

**From:** [March, Joseph H.](#)  
**To:** [Public Relations Division](#)  
**Subject:** Release: American Legion Washington Conference set for March 17-23  
**Date:** Tuesday, March 15, 2011 9:58:19 AM

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **American Legion Washington Conference set for March 17-23**

WASHINGTON (March 15, 2011) – The American Legion will hold its 51<sup>st</sup> annual Washington Conference, with its national commander, Jimmie Foster, and VA Secretary Eric Shinseki among the guest speakers. The conference will be held at the Renaissance Washington D.C. Hotel.

On March 17, the conference kicks off with a Heroes To Hometowns Career Fair, put together by the Legion's Economic Division and cosponsored by Recruit Military. The next day, the Economic Division is hosting a Homeless Veterans' Providers Workshop, featuring speakers from several federal and nonprofit agencies that work to reduce homelessness among veterans.

The American Legion's Ad Hoc Committee on Traumatic Brain Injury/Post Traumatic Stress will meet March 18-19 to discuss treatments for veterans and servicemembers who suffer from TBI and PTS. The committee, made up of Legion past national commanders and medical experts, will go to Walter Reed Army Medical Center for a briefing on TBI treatment and visit with wounded warriors suffering from TBI and PTS.

The committee will hear presentations on VA treatment practices, how reserve components are tracking servicemembers with TBI/PTS, and the use of hyperbaric oxygen treatment for TBI.

On March 20, the Economic Division is hosting its Veterans on Campus Education Symposium, which will focus upon issues faced by returning veterans when they choose to take advantage of their GI Bill education benefits and become full-time students.

Featured speakers for the education symposium include Robert Spanogle, past national adjutant and past national commander of The American Legion, and Derek Blumke, cofounder of Student Veterans of America.

The Veterans on Campus event also includes four panels that will explore the topics of student veterans' experiences on campus, the Post-9/11 GI Bill, women student veterans, and how The American Legion and other veterans service organizations can help to foster veteran-friendly academic environments.

Several American Legion commissions will meet on March 21: legislative, economic, national security/foreign relations, and veterans affairs & rehabilitation.

The Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Commission will hear from a variety of speakers, including Robert Petzel, VA's under secretary for health; Michael Walcoff, VA's

acting deputy under secretary for benefits; and Wilma Vaught, president of Women's Memorial Foundation, Inc. and a retired Air Force brigadier general.

Speakers at the Economic Commission meeting include Col. John Mayer of the Marine Corps' Wounded Warrior Regiment, Capt. Bernie Carter of the Navy's Safe Harbor Program, Tonya Kennerly, coordinator of the Wounded Warrior Resource Center; Patricia Orsini, director of the Wounded Warrior Program in the U.S. House of Representatives; and Paul Plasencia, manager of DoD's Veterans Outreach Program.

David Horne, senior counsel for the Russ Reid lobbying firm in Washington, will address the Legislative Commission, along with Mike Harris, chairman of the National Legislative Council, and Helen Tolar, staff director of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee.

Guest speakers for the National Security/Foreign Relations Commission meeting feature Dan Larsen, deputy director at the Office of Korean Affairs, State Department; Kathryn Condon, executive director of Arlington National Cemetery; and Dr. Ken Gabriel, deputy director of the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA).

A panel of senior enlisted servicemembers will also discuss their deployment experiences, transitions into civilian life, and challenges faced by military families.

The Washington Conference's main event, Commander's Call on March 22, will feature opening remarks by American Legion National Commander Jimmie Foster.

Other guest speakers include VA Secretary Eric Shinseki, Rep. Jason Altmire, D-Pa.; Raymond Jefferson, the Department of Labor's assistant secretary for veteran employment and training; Carlene Ashworth, national president of The American Legion Auxiliary; and David Dew, national commander of the Sons of The American Legion.

Following Commander's Call, the Legion will hold a press conference at the National Press Club in Washington to announce the results of its women veterans survey, conducted in January by ProSidian Consulting of Charlotte, N.C.

The Legion's Economic Division is hosting a Small Business Development Workshop on March 22. The keynote speaker will be Margot Dorfman, CEO of the U.S. Women's Chamber of Commerce. Other guest speakers include Billy Jenkins of the Small Business Administration, Judith Stackhouse-Jordan of the General Services Administration, and Louis Celli, president and CEO of the Northeast Veterans' Business Center.

The National Commander's Public Relations Award Luncheon will be held March 23. This year, Nesse Godin will receive the Legion's public relations award. Sent to a Nazi concentration camp in 1944, Godin survived the ordeal to become a founding member of several Holocaust survivor groups.

Over the years, Godin has also been involved with The American Legion Boys Nation and The American Legion Auxiliary Girls Nation programs.

