott wrote, "He who looks with pride upon his history which his fathers have written by their heroic deeds, who accepts with gratitude the inheritance which they have bequeathed to him, and who highly resolves to preserve this inheritance unimpaired and to pass it on to his descendants enlarged and enriched, is a true American, be his birthplace or his percent- age what it may."

Part of our great inheritance is shared on Memorial Day. Yet if we do not respect our departed veterans every day, we dishonor them the rest of the year beyond Memorial Day.

One way active remembrance beyond Memorial Day is practiced by giving every veteran burial honors. In recent years, in two South Dakota communities, five veterans would have been buried without proper respect given for their service had I not spoken up. I let it be known in our community, through the funeral home and nursing home, that no veteran should be buried without honors. This outreach had its roots in a situation several years ago when a local veteran died. His out-of-state brother was contacted and asked about the final disposition of the remains. The brother’s reply: “Cremate him. Throw away the ashes. No one cares about him.”

The word went out; 11 people, plus an honor guard, showed up to honor the man’s faithful service. Active remembrance on Memorial Day can be carried on throughout the year by a simple act of honoring our country’s departed veterans every day.

I pray that God gives you the vision to see the need, courage to act, and strength to accomplish great things for God and country.

**AMERICANISM**

South Carolina senior earns Eagle Scout of Year award

Welland Dane Burnside, 18, a senior at Maple Hill High School in Garden City, S.C., has been named the American Legion’s 2007 Eagle Scout of the Year. A member of Boy Scout Troop 396, Burnside earned a college scholarship worth $1,500.

The award recognizes Burnside’s practical citizenship at school, in Scouting and his affiliation with Belin Memorial United Methodist Church. For his Eagle Scout project, Burnside launched an effort to conserve Myrtle Beach State Park, where nature trails had become impassable, birdhouses were in need of repair or replacement, non-native plants and vines had overtaken the pond, and a supply of mulch was needed for pathways. Burnside’s Eagle project covered all these tasks.

He also installed redwood benches at various locations around Myrtle Beach State Park for public use. As part of the park’s restoration, Burnside secured permanent recycling of mulch from the local electric company to the park.

This isn’t the first time Burnside has made a difference in his community. He received recognition for starting the Suitcases for Kids program seven years ago with his sister, Aubyn, which provides suitcases for foster children so that when they are moved from place to place they have something besides a plastic bag in which to carry their belongings.

Today, Suitcases for Kids is a nonprofit charity active in all 50 states and 29 foreign countries.

Burnside, an Eagle Scout since 2001, is also an honors student and star athlete.

The American Legion also awarded scholarships to Blaine Thomas Drozd of Genoa, Neb., Jacob Keith Hedelius of Manti, Utah, and Michael Vaughn Baxter Bledsoe of Chapmanville, W.Va.

American Legion posts sponsor more than 2,700 Scouting units, serving more than 73,500 young people nationwide.

**ON TELEVISION**

‘History Channel’s Act of Honor’ to tell story of heroic Marine

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‘History Channel’s Act of Honor’ to tell story of heroic Marine

The story of Sgt. Rafael Peralta - told in the upcoming documentary, ‘Act of Honor,’ from The History Channel - begins in Mexico City, Mexico, where he was born. Soon his parents moved to Tijuana, and that was where he stayed until he came across the border to San Diego when he was 15.

He wanted to be an attorney, and he was smart enough, but there was no money for college. But he had a plan. He would become a Marine. The Corps would pay for his education. Besides, he loved his new country; he wanted to prove that love.

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He wanted to be an attorney, and he was smart enough, but there was no money for college. But he had a plan. He would become a Marine. The Corps would pay for his education. Besides, he loved his new country; he wanted to prove that love.

After joining, Peralta’s unit was assigned to help clear out Fallujah, a lawless fortress filled with thousands of insurgents. Now a sergeant, Peralta helped kick in doors and clear houses one dangerous room at a time. Dozens of marines died.

The place where Peralta died was called Block 412. When the squad popped the door on its fifth house of the day it walked into at least four insurgents, who immediately peppered them with automatic fire. Peralta, hit immediately, rolled off to the side of the room. Then there was the unmistakable rattle of a grenade. What he did next changed many lives forever.

“He reached over with his right hand and grabbed it and pulled it under his chest,” said Sgt. Nicholas Jones, one of the men in that room. "Aafter that there wasn’t much you could do. You kind of knew that was the end of it.” By giving his life at age 25, Sgt. Peralta saved the lives of four Marines.

‘Act of Honor” is a world premiere simulcast on The History Channel (in English) and on The History Channel en espanol (in Spanish) on Saturday, May 19, at 7 p.m. ET.
President defies Congress, vetoes DoD supplemental bill

By Jimmie Foster

On May 2, six weeks after it originally passed both congressional chambers, President George W. Bush vetoed H.R. 1591, a $124 billion emergency Department of Defense supplemental appropriations bill for fiscal 2007. The following day, needing at least 289 votes to override the president’s veto, the House of Representatives passed H.R. 2203, with one member voting “present.”

Seven House members did not vote on the conference report report: Reps. Jo Ann Davis, R-Va.; Eliot Engel, D-N.Y.; Kirsten Gillibrand, D-N.Y.; Nick Lampson, D-Texas; Cathy McMorris Rodgers, R-Wash.; Solomon Ortiz, D-Texas; and Lynn Westmoreland, R-Ga.

The conference report for H.R. 1591 met the withdrawal deadline binding, while wording in the original Senate version was advisory. The conference report contained language mirrored in the previous year’s version. On April 25, by a vote of 218-208, the House passed the conference report to H.R. 1591. The Senate approved the conference report the next day 51-46.

The president’s original supplemental request contained $97 billion in funding to sustain military operations in Iraq, Afghanistan and the global war on terrorism. However, the final version of H.R. 1591 became a vehicle that numerous members of Congress loaded with various “pork-barrel” projects, adding nearly $27 billion in additional funds to both the House and Senate versions of the measure.

Of the remaining $26 billion, a portion addresses emergency relief to states devastated by 2005’s major hurricanes, other agricultural disasters, and additional funds by request for Realignment and Closure (BRAC). Furthermore, $1.8 billion in supplemental money was added for VA discretionary programs, including $1.3 billion for VA medical care; $356 million for veterans’ information technology; and $30 million for research.

President Bush has publicly urged Congress to send him a supplemental funding measure that will support U.S. forces in Iraq, Afghanistan and the global war on terrorism without deadlines for withdrawals. House and Senate leaders are now examining their options for another supplemental spending bill more to his liking. Immediately after the president vetoed H.R. 1591, National Commander Paul A. Morin said, “There can only be one commander in chief, and he should be the one to determine before the mission is complete. It is immoral for Congress to appropriate for a war mission and then not want to pay for it once the troops are in harm’s way. You cannot possibly say, ‘I support the troops, but I don’t want to pay for their bullets, beans and bivouacking in combat.’”

The American Legion continues to support funding for the ongoing costs of war as recommended by the president and military commanders.

The House is currently considering a “nickel-and-dime” approach to funding the global war on terrorism via short-term funding measures. This makes no sense, especially in light of a spoiled terrorist plot targeting U.S. soldiers at Fort Dix, N.J.

Legion testifies on veterans legislation

On May 9, The American Legion offered a statement to the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee. The hearing focused on a number of bills concerning benefit programs for veterans and their dependents.

Legislation examined at the hearing included:

- S. 117, The Lane Evans Veterans Health and Benefits Improvement Act of 2007. Among its various provisions, this measure would create a VA database to track veterans who served in the global war on terrorism and are veterans of the first Gulf War. The American Legion suggested that the database identify veterans’ gender and whether they served in either Afghanistan, Iraq, both or neither.

- S. 225, Concerning traumatic injury benefits. This bill would expand the group of veterans who suffered traumatic injury to the rate paid between Oct. 7, 2001, and Nov. 30, 2005, and collect retroactive benefits under the Traumatic Injury Service members Group Life Insurance program. Originally, only U.S. servicemembers who served in Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom were eligible for these benefits. S. 225 would open this group to include all U.S. servicemembers on active duty during the period, regardless where they served.

- S. 423, The Veterans Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2007. This legislation would increase, effective Dec. 1, 2007, the rates of compensation for veterans with service-connected disabilities, and the rates of dependency and indemnity compensation for the survivors of certain disabled veterans. The amount of increase would be the same percentage increase as that for recipients of Social Security benefits.

- S. 562, The Veterans Employment and Training Act of 2007. This American Legion testimony supports this measure, which would allow accelerated payments of Montgomery GI Bill payments to veterans to allow them to complete training programs with immediate employment results.

- S. 848, The Prisoner of War Benefits Act of 2007. This bill would eliminate the current 30-day minimum detention period for an individual to be eligible for presumptive service-connected status as a prisoner of war. It would also add Type II diabetes and osteoporosis to the list of POW diseases presumed to be service-connected. S. 848 would also authorize the VA secretary to create regulations adding or deleting diseases enumerated in Title 38, U.S. Code, Section 1112(b), on the basis of medical and scientific evidence, to include recommendations from VA’s Advisory Committee on Former Prisoners of War.

- S. 961, “The Related Thank You to the Merchant Mariners of WWII Act of 2007.” This legislation would provide benefits to individuals who served in the U.S. Merchant Marines, including the Army Transport Service and the Naval Transport Service, during World War II. The benefit would be a special pension of $1,000 a month to Merchant Mariners who served between Dec. 7, 1941, and Dec. 31, 1946. In 1988, the Civilian Military Service Review Board granted veteran status to Merchant Mariners who served between Dec. 7, 1941, and Aug. 15, 1945. They were issued DD 214s from the Coast Guard and are entitled to the same medical, disability and burial benefits as other veterans.

- S. 1163, "The Blinded Veterans Pared Organ Act of 2007." This measure would improve compensation and specially adapted housing for veterans in certain cases of vision impairment involving both eyes. It also would establish specific visual acuity levels to delineate "impairment of vision," as opposed to "blindness.”

- S. 1261, The Montgomery GI Bill for Life Act of 2007. This would eliminate the 10-year limitation for use of MGIB benefits and repeal the 14-year limitation for use of MGIB-SR from DoD to VA, and a single appropriation for all MGIB programs within VA; and that the dollar amount of the MGIB benefit should be annually indexed to the average cost of college education, including tuition, room, board, textbooks and other supplies for a commuter student at an accredited university, college or trade school.

- S. 1266, The Veterans Dignified Burial Assistance Act of 2007. This legislation seeks to increase the burial plot allowance from $300 to $400, repeal the time limitation for state filing of reimbursement claims for veterans who are interred in a cemetery in a state, and modify the state veterans cemeteries construction grants program to allow states to apply for up to $5 million for grants for improvements of the cemeteries. The American Legion supports increasing the burial plot allowance to keep up with inflation rather than making an annual adjustment. As for the changes in the state veterans cemeteries program, The American Legion believes that states asking for increase in their improvement budget make their obligation to maintain those cemeteries for which they agreed to be responsible.

VA HEALTH CARE

Task force aimed at cutting red tape

A task force has been formed to help military personnel returning from Iraq and Afghanistan face streamlined federal procedures. On March 6, President Bush appointed VA Secretary R. James Nicholson to lead the Interagency Task Force on Returning Global War on Terror Heroes, which reviewed federal benefits and processes for changes that could quickly improve veterans’ access to services and programs. Nicholson went to the White House on April 23 to brief President Bush about the task force’s recommendations.

The task force brought together top officials from the departments of Defense, Veterans Affairs, Labor, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, and Education, as well as the Office of Management and Budget, the Small Business Administration and Office of Personnel Management. The focus was on improving what could be made within the authority of the individual departments or agencies, using existing resources. The panel specifically targeted health care, benefits, employment services, housing and outreach activities.

Recommendations focus on increasing awareness of available benefits among U.S. servicemembers and their families and improving the process for receiving them.

The task force report is available online at www.va.gov/taskforce/.
### 2006 NEF Challenge

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FOUR PILLARS

BACK TO BASICS’ AND THE AMERICAN LEGION

By Robert L. Morrill
Chairman, National Public Relations Commission

\[B\]ack to the Basics, Together We Win,” has been National Commander Paul A. Morin’s theme this year. Since 1919, The American Legion has served fellow veterans, their families, the youth of our country and our communities with pride.

In keeping with Morin’s theme, The American Legion has launched a branding campaign called "Four Pillars" to educate both public and internal audiences about how Legionnaires continue to serve our nation using the precepts handed down to them by our organization’s founders after World War I.

The American Legion National Public Relations staff is developing a series of ads, radio and television spots, and posters to serve as the campaign’s anchor. The “Four Pillars” theme will also be highlighted in press releases, speeches, media advisories and guest editorials. The American Legion’s Web site, www.legion.org, has special pages devoted to the Four Pillars. The American Legion Magazine and Dispatch will publish stories about the campaign, and a variety of creative marketing tools will be offered. Post newsletter editors can embrace the “Four Pillars” in commanders messages, youth activity reports, Americanism project coverage and features on local efforts to support deployed U.S. troops.

By emphasizing the “Four Pillars” of The American Legion, we hope to create a broader understanding of the far reach of The American Legion in the life of our nation.

The “Four Pillars” poster, at right, is designed as a small 9-by-12-inch stand-alone poster with room at the bottom for local post contact information. It is designed to be displayed in store windows, on bulletin boards at local National Guard and Reserve Centers, and anywhere else where U.S. servicemembers and veterans will see them.

Soon, a CD of print ads of different sizes will be available. Emblem Sales will offer 18-by-24-inch posters suitable for framing.

By using these free public-relations tools in conjunction with the “Four Pillars” theme in post newsletters, we will bring The American Legion “back to the basics” of our organization’s mission and contribute to the second part of Morin’s theme, “Together We Win.”

PUBLIC RELATIONS

Spread the word

Updates from The American Legion’s National Public Relations Commission

NALPA competition nears

Over the past year, National American Legion Press Association editors have employed the latest publishing technologies in editing/printing software, Web sites and e-newsletters.

In these new categories, all American Legion editors and writers are urged to submit their best works of the past year.

Based on the high caliber of post newsletters sent to National Headquarters, this year’s national NALPA competition will pit the best against the best.

Though this year is expected to be a difficult year for judges, who face tough choices in determining the best among American Legion publications, this will be a banner year for NALPA excellence.

Writers will bring to the Reno Convention Center a magnificent array of ideas that others can use.

Disaster preparedness booklet arrives in June

A new post booklet will be available next month. "Disaster Preparedness and Response for American Legion Posts" offers several ideas about how to get involved in community activities that prepare for, and respond to, both natural and man-made events.

The booklet also contains a complete media tool kit, including letters to the editor, news releases and community-relations suggestions. It’s another great outreach tool geared not only to veterans and youth but the entire community.

"Disaster Preparedness and Response for American Legion Posts" is the product of a memorandum of affiliation between The American Legion and the Department of Homeland Security.

Spread the word on Resolution 169

As the war on terrorism continues, the American public has become discouraged and started to question the necessity of the Iraq war. Antia war protesters are making news again, as has Congress and its efforts to create a timetable for U.S. forces to withdraw. Naturally, deployed U.S. troops are getting mixed signals.

NALPA newsletter editors should encourage readers to download the Res. 169 booklet, which explains the resolution in detail and provides message points and guidance on how to stand up for U.S. troops. Download it at www.legion.org.

PERA campaign renewed

Copies of the booklet “In the Footsteps of the Founders – A Guide to Defending American Values” are now available. The updated guide provides detailed information about identical bills introduced in the 110th Congress that The American Legion seeks to guide through to passage.

The Veterans Memorials, Boy Scouts, Public Seals and Other Public Expressions of Religion Protection Act of 2007 – H.R. 725 in the House and S. 415 in the Senate – will close the loophole in the law that permits courts to award the ACLU and other like-minded organizations taxpayer money as compensation for litigating against religious icons, including veterans memorials, Boy Scouts of America and other symbols of our nation’s heritage. The booklet includes names and telephone numbers of members of Congress. Legionnaires should encourage them to become co-sponsors and vote for these bills.

For more information, visit www.legion.org and click on "Public Affairs."