OPERATION LANDSTUHL: HELP OUR WOUNDED

The following challenge to raise $50,000 to purchase comfort items for wounded troops recovering at the U.S. military hospital in Landstuhl, Germany, was jointly prepared by the top three American Legion officials: American Legion National Commander Paul A. Morin, Auxiliary National President JoAnn Cronin and Sons of The American Legion National Commander Earl Ruttkofsky after a May site visit of the facility by Commanders Morin and President Cronin.

Many of the wounded arrive there naked. We are not talking about a hospital in the Sudan, but our very own Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany, a critical stop on the journey home for most of the severely wounded Americans fighting in the global war on terrorism.

As Michael M. Phillips explains in his book "The Gift of Valor," the clothes of these heroes are often cut off their backs by medics and corpsmen as they are evacuated from the battlefield. He adds, "If you make it to Landstuhl, you're good to go. It was an article of faith among the Marine infantrymen in Iraq that if the corpsman plugged up the hole to keep you from bleeding out, and the field surgeons stitched up the important organs, and the Air Force got you all the way to the Army hospital in Landstuhl, Germany, then you'd live. You might not be the same. Your legs might not be where they were before the war. Your arms might not work as well. Your skin might be disfigured by burns. Your brain might be so badly injured that you might not really be the same person you used to be. But you'd survive and eventually get home to your parents, your wife, your kids, your girl."

The American Legion wants these wounded servicemembers to do more than survive. America can never repay the debt it owes these heroes, but it can certainly improve their quality of life. Much attention has been rightly given to substandard conditions at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, but little is being done to help improve the plight of U.S. heroes being treated at Landstuhl.

Patients there don't ask for much. Some want nothing more than to return to their old units to fight alongside their buddies. Sadly, some of these wounded warriors have broken television sets in their rooms. Others lack comfort items such as DVDs, MP3 players or even magazines. They receive a small clothing allowance, but when you arrive with nothing it doesn't go far.

The top three officials in The American Legion family, from left, SAL National Commander Earl Ruttkofsky, Auxiliary National President JoAnn Cronin and American Legion National Commander Paul A. Morin are calling on Americans to donate money for comfort items to support troops recovering at the U.S. military hospital in Landstuhl, Germany.

The House is scheduled to take up H.R. 2642, the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations bill for fiscal 2008 in the near future. The bill cleared the full Appropriations Committee in a 56-0 vote.

"It is my hope that this much-needed increase in VA funding is not met with opposition by Congress or the administration," Morin added. "We as a nation cannot ignore the cost of providing health care to the brave men and women who answer the call to arms. Simply put, this is an ongoing cost of war, and the VA needs to be properly funded."

Since the 109th Congress failed to pass a VA budget for fiscal 2007, the 110th Congress added $3.5 billion in increased funding to VA in a continuing resolution in February and another $1.7 billion in the Emergency Defense Supplemental Appropriations bill coincides with the House Veterans Affairs Committee's recommendations for VA to the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee," Morin said. "Unfortunately, the House Veterans Affairs Committee chose not to participate in that hearing because former Chairman Steve Buyer (R-Ind.) felt such hearings weren't productive. But, obviously, many of Mr. Buyer's colleagues were listening and, more importantly, they took action."

VA appropriations bill coincides with Legion recommendations

National Commander Paul A. Morin applauded the efforts of House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif.; House Budget Committee Chairman John Spratt, D-S.C.; Appropriations Committee Chairman David Obey, D-Wis.; and Appropriations Subcommittee Chairman Chet Edwards, D-Texas, for producing an appropriations bill for the Department of Veterans Affairs that coincides with recommendations made by The American Legion.

"Last September, I outlined The American Legion's funding recommendations for VA to the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee," Morin said. "Unfortunately, the House Veterans Affairs Committee chose not to participate in that hearing because former Chairman Steve Buyer (R-Ind.) felt such hearings weren't productive. But, obviously, many of Mr. Buyer's colleagues were listening and, more importantly, they took action."

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COMMANDER'S MESSAGE

Veterans deserve better than rations

The backlog of pending Veterans Benefits Administration claims and appeals has swollen to nearly 800,000, leaving thousands of disabled veterans separated from relief they earned and are due. The American Legion's National Executive Committee has authorized suing VA, if necessary, to reverse the trend. The reason usually given for the logjam and delays is that the VBA lacks staff to handle the workload. Here's a thought: hire more people, and get the work done.

To veterans, it's a familiar condition. In many parts of the country, VA patients are forced to wait 18 months or more for surgery in understaffed VA hospitals. Throughout America, veterans can't get timely appointments. Parking spaces are even rationed to control daily patient loads. The suspension of Priority Group 8 veterans — some of whom have incomes so low they can't cover copayments for medicine — appears indefinite, if not permanent, as more and more combat veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan enter the system and can't believe lagging women's services and, with all we know about post-traumatic stress disorder, why mental health patients are asked to take a number.

Congress is again seeking refuge in the private-sector antidebt, which reports have shown will drive up cost, reduce quality and deny the reality that veterans have unique conditions related to military service. VA health-care funding is doled out not according to veteran needs but according to government willingness to pay. That is why the long-term care objectives of the Veterans Millennium Health Care Act have largely unmet eight years after it was enacted. That is why VA construction funds in under-served areas have moved at a glacier's pace since the Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services decision was released in 2004. It is why VA emergency rooms are closing their doors at the end of the day.

I recently went to Manchester, N.H., where services have been so reduced that it's now little more than a glorified outpatient clinic and nursing home. The director was unavailable when I went to learn more. Veterans told me they are being sent to Vermont and Massachusetts for care they used to receive locally. One complained of the change from a 24-hour emergency room to an "urgency-care center" with limited hours. Veterans arriving by ambulance are not accepted. They are "diverted" to other hospitals and later receive devastating bills if they don't meet new criteria. VA's current emergency-room policies don't improve care; they are driven by budget ratios.

We can tolerate no more rationing. More un-built hospitals in places like hurricane-hammered New Orleans and overcrowded Orlando and Denver. The government has a moral and statutory obligation to prepare accessible places of quality care for all veterans eligible under the law for VA services and benefits. It is not discretionary. Funding must be mandatory.

Members of the 110th Congress who campaign on promises of vast improvements for veterans — controlling the claims backlog and properly funding VA health care — have a great deal of work to do if they want to prove their words are any better than those of their predecessors. It is our job to let them know America's veterans deserve better than government rations.

Paul A. Morin

National Commander

EMERGENCY FUND

American Legion Auxiliary

21-28 Auxiliary Girls

National, Washington

21 Dispatch I JUNE 22, 2007

A MUSICAL TRIBUTE

Country music singer Michael Peterson's DVD collaboration with The American Legion — featuring the song "It's Who We Are," a tribute to The American Legion — is expected to be released at the 89th National Convention in Reno, Nev. Visit the musician's Web site, www.michaelpetersonmusic.com, and go to www.legion.org for updated ordering information as it becomes available.

LEGISLATIVE ACTION CENTER

To urge support for the flag amendment, contact members of Congress through The American Legion's Legislative Action Center online at capwiz.com/legion/home/. Through this site, you can reach any member of Congress via e-mail, as well as get updates on various pieces of legislation moving through both chambers.
Legion Riders give Guardsmen proper sendoff

By Robert W. Spanogle

I once heard a quote about man's inability to learn from his mistakes. To loosely paraphrase it, the quote claims that history teaches us that we never learn from history. Man repeats his mistakes time and again.

American Legion Riders in Maryland are determined to never repeat at least one mistake in our nation's life: the poor treatment U.S. servicemembers faced before, during and after their tours of duty in the Vietnam War.

In recent years, American Legion Riders in the Department of Maryland have participated in send-offs and welcome-home celebrations for U.S. military members deploying to, or returning from, Afghanistan and Iraq.

Most recently, riders from Disney-Bell American Legion Post 66 in Bowie, Md., joined with Southern Maryland District Post 293 American Legion Riders to salute 400 members of the Maryland National Guard's First Squadron, 158th Cavalry Regiment. The unit will undergo its final training at Fort Dix before finally deploying to the Middle East.

A send-off ceremony began at the Navy-Marine Corps Memorial Stadium in Annapolis and included Maryland Gov. Martin O'Malley and Department of Maryland Commandery David Schaaf. Afterward, soldiers saluted their families and boarded six buses bound for Fort Dix. A Maryland State Police motorcycle and more than 70 motorcycles driven by veterans, including American Legion Riders, escorted the soldiers to the Maryland-Delaware state line.

When the buses crossed over, the Legion Riders pulled to the side of the road, dismounted and stood at attention, saluting the buses as they passed.

Seeing U.S. servicemembers off is an important role for The American Legion. Our Legion Riders are sending a message to the soldiers heading overseas and to their families left behind: you are not alone.

Convention credentials

The following are official credentials for admittance to all National Convention venues, including the convention floor, exhibit hall and shuttle bus transportation:

- National Headquarters staff badge.
- Distinguished Guest badge.
- American Legion Auxiliary Convention badge.
- Sons of The American Legion Convention badge.
- Sons of American Legion Convention badge.
- News media credential.
- Special ID card for past national commanders.
- Exhibitors badge.

The following are not acceptable to a National Convention venue:

- White ribbon with blue lettering marked "delegation chairman."
- White ribbon with blue lettering marked "delegation secretary."
- Delegate (blue), alternate (yellow) or guest (red) ribbon.
- National American Legion Press Association pass.
- National American Legion Press Association button.

All of the above forms of identification must be worn with a National Convention badge.

Identification information

- National sergeant-at-arms and special assistants wear red armbands.
- Assistant sergeants-at-arms wear blue armbands.
- Convention badges worn by delegates have dark blue ribbon with gold lettering marked "delegation." Convention badges worn by alternates have a gold ribbon with dark blue lettering marked "alternate."
- Convention badges worn by guests have a red ribbon with gold lettering marked "guest."

Tour operators

Medtech Services, (775) 826-2022
American Legion Auxiliary Convention badge.
Accedence Home Medical Equipment, (775) 883-8600
Lee's Respiratory Service (Carson City), (775) 883-8600
Medtech Services, (775) 826-2022
United Airlines. Call (800) 521-4041. Use reference tour code number 564HT.
ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION

IMMIGRATION REFORM IS SIMPLE: ENFORCE EXISTING LAWS

By Paul A. Morin
National Commander

The U.S. Senate spoke loud and clear for the American people: this issue is too important to create new laws while ignoring existing laws.

The American Legion, most Americans and the majority of legal immigrants oppose any measures that sanction or condone coming to this country in any manner other than as stipulated by existing law, whether disguised as "undocumented workers" or "guest-worker programs" or any other wordsmithing that is synonymous with amnesty.

Americans understand the meaning of "immigration," but the adjectives "legal" and "illegal" seem to be deliberately ignored by some.

The American Legion's official position is simple: enforcement, enforcement and enforcement.

Assimilation into American society by legal immigrants is important to the nation's welfare; however, the failure to properly enforce existing immigration laws divides the nation and manifests both serious racial and cultural turmoil.

The message to Capitol Hill is clear:
- Oppose any great influx of legal immigrants and support immigration quotas set on a moderate and regulated scale in numbers that enable immigrants to be readily absorbed into the U.S. culture and life stream.
- Call for a strong and ceremonially rich citizenship naturalization process.
- Remain steadfast in the belief that all legal immigrants seeking citizenship should possess a level of proficiency with the English language and an understanding of U.S. history and government.
- Advocate that a naturalization ceremony should be mandatory and conducted in the English language and in a U.S. district court.
- Support legislation that allows legal immigrants who are U.S. military veterans with fewer than three years of active-duty service to seek naturalization if they are injured or if their injuries were aggravated while on active-duty with the U.S. Armed Forces, resulting in a discharge under honorable conditions.
- Before enacting new laws that legalize illegal conduct, try enforcing existing laws.

TECHNOLOGY

Legionsites.com to have booth at Reno convention

Created by two Legionnaires to enable American Legion posts to create and maintain an online presence, Legionsites.com will have a booth at the exhibitor's hall during the 89th American Legion National Convention in Reno, Nev., Aug. 24-30.

Nearly two years ago, Tony Cammarato and Tom Peters founded Legionsites.com, which provides a template for American Legion posts to create their own Web sites. Districts and departments also can use the software for their sites. Members of Post 504 in Batavia, Ill., the two veterans have responded to input from Legionsites.com customers and introduced new software based on their recommendations.

Legionsites.com is offering its "Phase 2" software free of charge to all American Legion subscriber posts, districts and departments using the Legion's approved and sanctionedLegionsites.com Web site.

Cammarato has a simple business philosophy. "First, listen to your customer. Then satisfy his needs," he said.

He and Peters expect the new software will do just that. Phase 2 allows the creation of unique, custom navigation buttons, and associated Web pages are created simultaneously. Now posts can cover any event, program or activity. The new software also simplifies Web editing and the addition of new pages for the same subject, if required, to avoid excessive scrolling by users.

A user manual is now available to download.

Finally, the Phase 2 software allows users to upload or delete files for use in Web pages and to order or activate/deactivate navigation buttons, create their own navigation buttons, and much more. The upload feature currently supports graphic files, Flash files and Acrobat documents.

The Phase 2 software's start-up cost is $299, which includes initial setup, license fees, domain name registration, the first year's Web hosting and 10 e-mail addresses. Send payments to The American Legion, 5745 Lee Road, Indianapolis, IN 46216-2063.

For a live demonstration of Legionsites.com's Phase 2 software, including the enhanced, easy-to-use features, go to www.legionsites.com.

National Convention Hotels

The following are hotel assignments for the 89th National Convention in Reno, Nev. Please contact your respective department adjutant in the state where you reside or where your membership is held. All housing reservations must be made via your department adjutant. Hotels will not accept individual reservations.

Peppermill Hotel & Casino
2707 S. Virginia St.
Reno, NV 89502
(775) 836-2121
www.peppermillcasinos.com

Departments: Alabama, Arizona, Florida, Indiana, Kansas, Michigan, Montana, Virginia, West Virginia, Wyoming

Grand Sierra Resort & Casino
2500 E. Second St.
Reno, NV 89505
(775) 797-2000
www.grandsierraresort.com

Departments: Alaska, District of Columbia, Florida, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Iowa, Maryland, Massachusetts, Mexico, Missouri, New Jersey, Ohio, Philippines, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Wisconsin

Atlandia Casino A & B
American Legion National Headquarters, Auxiliary National Headquarters, Sons of The American Legion, 8th & 40

Atlantic City Hotel
3800 S. Virginia St.
Reno, NV 89502
(775) 825-4700
www.atlanticacasinolasvegas.com

Departments: Delaware, Georgia, Maine, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Vermont

Landstuhl from Page 1

We are offering a challenge to the entire American Legion family and anyone else who wants to help. Let's raise $50,000 by the close of our 89th National Convention on Aug. 30 to ensure that these men and women are given the comfort items that they want. By family, we mean The American Legion, the American Legion Auxiliary and Sons of The American Legion; "anyone else" includes everyone who has the heart to help these brave young men and women. This is a family effort. It is our families that these men and women are protecting. The heroes at Landstuhl are our band of brothers and band of sisters.

Words such as "support the troops" and "sacrifice" are tossed around so many these days that they are in danger of being dismissed as clichés. Here is another one: "Talk is cheap." Care packages and cards are nice, but a donation to Operation Landstuhl is effortless. Simply visit www.legion.org and use any major credit card to make an online donation. It doesn't matter how much you give. Just give something. If you prefer, you can mail a check to The American Legion, c/o The American Legion, P.O. Box 8455, Indianapolis, IN 46206-1055.

Every post, unit or squadron that makes a donation will receive a certificate of appreciation signed by both national commanders and the national president. Strong national security and compassionate care for veterans are two of the original four pillars of The American Legion.

2006 appropriations.

"I call on every member of Congress, in both chambers, and the president to support this funding level and to take swift action to enact H.R. 2642 into law before the start of the new fiscal year," Morin said. "I look forward to working with VA Secretary R. James Nicholson toward the prudent expenditure of every dollar to provide timely access to quality health-care services and dramatic improvements in VA benefit claims processing."
American Legion joins Department of Homeland Security in National Preparedness Month

September effort emphasizes importance of preparedness for families, businesses, communities

The American Legion has partnered with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to promote the fourth annual National Preparedness Month in September, encouraging Americans to be prepared for emergencies in their homes, businesses and communities. This year’s effort has a growing coalition of more than 625 national, regional, state and local organizations pledging support.

“It is vital that Americans take steps to prepare for emergencies at home, work or school,” Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff said. “Personal preparation is key to effectively reacting to the effects of a disaster. By preparing yourself, your family and your businesses, you allow first responders to prioritize efforts and aid.”

The American Legion is a national fit for national preparedness efforts, National Commander Paul A. Morin said

“Wartime veterans are trained survivors who can attest to the importance of being ready,” Morin said. “As a country at war, it just makes good sense for every family to have a disaster plan and readiness kit...”

and become engaged in community preparedness and response efforts.

The American Legion and other National Preparedness Month coalition members will distribute emergency preparedness information and sponsor activities across the country that will promote emergency preparedness.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security promotes individual emergency preparedness through the “Ready” campaign and Citizen Corps. “Ready” is a national public-service advertising campaign produced by The Advertising Council in partnership with the Department of Homeland Security. The “Ready” campaign is designed to educate and empower Americans to prepare and respond to emergencies, including natural disasters and potential terrorist attacks.

For more information about how to prepare your family or business, go to www.ready.gov or call (800) BE-READY (237-3239) to receive free materials.

The American Legion will send copies of “Disaster Preparedness and Response for America Legion Posts” to all its posts. The booklet provides a wealth of information on getting involved in preparing for disasters and reaching out to local communities.

Tedrow fund benefits North Dakota youth

Before she passed away, rancher Hattie K. Tedrow of Billings, N.D., decided she wanted to leave behind funds to benefit young people in the southwestern part of her state. After she died, the district court judge probate judge settling Tedrow’s estate recommended that a portion be used to follow the late woman’s wishes for youth living within approximately 60 miles of her property.

That’s when The American Legion became involved.

On Sept. 4, 2000, in Milwaukee, the National Executive Committee approved Resolution 1, which authorized the acceptance of Tedrow’s request. Following the receipt of Tedrow’s funds, which totaled $930,140, Resolution 40 of the National Executive Committee’s 2001 Spring Meetings established guidelines for use of the fund.

Expenditures of funds began in 2002. Since then, more than $123,000 has been dispersed from the Tedrow fund. The money can be used by 17 North Dakota American Legion posts for the following programs:

- American Legion Boys State and American Legion Auxiliary Girls State fees for attendees certified by the posts
- Sponsorship of American Legion Baseball teams that are certified by National Headquarters
- Sponsorship of Boy Scout troops certified by the posts
- Aid to veterans and veterans’ families, and other charitable purposes for the 17 local posts
- A portion of the Tedrow fund also has been set aside for scholarships for high-school seniors pursuing secondary educations.

Scholarship recipients must be North Dakota residents, and the maximum scholarship per person is $2,000.

The American Legion will send copies of “Disaster Preparedness and Response for America Legion Posts” to all its posts. The booklet provides a wealth of information on getting involved in preparing for disasters and reaching out to local communities.

H2H requests available online

If you are a U.S. servicemember or veteran, or you know a family member of a servicemember or veteran who has been severely injured, fill out the “Heroes to Hometowns” request form available online at www.legion.org. Click on the “Heroes to Hometowns” link.

“Heroes to Hometowns” is a transition program for severely injured U.S. servicemembers returning to civilian life.

It is vital that the transition assistance is support, you may also fill out the request for contact your American Legion department service officer or your local American Legion post. A list of department service officers and a post locator also are available at www.legion.org.

For more information, contact The American Legion “Heroes to Hometowns” Program, Military Severely Injured Center (Pentagon Detachment) at (703) 908-6250 or e-mail heroesinhometowns@legion.org.

Veterans exposed to nuclear radiation encouraged to attend meeting

Veterans who participated in atmospheric nuclear testing between 1945 and 1962, were participants in the 1945-1946 post-World War II occupation of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, or were prisoners of war in those areas are asked to attend the Veterans Advisory Board on Dose Reconstruction (VBD) public meeting and comment session Sept. 19-20 at the Jesse Brown VA Medical Center, Multi Conference Center B and C, Room 2446, 820 South Damen Ave., in Chicago.

Meeting schedules:
- Sept. 19 - 8:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. and 2:30 p.m.-5:30 p.m.; public comment 1:30 p.m.-2:30 p.m.
- Sept. 20 - 8:30 a.m.-11 a.m. and 12:15 p.m.-12:45 p.m.; public comment 11:15 a.m.-12:15 p.m.

The goal of the VBD is to provide guidance and oversight of the dose reconstruction and claims compensation process and to improve communication with veterans.

For more information, call (866) 657-VBDR (8237) or visit www.vbd.org.

NATIONAL SECURITY

DoD report claims military hitting recruiting numbers

The U.S. Armed Forces are doing a much better job of recruiting than they are getting credit for, according to a recent Department of Defense report.

For the month of May, three of the four services met or exceeded recruiting goals. Although the Army missed May’s recruiting goal, it remains above the year-to-date mission by approximately 2,000 accessions ahead of its active-duty year-to-date goal. Four of the six reserve components met or exceeded their recruiting goals in May.

The Army, Navy, Marine Corps and Air Force also all met or exceeded overall active-duty retention missions. The Army National Guard retention was 108 percent of the cumulative goal of 23,081 in May, and Air National Guard retention was 99 percent of its cumulative goal of 7,478.

Both the Army and Air Guard are currently at 100 and 99 percent of their end strength, respectively. Losses in all reserve components for April were within acceptable limits.
Motorcycle riders on bikes of all shapes, sizes and colors will roar across the Midwest, over the Great Plains and through the Rockies and southwestern deserts en route to Reno, Nev., in August for the 89th American Legion National Convention. They will ride more than 2,000 miles to raise money for the college educations of children of U.S. servicemembers who have died in action since Sept. 11, 2001. American Legion National Commander Paul A. Morin will lead the second annual American Legion Legacy Run from National Headquarters in Indianapolis across the country to the convention city, with hopes of raising $250,000 or more for the American Legacy Scholarship Fund. Riders can join the run at any time along the route, or make the entire trip Aug. 19-24. An American Legion Rider Rally is scheduled for Aug. 25 in Reno, and riders will join in The American Legion National Convention Parade on Aug. 26. Legacy Run participants will depart American Legion Post 500 in Speedway, Ind., in the early morning hours Aug. 19. Legionnaires unable to participate in The American Legion Legacy Run or attend the convention may support the American Legacy Scholarship Fund by sending tax-deductible contributions to The American Legion Legacy Scholarship Fund, P.O. Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206.
FOR MORE INFORMATION on the American Legacy Scholarship Fund, contact Bob Caudell at (317) 630-1212 or by e-mail at rcaudell@legion.org. Information may also be found on The American Legion Web site at www.legion.org. Click on the scholarships link on the lower left corner of the home page.
**MEMORIAM**

**A MENTOR, LEADER AND FRIEND**

**Longtime Internal Affairs Commission Chairman passes away.**

Past National Commander Jake Comer considered longtime National Internal Affairs Commission Chairman Herman Harrington one of his closest and dearest friends. He also described him as easily approachable and a dedicated Legionnaire.

However, the greatest compliment Comer paid Harrington — who passed away May 23 at age 83 — concerned the man’s ability to pass along to others what he’d learned during 22 years as chairman of the Internal Affairs Commission.

“[That was a big key to Herm:] preparing people to be leaders down the road,” Comer said. “When the Internal Affairs vice chairman (Larry Besson) moved up after Herm stepped down, we knew we didn’t have to worry. We knew he had done a great job preparing Larry for the chairmanship. Herm was always like that.”

A World War II Army veteran who earned both the Bronze Star and World War II Victory Medal, Harrington belonged to Melvin Roads Post 1231 in Rensselaer, N.Y., and was a 62-year Legionnaire. He served as a member of the National Internal Affairs Commission for 32 years. During the 2006 Fall Meetings in Indianapolis, Resolution 50 appointed Harrington chairman emeritus of the National Internal Affairs Commission.

Besson said he wouldn’t have been able to step into the chairman’s role without Harrington’s guidance.

“He was great about spending time with me and answering any questions I had,” Besson said. “After his passing, I sent a letter and an e-mail to his wife, Ann, and told her that I never would have had the confidence to be the chairman without the guidance that Herm gave me. He was such a great leader. I just want to be able to do the job the way he did.”

Harrington served as the Department of New York’s commander from 1972 to 1973 and as the department’s Alternate National Executive Committeeman from 1973 to 1974.

Department of New York Adjutant Richard Pedro knew Harrington for more than 40 years.

“We weren’t always on the same side of the issues early in our careers, but Herm was always friendly about it,” Pedro said. “Beyond losing a Legionnaire, we’ve also lost a friend. He was a guy who you looked forward to seeing and also could look to. He was a strong member of my team and was really looked to in the Third and Fourth Districts, which are composed of 18 counties. He was highly valued by the people in that area, and he was highly valued by me. He was one of the great guys to New York.”

Pedro said that Harrington made sure The American Legion would be in good hands after he passed away.

“He mentored a number of people in his area. He saw potential and was very good at moving it along and nurturing it,” Pedro said. “He’d take people under his wing and look after them.”

Past National Commander Butch Miller, who worked closely with Harrington in conducting The American Legion National College, echoed Pedro.

“He was always good at recognizing and mentoring the future leaders of the organization,” Miller said. “I think that’s why he became such a strong supporter of Legion College. He was very supportive of that, not only from an organizational standpoint, but also from a personal standpoint. He was just like that. I can’t remember anyone ever asking him to sit down and talk about something or answer questions and Herm saying ‘no.’”

Harrington fully engaged the issues to which he was dedicated, said Miller, pointing to his perseverance in keeping a controversial display of the Enola Gay from appearing in the Smithsonian Air & Space Museum in 1995. “All World War II veterans and the Enola Guy have been prostituted to make a political statement about the horrors of atomic warfare,” Harrington said of the exhibit’s script. He testified before the U.S. Senate regarding the display, which ended up cancelled, and later received a letter of thanks from Maj. Gen. Charles W. Sweeney, who piloted the plane that dropped the bomb on Nagasaki.

“[If Herm felt something was the right thing to do, he was ready to go at it until the end],” Miller said. “He’s definitely one of the guys I think of who really helped guide me and mentor me.”

Harrington is survived by his wife, Ann. Condolences can be sent to Ann and the family at 32 Clinton St., Rensselaer, NY 12144-3604. Donations can be sent to the Herman G. Harrington Memorial Scholarship Fund, Melvin Roads American Legion, 200 Columbia

**TROOP SUPPORT**

**Legion’s Heroes to Hometowns float a success in Indy**

The American Legion’s Heroes to Hometowns program received national and celebrity attention during the Indianapolis 500 Festival Parade over Memorial Day weekend.

Six wounded U.S. servicemembers rode aboard the Legion’s Heroes to Hometowns float during the parade, which was attended by approximately 300,000 people. The float and its passengers received ovations from spectators and other parade participants as it passed through the downtown streets of Indianapolis. ESPN-2 televised the parade nationally.

U.S. servicemembers riding on the float also were introduced to many celebrities participating in the parade, including Indianapolis Colts quarterback Peyton Manning, rock star Gene Simmons, musical group the Commodores, retired Gen. Chuck Yeager, and actors Patrick Dempsey and Ray Liotta.


“I was immediately struck by the thought, ‘What did I do to deserve such accolades’ when seeing the crowd on their feet cheering us on the float.” Maynard said. “I realized that the applause wasn’t for me personally, but for who and what I represented — that is, the thousands of injured soldiers from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.”
To donate to the Auxiliary
The American Legion
Indianapolis, IN 46206
see each department
do all they can to raise
NEFandCWF: national
conventions. Bowls at their respective
receive crystal Revere
highest percentage in
Departments with the
and Ruttkofsky want to
every department
to continue our legacy
Legion are challenging
of giving back to our
family's programs: the
American Legion family
generous donations of
fill the coffers of each of
The goal this year is to
college of each of these funds with the
genous donations of
American Legion family
members nationwide, to
continue our legacy of
giving back to our
most needy.
Leaders of The American
Legion, American
Auxiliary and Sons Of The
American Legion are
challenging every
department commander, president
and SAL commander to
do all they can to raise
funds. Main, Conni,
and Ruttkofsky want to
see each department
raise funds equal to their
2006 delegate-
strength membership
achievements.
Departments with the
highest percentage in
each category will
receive crystal Revere
bowls at their respective
national conventions.

To donate to the
NEF and CWF:
The American Legion
PO Box 6141
Indianapolis, IN 46206
To donate to the
Creative Arts Festival: American Legion
Auxiliary
777 N. Meridian St.
Indianapolis, IN 46204

<table>
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<th>Department</th>
<th>2007 goal</th>
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DATELINE: CAPITOL HILL

President enacts final version of DoD supplemental bill

By Jimmie Foster

On May 24, three weeks after President Bush vetoed an emergency Department of Defense supplemental appropriations bill for fiscal 2007, Congress passed H.R. 2206, a similar measure that met the president’s request for no withdrawal deadlines for U.S. forces serving in Iraq. The bill passed the House by a vote of 280-142, while the Senate vote for passage later the same day was 60-34. The president signed the measure May 25, making it Public Law 110-28.

Language in the law establishes no deadlines to remove U.S. military forces from Iraq but does set certain benchmarks for the Iraqi military and government to meet. If these benchmarks are not met, then U.S. forces could be withdrawn or redeployed. The Iraqi benchmarks, however, can be waived.

The fiscal version of the supplemental request contains $94.7 billion in funding to sustain military operations in Iraq, Afghanistan and the global war on terror. However, P.L. 110-28 contains additional numerous pork-barrel projects totaling $25 billion. The president withheld his veto pen, expressing his satisfaction with finally receiving a supplemental funding bill devoid of timetables for withdrawal from Iraq.

The remaining $25 billion addresses emergency relief to states devastated by 2005’s major hurricanes, relief for other agricultural disasters, an increase in the veteran’s minimum wage from $5.15 per hour to $7.25 per hour – offset by a $4.8 billion package of business tax cuts – and additional funds for the Base Realignment and Closure process. Furthermore, $1.8 billion in supplemental money was added for VA discretionary programs. This additional VA funding includes $1.3 billion for VA medical care, $326 million for minor construction projects, $83.2 million for general operating expenses, $35.1 million for information technology systems, and $32.5 million for medical and prosthetic research.

Despite this victory for the White House, Congress put language in the measure that would require the president to issue reports in July and September on the progress made by the Iraqi government on the 18 benchmarks included in the bill.

Congress hopes that each report will be the focus of continued scrutiny on U.S. involvement in Iraq. In addition, the fiscal 2008 DoD authorization and appropriations bills will receive considerable analysis in the months ahead.

House passes veterans bills

On May 23, the House of Representatives passed six bills that will affect veterans. These measures reflect the lion’s share of the work done by the House Veterans Affairs Committee in the 110th Congress. The Senate Veterans Affairs Committee will conduct a markup on these bills June 27 but has not announced which bills will be examined.

H.R. 612, “The Returning Servicemember VA Healthcare Insurance Act of 2007,” passed the full House by a 419-0 vote. It would extend the term of free health care for returning servicemembers from two years to five years. This change is intended to help veterans who may have health problems that do not become apparent until long after their military discharges. The bill’s provisions would apply only to veterans who have served in combat during or after the 1991 Persian Gulf War.

Another bill, H.R. 3199, “The Early Access to Vocational Injury Health Enhancement and Long-Term Support Act of 2007,” would authorize up to five new traumatic brain injury research centers and mandate a comprehensive program for treating traumatic brain injuries at VA health-care centers. The bill would also authorize $70 million for research, training and education programs for fiscal 2008 through fiscal 2011. Finally, H.R. 2199 would authorize an additional $7.5 million for a pilot project of mobile veteran’s centers, intended to improve access to readjustment counseling for returning veterans in fiscal 2008 and each succeeding year.

Another measure, H.R. 1470, passed by a 421-1 vote. This measure, “The Chiropractic Care Available to All Veterans Act,” would require VA to provide chiropractic care at 75 VA medical centers by the end of 2009 and at all VA medical centers by the end of 2011.

The House also passed H.R. 67, “The Veterans Outreach Program Act of 2007,” by a vote of 421-0. This bill would establish a new grant program for state veterans outreach programs. It would authorize $25 million a year in grants from fiscal 2007 through fiscal 2009. Under this legislation, states could disburse funds to county veterans service offices.

Another measure passed by the House was H.R. 2239, “The Early Access to Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Benefits Act.” The vote for passage was 414-0. This measure would extend eligibility for vocational rehabilitation benefits to disabled U.S. servicemembers who have not yet been discharged from the military but are likely to be discharged because of their conditions.

The final bill passed by the House, H.R. 1660, would authorize a national veterans cemetery in southern Colorado. The measure passed by voice vote. These measures now go to the Senate for further action.

Fiscal 2008 VA funding bill

On June 6, the full House Appropriations Committee approved a draft bill to fund military construction projects and the Department of Veterans Affairs for fiscal 2008. The measure was passed by a unanimous 56-0 vote of the committee. This legislation now moves to the full House for consideration.

The bill would increase VA’s budget to a total of $87.7 billion, $9.9 billion above the fiscal 2007 level – the largest single increase in the history of VA – and $3.8 billion above the president’s request for the upcoming fiscal year. It also increases funding to VA’s repair and maintenance needs to avert any incidents similar to the Walter Reed Army Medical Center experience from happening in the VA system.

The chart below outlines VA final appropriations for fiscal 2007, the president’s VA budget request for fiscal 2008, and the amounts approved by the House Appropriations Committee for fiscal 2008.

Other spending in the measure includes $21.4 billion for military construction, family housing and the Base Realignment and Closure process. This is an increase of $207 million from the president’s request for fiscal 2008 and $5.1 billion more than the current fiscal year. Although the measure was initially approved by a voice vote, Rep. Chet Edwards, D-Texas – chairman of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Military Construction and Veterans Affairs – requested a recorded vote to send a strong bipartisan message to the White House, which had threatened to veto the bill if it exceeded the president’s initial budget request.

The fiscal 2008 funding allocations for many of the VA accounts meet or exceed funding targets proposed by the American Legion in testimony by National Commander Paul A. Morin earlier this year. This is the first time such a situation has occurred in years.

The American Legion will continue to monitor the VA fiscal 2008 budget process in the coming months.

ECONOMICS

‘Patriot Express’ provides small-business help

Nearly a quarter of newly discharged veterans consider starting their own businesses. To aid their efforts, the Small Business Administration’s new program, “Patriot Express,” offers a wide variety of assistance to veterans interested in setting up or expanding their own businesses. A similar program for veterans ranges from helping write business plans and managing businesses to obtaining financing and learning how to export goods. Participants may also qualify for loans between 2.25 percent and 4.75 percent over the prime interest rate.

“America’s veterans are a great resource for the private sector,” Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary Jim Nicholson said. “I commend (SBA) Administrator Steve Preston of the Small Business Administration for his initiative in helping veterans transition back into the private sector.”

“Patriot Express” is open to veterans, reservists and National Guard members, survivors of U.S. military personnel; surviving spouses of U.S. servicemembers who die on active duty, and spouses of veterans who die from a service-connected disability.

Expanding veterans’ eligibility for SBA’s “Patriot Express” program was a key recommendation of a presidential task force on the needs of returning veterans.

More information about the SBA program is available at the Small Business Administration’s “Patriot Express” Web site, www.sba.gov/patriotexpress.
VA to modernize Leestown campus

VA will begin developing a master plan for the Leestown, Ky., campus that will include construction of a single-floor 60-bed nursing home, a 30-bed domiciliary and a new outpatient building to meet the current and anticipated needs of Kentucky veterans.

The new facilities will be located on vacant land on the southeastern portion of the 135-acre campus. VA will also explore partnerships with the private sector to generate revenue by leasing under-used buildings at Leestown, once the new facilities are completed and occupied.

Mail-out pharmacy gets a boost

With mail-out pharmaceuticals for veterans already a $3 billion annual operation for VA, the department made a major expansion in its future capability with the dedication June 11 of a new building and improved production system for the Dallas VA Consolidated Mail Outpatient Pharmacy.

With an annual budget of nearly $3 billion, VA's mail-out pharmacies dispense 75 percent of all VA prescriptions. Consolidated Mail Outpatient Pharmacies will handle nearly 100 million prescriptions this year, quadrupling the 25 million prescriptions dispensed just 10 years ago. Most pharmaceuticals are mailed within 48 hours of the mail-out pharmacy receiving the prescription.

VA mail-out pharmacies begin processing pharmaceuticals after downloading electronic prescriptions from VA health-care providers. Medicines are mailed directly to patients.

VA to establish nursing academy

To address a shortage of nurses across the nation and ensure that veterans continue to receive personalized care in VA facilities, the Department of Veterans Affairs has announced the creation of a new multi-campus Nursing Academy.

A five-year, $440-million pilot program will establish partnerships with 12 nursing schools across the country during the next three years, beginning with four for the 2007-2008 academic year.

The VA nursing academy is a virtual organization with central administration in Washington and teaching at competitively selected nursing schools across the country that partner with VA.

Further information is available online at VA's Office of Academic Affiliations Web site, www.vagovoa.

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### TAPS

**William G. Boyer**

Brookline, Ariz.

William G. Boyer of Post 195 (Department of Oregon) passed away April 21 at age 83. He was a World War II Navy veteran.

Mr. Boyer served in several department positions, including department commander from 1994 to 1995. Memorial contributions can be made to the Chapel of Four Chaplains, 1201 Constitution Ave., Philadelphia Naval Business Center B649, Philadelphia, PA 19112, or the Oregon Veterans Home, 700 Veterans Drive, The Dalles, OR 97058.

**Elvin J. Carey**

Chicago

Elvin J. Carey of Post 915 (Department of Illinois) passed away May 16 at age 74. He was a Korean War Marine Corps veteran.

Mr. Carey served in several department positions, including department commander from 2003 to 2004. He also served as alternate National Executive Committeeman from 2005 to 2007. He was a member of the National Americanism Council Liaison Committee from 1966 to 1978, the National Child Welfare Commission national commander's representative in 1971, National & Foreign Relations Council vice chairman from 1976 to 1978, 1993 to 1994 and 2001 to 2007. Harrington is survived by his wife, Ann. Condolences can be sent to 22 Clinton St., Rensselaer, NY 12144-3040. Donations can be sent to the Herman G. Harrington Memorial Scholarship Fund, 1201 Constitution Ave., Philadelphia, PA 19112.

**Frank A. Lucia**

Wilmington, Del.

Frank A. Lucia of Post 18 (Department of Delaware) passed away May 23 at age 86. He was a World War II Air Force veteran.

Mr. Lucia served in several department positions, including department commander from 1974 to 1977. He also served as National Executive Committeeman from 1965 to 1966, National & Homeland Security vice chairman from 1968 to 1974, National Legislative Council vice chairman from 1976 to 1978, and National Distinguished Guests Committee vice chairman from 1978 to 1979.


**A.J. Mercier**

Madison, Wis.

A.J. Mercier of Post 157 (Department of Wisconsin) passed away May 31 at age 82. He was a World War II Army Air Force veteran.

Mr. Mercier served in several department positions and also was a member of the National Americanism Council from 1963 to 1964.

He is survived by his wife, Betty, three sons and one daughter. Memorial contributions can be sent to the Wisconsin American Legion Education Programs/Badger Boys State, P.O. Box 388, Portage, WI 53901, or to the American Heart Association, 2810 Dairy Drive, Suite 300, Madison, WI 53718.

**Alice B. Mirkowski**

Brookfield, Wis.

Alice B. Mirkowski of Post 408 (Department of Wisconsin) passed away May 30 at age 84. She was a World War II Army veteran.

She was a member of the National Counter-Subversive Activities Committee from 1974 to 1975. Memorial contributions can be sent to St. John the Baptist Catholic School, 214 N. SANDARD Ave., Jefferson, WI 53549.

**Morris Nooner Jr.**

Edina, Minn.

Morris Nooner Jr. of Post 912 (Department of Illinois) passed away May 23 at age 82. He was a World War II Navy veteran.

Mr. Nooner served in several department positions, including department commander from 1963 to 1964.

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**Hereman M. “Herm” Harrington**

Rensselaer, N.Y.

Hereman “Herm” Harrington of Post 1231 (Department of New York) passed away May 23 at age 83. He was a World War II Army veteran.


He was a member of the National Distinguished Guests Committee from 1966 to 1968, the National Public Relations Commission from 1972 to 1974, the National Internal Affairs Commission chairman from 1974 to 2006, and the National Legislative Council from 1976 to 1978, 1993 to 2004 and 2004 to 2007. Harrington is survived by his wife, Ann. Condolences can be sent to 22 Clinton St., Rensselaer, NY 12144-3040. Donations can be sent to the Herman G. Harrington Memorial Scholarship Fund, 1201 Constitution Ave., Philadelphia, PA 19112.

**Harry E. Cowan Jr.**

Chandler, Ariz.

Harry E. Cowan Jr. of Post 8 (Department of Nevada) passed away May 19 at age 76. He was a Korean War and Vietnam War Marine Corps veteran.

Mr. Cowan served in several department positions, including department commander from 2002 to 2003. He was also a member of the National Veterans Preference Commission from 1999 to 2005.

**Charles M. Snyder**

Dover, Del.

Charles M. Snyder of Post 2 (Department of Delaware) passed away March 20 at age 76. He was a Korean War and Vietnam War Air Force veteran.


He was a member of the National Membership & Post Activities Committee from 1950 to 1954 and the National Rehabilitation Commission Advisory Board from 1954 to 1961.

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**Raynor Smith**

Meridian, Idaho

Raynor Smith of Post 12 (Department of Oregon) passed away May 18 at age 89. He was a World War II veteran.

Mr. Raynor served in several department positions, including honorary past department commander. He also was a member of the National and Homeland Security Commission from 1978 to 1979.

He is survived by two daughters and two sons.
Awards

Minnesota sergeant named Law Enforcement Officer of Year

In her 25 years at the Willmar, Minn., Police Department, Julie Asmus has combined exemplary community service with outstanding police work. She’s earned several awards, along with the respect of her co-workers and members of her community. This year, her efforts also earned her the title of The American Legion’s Law Enforcement Officer of the Year.

A sergeant in the Willmar Police Department, Asmus has served as a patrol officer and investigator. Previous honors include Minnesota Juvenile Officer of the Year, the lieutenant governor’s Award for Outstanding Achievement and the Minnesota Association of Women Police’s 2001 Officer of the Year Award. As a detective in the child abduction unit, Asmus saw the need for an appropriate, child-friendly place to interview children and make them feel comfortable. She assisted in writing a grant for such a room and then designed it, purchased materials and oversaw construction.

Asmus has also served as a Drug Abuse Resistance Education coordinator and teacher in the Willmar School District for the past 15 years. "Julie is committed to the young people in our state," wrote Minnesota DARE Inc. Executive Director Kathi Ackerman in a letter nominating Asmus for the award. "She serves as a voice of authority and heart of compassion. She believes in what she does and her actions demonstrate that belief. The young people of Willmar are very lucky to have her."

Willmar Chief of Police James A. Kulset also wrote a letter praising Asmus.

"Sgt. Asmus has earned the respect and trust of the community and the members of the Willmar Police Department," he wrote. "Her actions on duty define professionalism; her actions off duty set the standard for what community involvement should be for public servants. Her attitude is such that she does not tell management why we cannot do something but instead works to figure out how it can be accomplished."

Outside of her police work, Asmus has been actively involved with the United Way, Girl Scouts, St. Mary’s Catholic Church and mentoring programs through Business and Professional Women.

She’s both an American Legion and American Legion Auxiliary member of Austin F. Hanscom American Legion Post 167 in Willmar and served in the Army National Guard from 1978 to 1985.

In 1999, Asmus was appointed to the Mayor’s Aquatic Center Task Force, which gathered data for a proposed tax referendum for an aquatic facility in Willmar. When the referendum didn’t pass, Asmus eventually built a swimming pool in her own backyard and every summer hosts pool parties for the Kandiyohi County Girls Group Home.

"Never short of energy and enthusiasm, Sgt. Asmus is quick to volunteer for a variety of community projects while at the same time passionately and professionally performing her traditional police duties," Willmar City Administrator Michael Schmit wrote. "She is truly an asset to our police department and community. She is most deserving of (the award). I have had numerous occasions over the years to already consider her in that light."

Asmus will be honored at the 89th American Legion National Convention, scheduled for Aug. 24-30 in Reno, Nev.

American Legion Baseball

Massachusetts gets first American Legion Baseball Player of the Year

An East Weymouth, Mass., athlete has made history by being named the 2006 George W. Rulon American Legion Baseball Player of the Year. Joseph Walsh, the first player from Massachusetts to earn the title, was honored at the annual Hall of Fame baseball game on Doubleday Field in Cooperstown, N.Y., on May 21.

Weehawken American Legion Baseball for Post 79 in Weymouth for three years, will receive a $1,000 scholarship from The American Legion and a $5,000 scholarship from Stokely Van Camp, makers of Gatorade. He graduated from Weymouth High School with a 3.54 grade-point average, ranking in the top 5 percent of his graduating class, and currently attends Worcester Polytechnic Institute, where he plays for the school’s baseball team.

Walsh is heavily involved in local volunteer work. He earned his Eagle Scout Award in 2005 and participated in several National Honor Society projects, including raising money for Hurricane Katrina victims and UNICEF. He has volunteered for the past two years at a youth baseball clinic in Weymouth to help 9- to 12-year-old players better their skills.

The American Legion Player of the Year Award is named for George W. Rulon, a 25-year former national program coordinator of American Legion Baseball. The award is based on integrity, mental attitude, leadership, citizenship, sportsmanship and good conduct.

GI Film Festival

'Saving Private Ryan' voted top war movie

Steven Spielberg’s “Saving Private Ryan” was voted “Best War Movie Ever” by Legionnaires across the nation in a poll sponsored by The American Legion Magazine.

The American Legion announced the results at the GI Film Festival at the Ronald Reagan International Trade Center in Washington on Memorial Day weekend. Dale Dye, a military adviser to Spielberg and an actor in the 1998 film, accepted the award.

"No one knows the cost of war better than those who have experienced it," said John Raughter, editor of The American Legion Magazine. "That firsthand experience by America’s wartime veterans has made them far better experts on what makes a good war movie than most film critics. There were no pre-selected nominees on the ballots. Participants were allowed to vote for any war movie of their choice. We received hundreds of votes, and 11.3 percent chose ‘Saving Private Ryan’ as their favorite war film.

The movie’s true-to-life portrayal of the storming of Normandy struck a chord with voters. "The movie depicts the reality of war by showing the bravery, fear, cowardice and horror of it all," said Mark C. Hemmrich, a Legionnaire from Stevens Point, Wis., who voted for the film. "It exemplifies our American ingenuity, honor and our sense of liberty, justice, religion and family."

The 1962 D-Day classic “The Longest Day” and the 1955 Audie Murphy film “To Hell and Back” both tied for second place. "Band of Brothers," a 2001 cable miniseries, was next. A list of the top 10 war movies will be published in an upcoming issue of The American Legion Magazine.

The GI Film Festival, the first of its kind, featured 22 film screenings - two panel discussions and appearances by acclaimed actors Gary Sinise, Dale Dye and R. Lee Ermey, along with entertainer Pat Boone and former Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Richard Myers.

“There is no doubt given the enthusiastic response we received this year that we struck a chord with the GI Film Festival," said Brandon Millett, the event’s president. “We look forward to building on our successes next year and in the years to come.”

For more on the inaugural GI Film Festival, go to www.gifilmfestival.com.