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Roosevelt IV named chairman of Legion's 100th Anniversary Honorary Committee

INDIANAPOLIS (Oct. 17, 2012) -- The grandson of a prominent American Legion founder will help the nation's largest wartime veterans organization celebrate its 100th birthday over the next seven years.

The American Legion National Executive Committee passed Resolution 1 Wednesday naming Ted Roosevelt IV of New York, a Vietnam War Navy veteran, to serve as chairman of the Legion's 100th Anniversary Observance Honorary Committee.

"I am honored and even more humbled by the opportunity to work with The American Legion to help it discharge the nation's obligations to its veterans," Ted Roosevelt IV said. "The American Legion – what it has done, what it is doing and what it will continue to do – is exactly what my grandfather and his fellow co-founders intended to achieve."

Ted Roosevelt IV will lead an honorary committee of distinguished Americans whose lives have been affected by the Legion. The organization's all-volunteer 100th Anniversary Observance Committee, led by Past National Commanders Robert W. Spanogle and David K. Rehbein, has been developing plans over the last year to pay tribute to the organization's centennial, particularly at the local post level, with major celebrations scheduled for the 2018 and 2019 national conventions, in Minneapolis and Indianapolis respectively.

Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., was a U.S. Army lieutenant colonel at the end of World War I when he began drumming up interest for a new veterans organization that, according to Resolution 1, "would be built on compassion for veterans and their families, community service, patriotic values, strong national defense, the wholesome development of young people and camaraderie ... the organization would be community-based, without regard for military rank, branch of service, duty station, social standing or political persuasion."

The American Legion was formed in Paris March 15-17, 1919, and swiftly grew, chartering more than 5,200 posts in its first year. In decades to follow, The American Legion would serve millions of veterans, troops, families and communities, regardless of gender or ethnicity.

With 2.4 million members and more than 13,000 posts worldwide today, it remains "the largest and most influential of all U.S. veterans service organizations," the resolution adds. The Legion would bring into existence the modern Department of Veterans Affairs, draft the original GI Bill, fight to provide benefits for veterans exposed to Agent Orange and to help those suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder.

During Wednesday's NEC meeting, Roosevelt IV donated to American Legion National Headquarters an original oil painting of his grandfather, titled, "Brigadier General Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., 1887-1944," by T.A. Devenish. The painting depicts Roosevelt, Jr., in Normandy following the D-Day invasion of June 6, 1944. Five weeks after coming ashore at Utah Beach in the first wave of the Normandy assault, Gen. Roosevelt, 56 at the time, died of a heart attack in France, where he is now buried. He posthumously received the Medal of Honor and was named a past national commander by vote of The American Legion in 1949.

Ted Roosevelt IV, a retired U.S. Navy Reserve lieutenant commander, is a managing director for Barclays Capital Corp.

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