PROCEEDINGS

of the

81st Annual National Convention

of

THE AMERICAN LEGION

September 7-9, 1999
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PROCEEDINGS

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81st Annual National Convention

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THE AMERICAN LEGION

Anaheim Convention Center
Anaheim, California

September 7-9, 1999
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FOREWORD

This booklet has been prepared for the information of members of The American Legion. It has come to be known as the Summary of Proceedings of the National Convention for the current year. It is a comprehensive resumé, in as small space as possible, of what took place at the Eighty-First Annual National Convention in Anaheim, California, September 7-9, 1999.


To make a quick distribution, speed has been necessary. Every precaution has been taken to avoid errors, but some may have occurred in the rush of Convention events and the haste of editing and printing.

Permission is hereby given to quote from this Summary without further consent. However, because of the nature of our resolution process, I urge that the full text of any or all resolve clause(s) is used when a quotation from a resolution is required for publication.

Robert W. Spanogle
National Adjutant

Note: At various times, the National Vice Commanders, as follows, presided over the Convention sessions, when called upon by presiding officer, in accordance with the Uniform Code of Procedure as shown in the verbatim proceedings: Leo P. Burke, California; Roger L. Tingler, Georgia; James W. Gravenstein, Kansas; Fernando M. Goulart, Rhode Island; and John D. Morris, Texas.
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Abbreviations used in this report: AMER=AMERICANISM; IHR/P=credential & internal affairs/powership; CON AP=CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS; CONS W/...=CONSOLIDATED WITH ...; CONV=CONVENTION COMMITTEE; EC/EVP=ECONOMICS/EMPLOYMENT & VETERANS PREFERENCE; FR/R=FOREIGN RELATIONS; REL=RECEIVED & RECORDED; REF=REFERRED; SEC=SECURITY; V & R=VETERANS AFFAIRS & REHABILITATION; CRY=CHILDREN & YOUTH; W/A=AMENDMENTS
...At 8:30 a.m., the Delegates were entertained by Mr. Peter Ole, our organist.
...At 9:00 a.m., the Delegates assembled for the 81st Annual National Convention, and the following proceedings were conducted:

NATIONAL COMMANDER BUTCH MILLER: Before we begin our program, join me in a round of applause for Peter Ole and the wonderful job he has done for so many years here. It is with great pride that I now call this 1999 81st National Convention of The American Legion to order. Please rise as Speedway Color Guard of American Legion Post 500 in Speedway, Indiana presents our Colors. Remain standing for the singing of the National Anthem by the Junior Vice Commander of the Department of New Jersey, Mr. David Squibb. Color Guard, please post the Colors. Right hand salute. One. Two.

...Speedway Color Guard of American Legion Post 500 in Speedway, Indiana, presented the Colors, following which the Delegates sang the National Anthem.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: Let's give those gentlemen a round of applause from Post 500. For our Convention Invocation, I call on our National Chaplain, Father Robert J. Sweeney of Arthur Finnigan Post 1443 near his home in Greenwood Lake, New York.

Invocation
Rev. Robert J. Sweeney, New York, National Chaplain

Heavenly Father, words of truth, presence among us, the beginning and the end of our road, everything is wrought by Your love and grace. We give You thanks for the countless times You have protected our National Commander, Butch Miller, as he traveled this country, spreading the message of The American Legion. You have shielded him under Your outstretched wing. We pray, stir up our hearts, oh Lord. Let us neither be deaf nor lazy, but fill us with the active readiness of those who are truly faithful. In the darkness of this present time, may the purpose of The American Legion be fulfilled in us that we may continue to serve God and Country. Light up our lives as we begin this 81st Annual Convention of The American Legion. As we fought for liberty in foreign lands, give us the strength to advocate moral principles, respect for our flag and care of all veterans in this present age. This we ask in Your Holy Name. Amen.
Proceedings of Tuesday, September 7, 1999

Post Everlasting Ceremony and Lighting of the Peace Candle

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: I now call on National Chaplain Father Sweeney for the Post Everlasting Ceremony and the Lighting of the Peace Candle.

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN SWEENEY: As we gather in National Convention, we once again pause to remember two distinguished men who guided our great organization for a year. First, Jack Flynt, Department of Texas, National Commander 1981-1982, a World War II Army Veteran and a member of Post 445 in Dimmitt, who passed away January 2, 1999. Second, Donald E. Johnson, Department of Iowa, National Commander 1964-1965, a World War II Army veteran and a member of Post 514 in West Branch, who passed away August 10, 1999. Their passing brings to mind our short time of life and helps us to remember always to strive as others did. For it is in serving others that we influence the future. I ask now, National Sergeant-at-Arms, George C. Lussier of Virginia to light the Peace Candle.

...At this time National Sergeant-at-Arms lighted the Peace Candle.

POW/MIA Empty Chair Ceremony

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: Now we pause to remember those who are listed as Prisoners of War or Missing in Action from World War II, Korea and Vietnam. This morning, a special honor detail will place the POW/MIA flag on the empty chair. The members of this detail are from John Armitage Post and Unit 684 in Ridge Crest, California. We are thankful that three Americans captured in Kosovo early this year were released unharmed. Yet, this morning, we reaffirm that The American Legion’s resolve will never waver in determining the fate of those thousands of our comrades still listed as Missing in Action.

...At this time, the POW/MIA Flag was placed on the Empty Chair.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: Join me in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

Pledge of Allegiance

...At this time the Delegation recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

NATIONAL COMMANDER: Legionnaires, please join me in reaffirming our commitment to the principals and ideas on which our great American Legion was founded by reciting with me, in unison, the Preamble to the Constitution of The American Legion.

...At this time, the Delegation recited the Preamble.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: Good morning everyone. Morale is definitely high as we begin the 81st National Convention of The American Legion. I cannot help but reflect on the past and dream of our future. Each of us in our own way wants to make a difference, a difference in our family, a difference in our community, a difference for those who came before us and those who came after us. That translates into a legacy, our legacy. This morning, I’d like to ask you a question, and that is simply this: what is the legacy of The American Legion?

...At this time the Delegates viewed a video.
Presentation: Representation of The American Legion Youth Programs

1999 1st Place Winner National Oratorical Contest
Kevin Sladek, San Marcos, Texas

This is my country and I'm proud of it. Good morning. I'm Kevin Sladek of San Marcos, Texas, your 1999 National High School Oratorical Champion. With me this morning are champions from other American Legion programs. We want to say thank you to you and to the men and women you represent for making our future possible.

1998 Baseball Player of the Year
Chad Opel, Edwardsville, Illinois

I'm Chad Opel from Edwardsville, Illinois, the 1998 American Legion Baseball Player of the Year. Through my involvement with this great program, my immediate future has headed me toward Southern Illinois University where I will be studying for a degree in medicine. Yet for me, the lessons on sportsmanship, fair game and citizenship that are part of every American Legion baseball game will remain with me long after my playing days are over. I thank each of you for the impact that you've had on my life and for helping me build my foundation for the future.

1999 Gold Medalist, Precision Category
Junior Shooting Sports Program
Crystal Dove, Comer, Georgia

Good morning. I'm Crystal Dove of Comer, Georgia. I'm here today because just six weeks ago I became the 1999 Junior Shooting Sports Champion in the precision class. You might remember my sister Kelly. She was the champion last year. I know this competition is your newest youth program. You might even wonder about the benefits of such activities. Let me assure you, the competitors in this competition learn much more than just gun safety. Taking part in organized shooting competition has taught me three important life skills: discipline, the ability to mentally focus on a path and the need to set and achieve goals.

1999 Boys Nation President
Ryan Rippel, Columbia, Missouri

"My fellow Americans, lend me your ear." Sorry, Kevin, sometimes I get so carried away with this stuff. Commander Miller, distinguished guests, and delegates to the 81st National Convention of The American Legion, my name is Ryan Rippel and I'm from Columbia, Missouri and this past July I was elected President of The American Legion Boys Nation program. When I attended Missouri Boys State this past June, I dreamed of becoming Secretary of State. When that dream was realized, I began thinking about Boys Nation and the position that I would seek in Washington, DC. Becoming President was a difficult challenge, but a challenge that now has me looking toward my future with a stronger resolve than ever. I doubt that when Legionnaires in Illinois began developing the program that would become Boys State they dreamed of the great heights they would inspire
young men to achieve. Today, I stand with the youth champions of 1999, confident that our future will be bright and aware that each of you has made it all possible.

KEVIN SLADEK: We are simply four young Americans, proud to be standing here and humble in the knowledge that each of you has sacrificed so much to make it possible for use to continue to dream. We do represent the majority of young citizens. We are proud of our nation, our states and our cities. And we are proud of the American flag.

But right now, we think it’s time for you to get your toes tapping to some of the best patriotic music of the 20th Century. What do you say, guys? These young men, who are here today learning that you are the reason that they’re future is possible, would like to say thank you in their own special way. Please welcome the 1999 All-American Boys Chorus.

CHORUS MEMBER: Our music is the America’s music. We want to preserve the best of the light-hearted songs that have made America happy. This song has done the job since 1911. The man who wrote it knew how to make us cry with songs like “White Christmas”. He could stir our American patriotism with songs like God Bless America. But Mr. Irving Berlin also knew how to have an all American good time with songs like Alexander’s Ragtime Band.

...At this time, the Delegates listened to the choir.

CHORUS DIRECTOR: One of the hallmarks of the All American Boys Chorus is to attempt to instill in our youngsters a sense of determination, a sense of resolve, a sense of real leadership and what the boys like to call stout-heartedness. One of our fine young men steps forward now to sing about what it takes to be stout-hearted men.

...At this time, the Delegates listened to the choir.

CHORUS DIRECTOR: Our thoughts now go to the men and women who can still hear the echo of recent battles and to the memory of all of those who have given their lives for God and country. The young men of the All American Boys Chorus proudly raise their voices now in grateful song as they pay tribute to you, the Armed Forces of the United States of America.

...At this time, the Delegates listened to the choir.

CHORUS MEMBER: We extend a salute to The American Legion, to your life efforts and to your successes. You should know that it is the leadership and encouragement of people like yourselves that inspire us to look toward the future and reach for the stars. As the leaders of tomorrow, we the young men of the All American Boys Chorus sincerely and proudly salute you with the march music of American composer John Philip Sousa.

...At this time, the Delegates listened to the choir.

CHORUS DIRECTOR: We have been moved by all of the wonderful events that occurred here this morning and the short time that we’ve spent with you the All American Boys Chorus has had an incredible experience of The American Legion. The year 2000 will mark the 30th anniversary of this musical organization, the All American Boys Chorus. The boys have done so many incredible things through these decades. We do invite you to visit our booth at the far end of your trade show after the meeting has concluded today and find out more about the All American Boys Chorus, peruse the information and take some of their music home with you on CD or cassette tape. You’re all very lucky because we just happen to have a few hundred of them here today and you will find them over in the trade show in our booth. Two albums of holiday music and two albums that we like to call Americana, the music of this great land of ours. In closing our part of this morning’s program, we invite you to join us in singing about this great land, from New York to L.A. and all across the fruited plane, may God bless us all. May God bless America.
At this time, the Delegates listened to the choir.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: Let’s show the All American Boys Choir how much we appreciate it.

As we begin our 81st National Convention here in California, we are honored to have several individuals who have stopped by this morning to give us some greetings. Our first guest is the United States Representative for the 39th District of California, which includes the area of Anaheim that we are in right now. He’s served in Congress since 1992 and is best known for his efforts to eliminate wasteful government spending, provide tax relief and streamline our regulations. It is with great pride that I ask you to join with me to welcome to the Honorable Ed Royce.

Address: The Honorable Edward Royce
United States House of Representatives

The American Legion is a truly outstanding organization because it understands two things. It understands the importance of veterans, and it understands the needs of its members. I am honored to be standing here today with you who have so selflessly given so that others may experience the freedom that we all cherish.

It states on the Korean War Memorial that freedom is not free. No one understands this better than you. This country owes its life’s blood to its veterans. We look at you and we see loyalty, faith, devotion to America, and we take our cues from you. We and future generations are indebted to you, and especially we are indebted to that generation that Tom Brokaw calls our greatest generation. We are indebted for the service you rendered, but we’re also indebted for the example that you set in defending liberty for all.

Your service to our country continues today. Through your efforts with our nation’s youth, and programs like the scholastic competitions help our young people; they help them learn more about the United States; they help them learn self-government, and in the end the real winner is the United States, as tomorrow’s leaders are learning to lead us today.

The American Legion understands something else. It understands America owes a debt of gratitude to her veterans, and we must not forget those veterans during their time of need. I want to acknowledge personally the effect that The American Legion has. When The VA Healthcare Spending Appropriations Bill came from the Administration, it showed the VA budget was short. The leadership of the VA went to work, and when that bill comes before Congress when we return, there will be 1.7 billion in additional spending so that we avoid the needless closure of veterans programs and facilities. It should enable us to meet the challenge of hepatitis C among veterans, and to increase spending on long-term care.

When the VA leadership speaks and when you speak, it is with a certain authority. I remember the vote in June on the Veterans Benefits Improvement Act. That provided for the cost of living increase for disability compensation and pensions, and it also accelerated construction of the National World War II Memorial. It also directed the VA Secretary to start planning four new National veteran cemeteries. That vote was four hundred twenty-four to zero. So as I say, veterans speak with a certain authority.

I briefly wanted to address one issue with you here today that many veterans have approached me about at town meetings and in speeches across the state. Veterans make the following point. They say the world today is a dangerous place. Americans depend on our armed services to protect our families at home, and our interests overseas. They say over the past several decades that our military has risen to the challenge, that we’ve preserved peace
through strength and through readiness. But they raise this concern: Veterans say as we approach this new century, that our national security is again impaired. They say over the past decade excessive deployments and inadequate funding have reduced American military strength to levels that they consider dangerously low. Foreign powers have penetrated our most vital research facilities and have obtained our deepest nuclear secrets, even as the world’s most dangerous nations build these weapons of mass destruction and the missiles to deliver them, nations such as North Korea. American cities remain unprotected by any national missile defense.

People tell me that we as a nation learned these lessons the hard way. We learned peace through strength the hard way. We cannot continue to ask our military to do more with less. We know that America’s enemies are imbolded by any weakness and deterred when we demonstrate strength, and when we demonstrate resolve. When veterans raise these points at town meetings and in letters that they send us in Congress, they’re right. Excessive deployments and inadequate funding have reduced our military readiness, I believe, to dangerously low levels.

Since the end of the Cold War we have asked our military to do three times more with over one third less. By sending our forces on more missions with less support, our capacity to defend ourselves has eroded and created a true national security challenge. During the height of the Cold War, from 1960 to 1991, American troops were deployed 10 times. But post-Cold War, they have been deployed 26 times. There are now 265,000 American troops in 135 countries. And these deployments can dangerously erode our fighting capacity.

The U.S. came close to running out of air launch cruise missiles. More than half of the B-1 bombers at Elsworth Air Force Base lack critical spare parts. They are not mission capable.

A peace dividend is one thing, but America spends the least percentage of its gross national product on defense today than at any point since Pearl Harbor. Since 1989 the Army and Air Force have been reduced by 45 percent; the Navy by 36 percent; Marine Corps by 12 percent. In Congressional testimony late in April, the Air Force reported the worst situation: parts and equipment shortages of 18 billion; the Navy, 3.8 billion; the Army 3.7 billion and the Marines 3.2 billion. Now that’s 28.7 billion in shortfall. And while we won the Gulf War in 1990 with eight of our 18 Army divisions, we have only 10 total divisions today, but need to be ready to fight two Gulf War size conflicts at once. And that’s why our forces lack sufficient funds to do their job. And that is the reason why in the last few sessions Congress has beefed up inadequate requests for military authorizations by a full 29.5 billion dollars. This is being done because of the deterioration in readiness resulting from deployments. On May 20th, Congress put national security first by passing a bill to make deployment of a missile defense our national policy. In this authorization bill this year, 852 million to national missile defense will be spent to protect our cities and our families.

These are the new efforts being undertaken now to restore American security. And these efforts are being undertaken partly because of the leadership of The American Legion. Again, I thank everyone here for letting us live free. You are an inspiration to every American, and I’m honored to have had the chance to address you here today.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: Thank you Congressman Royce. It is indeed nice to know that we have friends in places who can help us.

Our next guest is a former educator. Yet, in reading her biography I was somewhat struck by her leadership involvement with countless non-profit organizations in the local Anaheim area. To say that in her 25 years of living in Anaheim she has made a difference
to both young and old would truly be an understatement. Please join me and welcome the Mayor Pro-Tern of Anaheim, Shirley McCracken.

Address: The Honorable Shirley McCracken
Mayor Pro Tern of the City of Anaheim

I consider it a privilege to be here today. I come from a family of veterans. They have served in World War I, World War II, Korea, Vietnam, Desert Storm and Somalia, and have served in every branch of the armed forces except for the Coast Guard, so I will have to work on my son to consider the Coast Guard so we'll make sure we get them all.

Welcome to Anaheim to the members of The American Legion, from the mayor, from the members of the city council, and from the people of Anaheim. For it is the people of Anaheim that The American Legion plays a very special role in our community. We are fortunate to have them work in our community for veterans issues. For one special role, along with other veterans organizations, we will dedicate a monument to American veterans opposite our city hall on November 11th of this year due to the concerns of The American Legion.

Members of The American Legion work in community service and they work with our youth. We are very fortunate to have them involved. I would like to share with you some of the concerns we have for the veterans, many of whom we find homeless on our streets. Within the next 18 months, Anaheim will have a combined veterans home and veterans shelter to serve the needs of those men and women.

American Legion Conventions are places where you work for veterans issues and where you plan for your various community projects. I know that sometimes you spend a great deal of time and energy getting ready for the kinds of service you are going to do back home, but remember veterans, do take some time for R & R.

Welcome to Anaheim. Have a great time here. We feel privileged that you are with us and that you will share your time with us for the next few days. Remember that we treasure you so you can treasure all of those who have served ahead of you, and those who are still serving a very small number in all of the various branches of the united armed forces. Thank you for coming.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: Thank you, Shirley. You certainly have a beautiful city here and we appreciate being here.

Talking about being here, without the host department within the various states that we visit, having a National Convention would be almost impossible. In the past program year, California’s Department Commander has led the effort to assemble all of the volunteers and other workers necessary to put on this National Convention for our successful gathering here. He is rightfully proud to have us in his home state, and I would add that we are proud to be here. Please give a warm greeting to the Immediate Past Department Commander of the Department of California, Dave Eby.

David L. Eby, 1998-99 Department Commander
The American Legion of California

It is indeed an honor to welcome you to California. On behalf of the 140,000 plus members in the Department of California, it is great to have you here. I want to direct your
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attention over to the California banner to this year's Department Commander, Willie Wilkin, and the California delegation.

We have traveled many hours to get here; some several minutes; some several hours from just minutes away. But we have traveled from the great redwoods in the north; from the mountains of the northeast; from the high deserts in the south, to the sandy beaches of San Diego. And we invite you to visit each of our posts, and you will find why 10 percent of the veteran population in this great nation have chosen California as their home.

We worked hard this past year to organize one of the best conventions that California has ever known. You will see some individuals coming up behind me that made it possible. For the past year as Commander, it has been indeed a pleasure. And Commander Miller, we did lose your luggage, but we did find something. If you could come up here for a moment. I know this is very small but this is something that’s very big in California. I present you with a Membership 2000 pin.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: Thank you.

DEPARTMENT COMMANDER EBY: We welcome you to California and wish you God speed, have a great convention, and may you have a safe visit and transportation back home.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: Rounding out our greetings this morning is a man who is well known to all of us. He is a deputy in the California Department of Veterans Affairs, President of the California American Legion National Convention Corporation, and a member of an illustrious group that I am looking forward to joining in a few days, that is he is a Past National Commander.

Please welcome Past National Commander Bruce Thiesen.

Bruce Thiesen, President

The American Legion National Convention Corporation of California

I think we'll keep this convention going for another week. He's enjoying his position as National Commander so well.

Welcome to California. It’s all that we said it would be and then some. I didn’t know it would be so good for you in California this time of the year, so it has been an enjoyable opportunity and a pleasure to bring what I consider some of the best weather that California has to offer to Anaheim in '99 so that you can enjoy all the amenities that this great state has to offer.

I would like to say that as the National Commander did state, that I am the Deputy Secretary now of the Department of Veterans Affairs, appointed by Governor Gray Davis when he took office in January. Governor Davis has a busy schedule. Of course, he is a decorated Vietnam veteran, and extends his regrets that he cannot make it. As of last Thursday he had 1200 bills to sign by the close of work on Friday, September the 10th, which at that time our legislative body goes on recess until January. So their work is cut out for them. And today, being the first day of school starts up in California for many schools, and his involvement in education programs around the state, he had a couple commitments. The book is still open and we are looking forward to a possibility of having him with us. So again, he did extend his welcome to each and every one of you as I came before you this morning.

We have had joint cooperation with many, many Legionnaires and Auxiliary members throughout of State of California. Let me assure you throughout this nation, because it takes
a lot of effort and information, a lot of give and take from those departments who have hosted a convention such as this magnitude before. We have had some experience. We have with us in the audience Past National Commander Bill Burke, and of course Past National President of the American Legion Auxiliary Josie Melgard, both from California who offered some insight to our labors here. We have also had the help of one who has served this organization well this year, not past yet, but National Vice Commander Leo Burke. So Leo, thanks for your help and your input as well.

Putting together a convention of this magnitude is more than I ever envisioned. They elected me to serve as president of this corporation, and in turn I had to look for someone to carry the ball and move it forward who lived in the immediate area. Well, the person who was chosen early on in this endeavor was Joe Early, a Past Department Commander of the Department of California. Joe, please come forward. Get a good look at him, because all the good things that you've got to say about this convention, direct them to Joe Early because he has done one heck of a job to bring this convention to you this time. Joe, thank you. If you've got any problems, you come and see me. I'll keep the heat off of Joe because he's done a lot for you. But I don't anticipate any problems. Everything is moving swell, especially working with the National Staff as they move in.

Thanks for the support. Enjoy the State of California. Enjoy all that we have here. It has been a pleasure to serve you.

Commander Miller, I say as a Past National Commander to you and to all the Legionnaires throughout this great nation, thanks for the splendid job that you have done serving this organization and bringing The American Legion and the issues of the veterans not only to this great nation, but to the world in your travels.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: Thanks for all of your hard work, Joe and Bruce.

I now call on our National Adjutant, Robert Spanogle, with the Department of Michigan to issue the Call for Convention.

Call for Convention
Robert W. Spanogle
National Adjutant

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLÉ: The call for the 81st Annual National Convention of The American Legion. By the authority of the National Executive Committee, the 81st Annual National Convention of The American Legion is hereby called to meet in Anaheim, California, September 7th through the 9th, 1999. The convention business sessions will be held in the Anaheim Convention Center, Hall B, first level.

PURPOSE

The Annual National Convention is the legislative body of the American Legion. The convention is called for the purpose of setting the program of The American Legion for the ensuing year amending the National Constitution and By-Laws and for the transaction of such other business as may be brought before it. At 12:00 noon of the final session or at the conclusion of all business of the National Convention, which ever first occurs on Thursday, September 9th, 1999, officers for the ensuing year will be elected. These being the National Commander and the five National Vice Commanders in that sequence.
REPRESENTATION

Representation in the national convention shall be by department and in accordance with the provisions of the National Constitution. (Section 3, Article V)

VOTE

"...Each department shall be entitled to five delegates and one additional delegate for each 1,000 members or major fraction thereof whose current dues have been received by the National Treasurer 30 days prior to the meeting of said convention August 9th and whose registration fees as fixed by the National Executive Committee for its total authorized delegate strength have been paid and one alternate for each delegate." (Section 3, Article V)

In addition to the above, the members of the National Executive Committee are delegates to the National Convention with vote which shall be exercised with the respected departments except that the vote of the National Commander shall be exercised only in his capacity as Chairman of the National Convention. (Section 3, Article VII)

"Each duly registered delegate shall be entitled to one vote." (Section 4, Article V)

Delegates to the National Convention shall be accredited in writing to the National Adjutant in the number and manner prescribed by Article V of the National Constitution. The rights of departments to make accredited substitutes for absentee delegates or alternate delegates shall be recognized by the National Adjutant provided it says substitution shall be officially certified by the Department Commander and Department Adjutant at the time of the certification required by the National Convention or at any time prior to the adjournment of the first session of the National Convention.

ALTERNATES

Alternates shall have the power to vote only in the absence of regular delegates. The selection of alternates to represent absent delegates is a matter for decision within the respected delegations. The vote of any registered delegate absent or not represented by an alternate shall be cast by the majority of the registered delegates present from his or her department.

NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

A meeting of the new National Executive Committee will be held at the call of the National Commander within 24 hours after the adjournment of the National Convention as provided by the National Constitution and Bylaws.

DEPARTMENT OFFICIALS

The department official, unless elected as delegates or alternates to the National Convention, have no privilege in the Convention except as a guest of their respective delegates.

CONVENTION COMMITTEES

Convention Committee

Americanism
Children & Youth
Constitutional Amendments
Credentials and Internal Affairs

No. of Members to which each Dept. is entitled:
One Delegate
One Delegate
One Delegate
Credentials and Other Internal Matters, One Delegate
(Sections I & II) One Delegate
Membership (Sec. III)

Economic
Employment & Veteran Preference One Delegate
Other Economic Matters One Delegate

Finance One Delegate
Foreign Relations One Delegate
Legislation & Rules One Delegate

National Security Committee; Joint Meeting One Delegate
(Includes Aerospace, Defense, Civil Preparedness,
Law and Order, Merchant Marine, Military
Affairs, Naval Affairs)

Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation One Delegate
Claims Rating One Delegate
Hospital and Medical Services One Delegate

Mr. Commander, that completes the call for the 81st Annual National Convention.
NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: I declare the 1999 81st National Convention
of The American Legion to be regularly convened.

[National Vice Commander Tingler now assumes the Chair.]
NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER TINGLER: The Chair recognizes Mr. Herm
Harrington of New York, Chairman of the National Convention Committee on Credentials
and Internal Affairs, for the purpose of making a report.

Report: Section on Credentials & Other Internal Matters
(Section I of Convention Committee on Credentials and Internal Affairs)
Herman G. Harrington, New York, Chairman

Forty-six members and guests of the section on Credentials and Other Internal Matters
met at 9:00 a.m., September 5, 1999, in Malibu, Room #11 on the Concourse Level of the
Anaheim Hilton Hotel, Anaheim, California.
Herman G. Harrington of New York was elected Chairman, and Larry J. Besson of
Illinois was elected Secretary.

It was regularly moved, seconded and carried to accept the Delegate Strength Report
as reported by the National Adjutant certifying membership 30 days prior to the National
Convention. It was regularly moved, seconded and carried that the report be based upon the
provisions of Section 3, Article V, of the National Constitution: Five delegates for each
Department, plus one additional delegate for each 1,000 members or major fraction thereof,
whose current dues have been received by the National Treasurer thirty (30) days prior to
the opening of the National Convention (August 9, 1999); and one alternate for each
delegate. In addition, in accordance with Section 3, Article VII, members of the National
Executive Committee which committee includes the National Commander, who exercises
his vote only in the capacity as Chairman of the National Convention, and five (5) national
Vice Commanders are delegates to the National Convention.
All living past National Commanders are members of the National Executive Committee without vote and life delegates to the National Convention with vote, which is exercised with their respective Departments. (Voting strength figures attached.)

Motion was adopted by majority vote that the Committee Chairman and Secretary be authorized to sign the Committee report on behalf of the Committee.

In accordance with the membership report certified to the National Convention Committee on Credentials and Internal Affairs by the National Adjutant on August 9, 1999, and in accordance with Article V of the National Constitution, the voting strength of the 55 Departments is 3,120 allocated as follows:

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<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Voting Strength</th>
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<tr>
<td>Alabama</td>
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<td>Alaska</td>
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<td>Arkansas</td>
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<td>California</td>
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<td>Connecticut</td>
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<td>District of Columbia</td>
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<td>Florida</td>
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<td>France</td>
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<td>Georgia</td>
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<td>Hawaii</td>
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<td>Wisconsin</td>
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<td>Wyoming</td>
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Mr. Commander, as a duly elected and registered delegate from the Department of New York, I move the adoption of the report.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: Do I hear a second?

...The report was seconded.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: Any discussion? Hearing none, those in favor of the motion, signify by the usual manner. Opposed? Motion's carried.

In early July a few major newspapers reported that our next guest had resigned. Well, I think it's rather obvious from the fact that he's here with us today that you just can't
believe everything you read in the newspapers nowadays. In the light of those reports, he said simply, “I accepted the job as Secretary of Veterans Affairs with a strong sense of the needs of the American citizen soldier. Those needs remain, and my job is not finished.”

Please welcome to our convention a friend of The American Legion, my former boss at the Department of Veterans Affairs. He is a member of American Legion Post 113 in Idaho, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, the Honorable Togo West, Jr.

Address: The Honorable Togo D. West, Jr.
Secretary of Department of Veterans Affairs

Thank you all for your reception of me and your invitation to me to join you at this, our 81st National Convention. My wife, Gail West, who is behind me here, and I are pleased to be part of this annual gathering of The America’s Legion, those who have served this nation proudly in the uniform of this country, Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, Coast Guard, and who continue to serve under the banner of this great organization.

You meet, we meet, in this our 81st Convention at a time of extraordinary national achievement, not just on the North American continent but around the world. Across the globe the American banner signifies the highest aspirations and ideals of free people everywhere. America’s ideals on principles of values as set out in our formal documents, our Constitution, our Declaration of Independence, but also as exemplified in our daily life, outline the aspirations of free people everywhere. America’s power, military, and by the force of our ideals is unrivaled. We are referred to as the sole remaining superpower. And there are even those in Europe who have been heard to refer to America as the hydropower, presumably something beyond a superpower. America’s Armed Forces, always the first and best, are unrivaled in their supremacy. And this year the Executive Branch of our government and the Congress have agreed to add expanded funding to our defense budget so that America’s youth in uniform can be trained, equipped, and led in order to continue to do their very best.

But here at home, we live in a land in which many of our economic and financial leaders boast of unrivaled economic success now and in the foreseeable future. Though, yes, you and I agree that every day of life in this marvelous country is a gift from God, the fact is that this strength in America, in her economy, in her forces and in her principles, is a gift from those who have fought for two-and-a-quarter centuries to preserve this nation, America’s veterans. A gift from them to the American people.

I pause for a moment to acknowledge that loss to our Legion some three months ago of George Washington Bentley, who had been to that point the sole living member of the Legion who had attended the 1919 Paris Caucus at which this Legion was envisioned and was founded. It was there at that caucus that the Preamble to the Constitution of the Legion where we associate ourselves for God and country was written. That bond, that bond of association for God and country, continues to hold this Legion together even today in the service of America.

Indeed, it was just a few months ago at Veterans Day in November that President Clinton observed that the successes of this nation in peace are due to the sacrifices of America’s veterans in war. The veterans of The American Legion have served some three times over for this nation. First, by their willingness to put on the uniform of this nation, to put their patriotism on display for the world to see. Second, by their willingness to go into
harm's way for this nation, to absorb with their bodies the blows intended by America's foes for the body of the American politic, to accept with their spirits the wounds, physical and mental, intended to be inflicted upon the American people. And thirdly, they have served by returning to their societies, to their communities, and even as America's veterans have taken off their uniforms, not taken off their concern for this nation for her security, for her survival, and for her prosperity.

The American Legion in its 80 years of existence has exemplified this triple commitment of America's veterans through your support of our youth, teaching them about life, about patriotism, about love of country, about democracy and its workings, in your support of Boys State and Boys Nation, your support of the Boy Scouts of America. As I have expressed to you before, as a Boy Scout myself, that support on your part is immensely important to me because of what I know it does to develop America's future leaders.

You have demonstrated it in American Legion baseball. As much a tradition of this nation, as much woven into the life of this nation as baseball itself, and producing some notable graduates including your Graduate of the Year, the home run leader whom I note is once again Mark McGwire, along with Sammy Sosa, again providing us somewhat unparalleled excitement.

You have shown your support of America's veterans as well. Your Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission, through your commitment to advocate for veterans and their families in the Congress and the state houses of America and before the executive branch.

As I have said to you now in three previous discussions with you, twice now this convention, this is the fourth, twice in your midwinter meetings, you have earned my personal thanks as a son of North Carolina where I was born and grew up, who was given opportunity by this nation as the father, with Gail West, of two daughters who have grown to adulthood, secure in the land of opportunity. You earned my personal thanks because of your support of the banner of this nation, the flag, which has assured their freedom, their opportunity. So I say to you again as I have said to you before, it is a personal commitment of mine I will never oppose, never criticize, never disagree with any organization, including this one, which advocates the protection of the banner of this nation, the American flag. Now, of course, it may put me at odds with some members of the administration. I may have to explain myself, but that is my position. I am happy to hold to it.

In so many ways, America's veterans through this great organization, through their service, through their continued belief in this nation, have earned the respect, have earned the support, have earned the gratitude of America and of America's people. Now, you and I know that gratitude can be demonstrated in any number of ways. First, we can simply have the courtesy, the politeness, to say thank you. Thank you to the veterans that America's people meet on the streets every day. Thank you to the men and women in uniform. Thank you to The American Legion, which is one of my reasons for being here today. Secondly, a nation can express our gratitude by remembering. Remembering the sacrifice of her veterans. Remembering the loss of her military families. Remembering the times of trial as we do at Veterans Day, on Memorial Day, on Independence Day. And I believe as so many Americans do on every single day of our national life. But I think you and I also know that the most solid demonstration of gratitude is to put our words into action, to show as a nation, as a people, and as a government our gratitude by what we do. It is for that reason that I was proud to stand some four weeks ago on the tarmac at the airport in Nashville with Vice President Gore, from whom you will hear tomorrow, as he announced this administration's
commitment to add an additional $1 billion plus to a veterans health care budget for the coming year 2000. I was equally as proud when just a few hours later a committee of the Congress indicated, voted, to add an additional $700 million to that for a total of $1.7 billion for the veterans budget. I am proud that this debate is not over yet, that when the Congress returns in a few days this week, that they will be taking up measures designed to add increased funding to the veterans budget for the FY 2000.

First of all, that extra amount of money will go for a number of things that I will discuss in a few seconds. But remember, we won't know the exact amount until much later this month. Perhaps near the end of the month, beginning of October, because the VA, HUD, Health Care Appropriations bill is traditionally the last one the Congress acts on. I am willing, however, to make a prediction. Now my staff says be careful about predictions on budgets, but I am willing to make that prediction anyway; that is, that by the time the smoke has cleared we will see in the VA budget for the coming year an increase of at least $1 billion, $1.7 billion, I believe. And that is money that we can put to good use for veterans in the coming year.

A second thing about the significance of that development is this: We are already in the process in this department in working with the leadership of the VA, The American Legion, and other VSOs to put together the beginnings of the budget for fiscal year 2001. As you and our leadership in The American Legion know, the 2001 budget will be based as a beginning point on the budget for the year 2000. So every dollar of increase in FY 2000 signals our ability to have increases in FY 2001 as well. It's very important that these increases not be just a one-time thing but signal a continuing commitment to the improvement of health care benefits and delivery for our veterans in this nation.

Finally, budgets are not just about rearranging sources of revenue or the utilization of our nation's assets. Budgets are about a nation's priority. So the third significance of these increases is that they make clear this nation's priorities, that this nation places among her leading priorities living up to our commitment to our veterans and to their families for their service to this nation.

As a result, in the coming fiscal year, we will go forward with our plan to open 89 new community-based health care centers, outpatient clinics. We will go forward with our plans to add more than 400 additional personnel into the processing of claims for veterans benefits. All too often over the past year, as I and my deputy, Hershel Gober, have traveled across this nation, we have heard time and time again that our veterans are having to wait too long for the processing of their claims, for the making of their appointments for health care. We expect to use these additional resources both to shorten the time in which veterans have to wait for their health care appointments, the Veterans Health Administration, and to improve the processing of claims in the Veterans Benefits Administration. And finally, in the coming year, in the coming 12 months, we will open the largest number of national cemeteries opened at any one time in the history of this nation, some four. One of them already opened. We already had the opening in Saratoga, New York. And there are three more to come in Ohio, Illinois, and Texas, in this year.

We can talk about who gets credit for these increases. We can lay it at the feet of members of Congress, the administration. We can place it wherever we choose. But I remind you of one old, battle wounded veteran three times wounded in the Civil War said on one occasion to his fellow veterans, Justice Holmes. He said, "I learned in the regiment and in the classroom what I considered to be the best we can do for ourselves and for our nation. To see as far as one may. To try to understand the powerful forces at work behind the
details. To hammer out as solid a piece of work as possible. To make it first rate. And to leave it unadvertised.” But differently Justice Holmes said that, “If we do not care who gets the credit, we can achieve a whole lot of good things.” If we don’t care who gets the credit for improving the veterans budget, we can achieve a lot. Now why? Why should we work so hard to do these things? Is it because the administration and the members of Congress are good people? Well, although we like to think they are and we are, it is not for that reason. Is it because the American people are generous and are moved by generosity?

Well, I believe that the American people are good and decent and generous, but that is not the reason either. These increased monies in the VA budget, these increased resources devoted to veterans, are there because they belonged to veterans all along. They were earned in the First World War in the Argonne Forest. They were earned in the Second World War at Normandy, in the Pacific. They were earned in Korea and in Vietnam. They were earned in Desert Storm. Those resources are put there because they belong to our veterans who have earned them with their blood and their sweat.

As I began my few brief comments to you today, I referred to all that our veterans have achieved for this nation to bring her to this pinnacle of unrivaled power and influence in the nation. It raises the question of what has enabled America’s men and women in uniform and their families to achieve so much for this relatively young nation. Two-and-a-quarter centuries, after all, is not a very long time in the history of this world. One person gave an answer back at the beginning of World War II when the questions of entering the war or not were being debated. Harold L. Ickes, then the Secretary of the Interior for President Roosevelt spoke of what constitutes an American. For it is that which unites America’s veterans, that common bond of being American. He said, “What constitutes an American? Not color. Not race. Not religion. Not pedigree of family nor place of birth. Not his social standing nor the size of his bank account. Not his trade. Not his profession. An American is one who loves justice and believes deeply in the dignity of every man and every woman. An American will fight for his freedom and for the freedom of his neighbor. An American is one who will forgo ease and property and security to assure for himself and his children the freedoms of free men and free women.”

Well, God bless all those Americans who, in uniform, have stood for this nation over her life. God bless those who stand in their footsteps today in uniform of their services across the world. God bless those who love them and those whom they love. And on this day, here on the West Coast of the United States, in this 81st Convention of America’s Legion, The American Legion, a place where patriotism is never out of style, a convention where it is never inappropriate to disclose one’s love of country and of this country’s people, here may God bless as well that dear and noble nation which has given to you and to me, to our children, and will give to our children’s children, life, liberty, and opportunity. And to which you have given, to which we have given, our loyalty, our service, and, oh, yes, our love. God bless you all.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: Mr. Secretary, I must say it’s refreshing to have a gentleman of your stature who served the veterans so well in this country to have the courage to step forward and show that courage in your wish for the protection of our flag. Thank you for all the wonderful things you do, Togo.
Presentation: The American Legion Distinguished Service Award
Butch L. Miller, Virginia, National Commander

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: The American Legion honors many men and women for their dedicated service and efforts. The highest form of recognition that can be bestowed at the national level is The American Legion Distinguished Service Medal. This morning it is an honor to make that presentation, but I have to tell you that that honor comes with a full measure of sadness as well.

The gentleman that we have chosen to honor passed away June 4th of 1999. He is Zachary Fisher, a truly great American who actually was the son of a Russian emigrant. What he accomplished in his lifetime will be forever remembered in the history books but even more so in the lives that he touched. I would like you to watch a videotaped tribute to Zachary, to the man we honor today. It reveals to you his true spirit which molded the life of one Mr. Zachary Fisher.

...At this time videotape was viewed by the delegation.

I think it's very easy to understand why we honor Zachary today. Every day of his life, in every way possible, Zachary Fisher gave back to the nation that he loved and those who defended her. He truly deserves The American Legion Distinguished Service Medal.

Here to accept for the Fisher family is Ms. Gail Berry West, a volunteer member of the Board of Directors of the Fisher House Foundation.

MRS. GAIL WEST: Zachary very much wanted to be here today to accept The American Legion Distinguished Service Medal. Sadly, he cannot. In mid-March, Zachary wrote National Commander Miller, "I am humbled to learn of my nomination to receive The American Legion Distinguished Service Medal." He was looking forward to your annual convention, but his health began to worsen. He went into the hospital in early April and remained there until he passed away on June 4th. Before he died, Mr. Fisher asked that I represent him to accept the Distinguished Service Medal, and I am honored to do that today.

Zachary Fisher had a special love for the military and its men and women in uniform. When President Clinton presented him the Medal of Freedom in September of last year, Zachary responded by saying:

I am proud of the calling which I have answered for the last 20 years, that of supporting the young men and women who defend our nation and their families. Our whole nation owes them a great debt. And Elizabeth and I have tried to do our share to pay that debt. Every member of the Armed Forces is welcome aboard Intrepid. Everyone can enjoy fleet week. Any military or veteran's family can stay in a Fisher house. Any military dependent can apply for one of our scholarships. I hope that these steps have made and will continue to make a difference in the lives of at least some of the men and women who proudly wear or have worn America's uniform.

I am here today to assure you that the magnificent programs begun by Zachary and his wife, Elizabeth, will continue. Zachary and Elizabeth did not have any children of their own, so two of their nephews have stepped in. Arnold Fisher will manage The Fisher House Program, while nephew Tony Fisher concentrates on the Intrepid Sea-Air-Space Museum [New York City]. They are committing their time and their resources to continue his programs of support for members of the military, veterans, and their families.

But without Zachary Fisher, we will need your support to continue the legacy begun by two great American patriots: to build more Fisher Houses; to modernize the Intrepid Sea-Air-Space Museum; to continue awarding scholarships to the sons and daughters of our military, we need partners, individuals, organizations, and corporations. The American
Legion Auxiliary has been one such partner. They are the single largest organizational donor to the network of 26 Fisher Houses which provide shelter and support to families when a loved one is hospitalized at a military or VA medical center. With help from the American Legion Auxiliary and thousands of others, we will be building three new Fisher Houses over the next two years.

This was Zachary’s dream and his legacy. It has been and will continue to be a privilege and honor for me to serve as a trustee of an organization dedicated to bettering the quality of life for America’s heroes, its service members, veterans, and their families. Were Zachary Fisher alive today and able to be with us, he undoubtedly would have noted that his award is for patriotism and public service. And he would have saluted you, loyal Legionnaires, for your service to our nation and its men and women in uniform.

On behalf of the Fisher family and the Fisher family of philanthropic foundations, we are proudly grateful for the recognition accorded to our founder, our mentor, and hero. Thank you so very much, and God bless each of you for your service to our nation.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: Thank you, Gail, for representing the Fisher Foundation. It truly is an honor to be able to recognize Zachary and what he did.

For ten straight national conventions, we have dedicated and rededicated this great organization to the effort to return to Congress and the people the right to protect the flag of these United States. I don’t think any of us anticipated the true measure of this struggle. After all, our free speech rights have flourished for nearly 200 years when flag desecration was against the law.

Well, we may not have anticipated it would take more than a decade to work to restore that protection. I am proud, and I’m sure that you are, too, that The American Legion remains steadfast in leading the effort to protect our flag. It is time once again for us to be brought up to date on our efforts. There is no better person to do that than our Chairman of the Citizens Flag Alliance, a retired Major General, a recipient of the nation’s highest honor, the Medal of Honor, for his service in Vietnam, and one of America’s greatest Americans I have ever had the pleasure of meeting, and I’m sure many of you have had the pleasure of meeting him, too. Please rise and give the proper honor to a member of American Legion Post 800 in Idyllwild, California, Retired Major General Patrick Brady.

Special Report: Citizens Flag Alliance, Inc.
Major General Patrick H. Brady (USA Ret.)
Chairman of the Board

It’s always such a great honor for me to be with you folks and to be able to talk to you. I went to a rally yesterday on the Legion’s fight for what is right. And I don’t think there’s any fight more right, there’s no cause more just, than to protect veterans, to protect the security of our nation, our Constitution, and to promote patriotism among the young people. Since St. Patrick’s Day over 80 years ago, no one has done that better than the Legion. What is right is why you exist.

But the inspiration, I think, and the faithful companion to the Legion’s fight for what is right has been Old Glory. In fact, the Stars and Stripes has been the constant companion and inspiration of all those in our history who have fought for what is right. Think of any significant event that’s ever happened in America that did not involve our flag, from the Civil War to Suribachi to the moon landing. And therein, I think, lies Old Glory’s greater worth. The unique respect that Americans have for our flag has inspired throughout all our
history the values our veterans fought for, values that make us the most respected nation on
earth, and values that are vital and inspirational to our children and to our future.

Waving the flag has ignited the flame of patriotism in the hearts of countless Americans. Burning the flag will help put that flame out. The flag represents the core of what we have been in this country, what you all gave us in this country. Burning the flag represents what we are becoming.

All of you who helped pay the price for our freedom. You once took an oath to protect and defend our Constitution against all enemies, foreign and domestic. Every day millions of Americans take that same oath when they pledge allegiance to our flag. Now, although we take the oath and the pledge in the presence of Old Glory, it’s not the colored cloth, it’s the Constitution that’s in our hearts. We have all seen our share of foreign enemies to our Constitution, communists, fascists, dictators. They are now vanquished to the slime pit of history. There are always going to be foreign enemies to our Constitution, but none that we can’t handle, at least right now. The threat to our Constitution today is domestic. If it is ever destroyed, it will be by us as we commit suicide. That’s why the Legion is leading the fight to recapture our flag. As the politicians will say, it’s not the flag, stupid, it’s our Constitution.

Today’s enemies to the Constitution aren’t armed with guns and tanks. They don’t wear camouflage fatigues. They don’t bunker in the jungle. They wear black robes and expensive suits, and their bunkers are the courtrooms, the classrooms, the coat rooms, and the newsrooms. The missiles are lawsuits, legal dictates and media misinformation. Unfortunately, the casualties in this war are parents, children, teachers, and hard-working Americans struggling every day just to do what’s right. Those who assault our Constitution grew up on different playing fields than the rest of us, the playing fields of the elite, and most of them have never seen a battlefield. They have a vision of our Constitution that’s alien to most persons. Their battle cry is that evil has worth, that toleration for offensive and evil conduct is essential to freedom. Now where in the Constitution does it say that? Where does it say that we must tolerate conduct which a majority find evil or offensive? What has that to do with our freedom? They are masters of psychological warfare. They know if they can change the language, they can change our Constitution. Their armor is a distorted First Amendment, but the target is the Constitution. They are determined to mold it to their ideals and never mind the ideals of the Founding Fathers who created it.

A great Chief Justice, Hugo Black, said, “Our Constitution was not written in sands to be washed away by each successive wave of new judges blown in by each successive political wind.” He also said, “It passes my belief that anything in the federal Constitution bars making the deliberate burning of the American flag an offense.”

These elite will shout hysterically about a tyranny of a majority simply because they fear the will of the majority. They fear the democratic process. Why else would they deny us the right to protect our flag. Just to vote on this issue?

Some senators in the media say the flag amendment aligns the United States with totalitarian governments like China, Cuba, and Iran. The statement is truly amazing. To compare an American flag, protected according to the will of the American people, with flags that represent the horrors of Saddam Hussein, Mao Tse-tung, and Fidel Castro, I think, is an insult to all Americans and all that Americans stand for. George Washington helped design and adopt our flag. Does that align him with Communists? James Madison wrote the First Amendment. He and Thomas Jefferson both believed that our flag should be protected.
Does that align them with Hitler or Stalin? Our flag is designed and owned by the people, not a party.

Someone said that under majority rule, heads are counted; under minority rule, heads are cracked. It’s vital that the will of the majority rule. In a democracy, it’s the wisdom of the majority that protects us from the tyranny of the minority. Whether the minority be dictators, communists, fascists, or judges and those who compare our will with the will of dictators. It’s a remarkable difference between our flag and the flag of tyrants that warrants its protection.

The enemy these elite fear most is an informed, alert, and active majority. A victory for an amendment which will return to us the right to our flag would be for them a devastating defeat. It would change the battlefield from the courtrooms to the living rooms. And for them it could start a slippery slope which will return to the people their Constitution. They fear Americans who ask why. Their position is endangered every time we ask why. The American GI was the most lethal weapon on any battlefield that he ever entered simply because he asked why. Why are we doing it this way? Is there a better way? And he usually found one.

Why is flag burning and pornography protected speech and prayer not? What is said when you burn a flag? If speech can be other than verbal, why isn’t flying the flag speech and burning the flag an assault on speech? Why does the Supreme Court allow the flag to be burned anywhere except on their steps? If flag protection will destroy the Bill of Rights, why didn’t it do so during the 200 years in which we have the right to protect our flag? Where in the First Amendment do we find conduct or expressive conduct or even expression? Why did the author of the First Amendment denounce flag burning if it was speech?

Abraham Lincoln once asked how many legs does a dog have if you call his tail a leg? The answer is four. You can’t change a tail to a leg by calling it one. And you can’t burn a flag with your tongue.

Most agree that the burning of the flag is a sign of moral weakness in an individual. Why then isn’t the legalized burning of our flag a sign of moral weakness in our country? Why does the media bombard us with pro flag-burners they call heroes, like John Glenn. They give no coverage to heroes like Norman Schwartzkopf who said, “I regard the legal protection of our flag an absolute necessity and a matter of critical importance to our nation.” He told me that his troops understood the importance of free speech. They would die for it. But what they don’t understand is how is defecating on our flag is speech.

These folks rant and rave about civil liberties, but they never mention civil responsibility. There can be no freedom in our country without personal responsibility. The Constitution is nothing if it’s not a set of values. A great teacher in his condemnation of a valueless society wrote about men without chest. The chest he called the spiritual element, the value center of a person. It was the indispensable connection between the head, the intellectual part, and the belly, the visceral, emotional part of our nature. Balance and goodness comes when the head rules the belly through the chest. Danger comes in a people without a chest, from intellectuals without values, and human animals governed by their passion and instincts alone. Columbine High School had two young men without chests. They asked a young lady if she believed in God. She said yes, and they shot her. Now she was ruled by a system of values. They weren’t. And therein lies the cause. All the rest is meaningless commentary. People without chest would not possibly understand the importance of our flag or any symbols. The ACLU says the flag is just a piece of cloth and
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a wedding ring is just a piece of gold and the cross is just a piece of wood and the Constitution is just a piece of paper. They see a colored cloth burning. Those who have chest see our Constitution, our ideals, burning.

One of our senators, in defense of flag burning, wrote, "I do not believe reverence for our country and its symbols can or should be imposed by law." That’s a remarkable thing to say. Reverence as a feeling of awe or respect is, of course, an abstract. It cannot be measured or even known in any way. Certainly, you can't impose it. But reverence as an act of respect can be known and can be measured in many ways. Reverence for a country is known in the acts of patriots like all of those of you who are out here. The acts of our patriots are the foundation of the very security of our country. Would anyone go to war and die for something they did not revere? What if we had a war and no one came? Why should we not have a draft for fear it would impose reverence by law? Why is it illegal to burn draft cards, which is really the symbol of forced reverence in time of crisis?

The Supreme Court Justice Felix Frankfurter said, "We live by symbols. Symbols are vital in a democracy." How can you separate ideals from the symbols that house them? It's like separating a person from his soul. The mentality that says we should do nothing to foster respect for symbols in our country is simply crazy. The senator and a minority like her will tell us that you can't legislate patriotism or morality, that patriotism is the last refuge of scoundrel. Where does that come from? What tells us more about a nation than its system of justice. How many of our laws come from the Ten Commandments, which is really a moral code? What are laws if not morality in action? If our laws do not foster patriotism, which is simply a love of country, of our neighbor, of our land, of our leaders, and it promotes service to others and to America, if we don't foster that, how long will we survive? Patriotism is the last refuge of a free people. The danger from those who demean patriotism is that it may result in the spawning of generations of America who will not care for their country, who will refuse to serve or sacrifice no matter how legitimate and eminent the threat. Most tragically, they will encourage and foster that same kind of conduct in their children.

As you know and as you do, patriotism in its highest form is service to our youth. The entire debate over the flag is centered on what we teach our children. No one would change the People for the American Way, they will not change you, and they will not change me; but they can change the children of the USA. Most will tell you that flag burning is wrong, but what is most important is that what it teaches is worse. It teaches our children disrespect. It teaches them that the outrageous acts of a minority are more important than the will of the majority. It teaches that our laws need not reflect our values and that it is not the Congress, not the people, but the courts that own the Constitution.

There is always a danger that if you have not served your country that you may not care for it. Some of these elite who have never saluted Old Glory in uniform, glory in saluting their personal courage by highlighting the unpopularity of their position on the flag amendment. But they fail to note that this position is very popular with the media and will gain them immeasurable goodwill there. Promoting one’s popularity with the media, the greatest ally of our elite, the greatest influencer of votes in our society, requires absolutely no courage. Getting the media to condemn flag burning is like getting Satan to cast out devils. It’s the politicians who stand up against the media for Old Glory and our Constitution who are truly courageous. I hope that you will let those courageous politicians hear from you. You will hear from some of them today, especially in the Senate, as we await the vote there after an overwhelming victory in the House.
The flags that we pledge will wear out, and they will be replaced; but our Constitution is ageless, and it must never be replaced. The great patriots here today participated in the defeat of all the foreign enemies to our Constitution in this century. It's comforting to know that you great warriors are with us in the battle to recapture Old Glory. You know that it's not a battle over a colored cloth. It's an affirmation of our oath as soldiers, of our pledge as civilians, to protect and defend the Constitution from all its enemies, foreign as well as domestic.

The Supreme Court has a right to make a mistake. They do it all the time. We have an obligation to correct their mistakes. We don't do it all the time. Let's do it this time. Let's send a message to those who mess with our Constitution and who have taken our flag away that we want them back.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: Thank you, General Brady. I would like to personally thank you on behalf of The American Legion for your outstanding service, not only to the veterans of this country and the efforts to the flag, but I know that you are personally involved in this day in and day out. You go around the country and you ask for support. I'm happy to say that The American Legion has responded to that numerous times. As a further indication, we have some gentlemen back here who would like to present some checks to further our cause.

Al Ford, NECman from Michigan.

MR. FORD, Michigan: General Brady, it's a pleasure to be here this morning to present a check from the State of Michigan for $1,668. This is in addition to the forty thousand plus that we have already donated, and I am sure there is more on the way.

GENERAL BRADY: Thank you very much.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: I thank all of you as individuals, as posts, as districts, as departments, as veterans and as citizens for the support that you have given this. You have not wavered one bit, and we will not waver, because protection of our flag is right. We are known as an organization that doesn't always do the easy things; we do the tough things; we do the right things. So keep it up. Morale is High on the flag!

The next guest, and the honor I have been given to introduce him, is truly one that I take very personally. He comes from a long line in his family of naval officers. His grandfather and father were admirals in the Navy. He only became a Captain. Now you might think that his career didn't attain the heights and the levels of his father and his grandfather, but let me tell you what he did. He lived through five and a half years as a prisoner of war, in my war and his war, and a lot of our wars, Vietnam, in that place that you know as Hanoi Hilton.

Today, he is still serving our country and in his third term as a U.S. Senator from the State of Arizona. He serves on the Armed Services Committee. Time Magazine in 1997 said that he was one of the 25 most influential people in America. I'm very proud to say that he is using that influence and he has been, and continues to be, a supporter of Senate Joint Resolution 14, the Flag Protection Amendment. It is with great pride as your National Commander and as a fellow veteran, to introduce to you an American Legion member from Post 2 in Phoenix, Arizona, our friend, Senator John McCain.
Thank you, Butch, for that warm welcome. It is a great privilege and honor to be with you today at our final convention in this century.

Before I get serious, I would like to recall to you one brief event that happened to me before I retired from the Navy. I was over at San Diego at the officer’s club at the bar having a Coca-Cola, as most fighter pilots do. Standing next to me was a very senile looking guy. He looked a lot like Butch Miller, as a matter of fact. I engaged him in conversation and asked, “How long have you been in the Navy?” He said, “41 years.” I then asked, “Why were you not promoted?” He said, “Well, I was based at the 1st Squadron at Henderson Field at Guadalcanal early in World War II. Every single night one Japanese airplane used to fly over our field.” There’s people in this audience that remember. They called it Washing Machine Charlie.

He continued, “It was a harassment raid but the siren would go off, and I would have to get out of my tent, get into my airplane, start the engine and sit there. After awhile, because it was Washing Machine Charlie, the all clear siren would go off; I would shut down the engine and get out of my airplane and go back to bed. It was terrible. I wasn’t getting any sleep; the food was terrible. Well, finally I solved the problem. I went out in the jungle and I caught this monkey. And I trained this monkey that when the siren went off, he’d come out of the jungle, get into my airplane and start the engine and sit there, and when the all clear siren went off, he would shut down the engine and get out of my airplane and go back to the jungle. It was wonderful. It was working like a charm. I was sleeping like a baby every night. Well, sure enough, one night it was not a Japanese air raid, it was not Washing Machine Charlie, it was a real Japanese air raid. I came out of my tent just in time to see that monkey taking off in my airplane.” I said, “Well, I can certainly see why you were not promoted.” He said, “That’s not what makes me mad. The monkey retired as an Admiral last week.” I think maybe some of us served with that monkey; in fact, several monkeys, but I won’t go on.

This morning I had the opportunity to spend time with the ladies of the American Legion Auxiliary. They are a remarkable group of people that exemplify how blessed this nation is, and that service to its noble ideals is and always will be a family affair. Recently, I authored a book, *Faith of My Fathers*, about my family’s military tradition. I wrote it not for myself, but for my father and grandfather, both Navy admirals. I wrote it for all veterans whose service has been inspired, not only by love of country, but love of family and tradition. I wrote it for a special hero in that story: my mother. If this book can contribute in some small way to a greater appreciation of military service and the family’s role in defense of America, I will have considered it a worth while endeavor. God bless our country and our families.

As the days dwindle down in the 20th century, the American century, we look with justifiable pride upon our country’s role in the world history. We are proud and we are humble, humble in the knowledge that we enjoy our freedom because of the devotion of Americans who sacrificed greatly to secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, those brave Americans to whom duty, honor and love of a country were more dear to them than self. We are humble as we remember our sons and daughters who stand their post today in foreign lands and ships across the globe, the thousands of young men and women who guard our freedom. Their service and sacrifice is our nation’s finest honor and
always will be. With me today is one of my dearest friends and comrades from Hanoi Hilton, the first American pilot to be held captive in Hanoi, my dear friend Everett Alvarez. I hope you can welcome him today.

The world that many of us served in was a dangerous one, but more stable than the world today. It was a world where we confronted a massive organized threat, not only to our interests overseas, but to our very security at home. Our enemy was evil, but not irrational. And for all the suffering endured by captive nations and for all the fear of global nuclear war, it was a world made fairly predictable by a stable balance of power between two superpowers. Yet that world had much cruelty and terror, some of which was my fate to witness personally. I have memories of a place so far removed from the comforts of this blessed country, that I have learned to forget some of the anguish it once caused me. But I have not forgotten the friends who did not return with me to the country we love so dearly. The memory of them, of what they bore for honor and country, causes me to look in every prospective conflict for the shadow of Vietnam. I don’t let that shadow hold me in fear for my duty, as God has given me the light to see that duty.

But it no longer falls on us to bear arms in our country’s defense. It falls to our children and our children’s children. Should their duty lead them to war, I pray that the battle will be necessary and the field well chosen. But that is not their responsibility. It’s the duty of the nation’s civilian commanders and those of us privileged to be America’s political leaders, to ensure that the service of our sons and daughters is ordered for causes important enough to justify the sacrifices we ask of them. It is up to us to follow rules that should govern the use of force; rules that we have learned from bitter experience. It’s up to us to make every possible effort to guarantee that the men and women we send into harm’s way are amply provided for as a super power with global responsibilities should provide for its forces. Almost 100,000 Americans are serving overseas in an unprecedented number of contingency peace keeping and humanitarian operations. Our armed forces are deployed for more countries in greater numbers for these purposes than at any time in our history.

While we debate the merits of all these contingencies, it is beyond dispute that a decade of declining defense budgets and ever more frequent deployments have stretched the services perilously close to the breaking point. Many of us who have criticized for sounding the alarm bell in the past, now have the empty satisfaction of seeing the Clinton Administration admit that there is more to maintaining strong defense than falsely promising to do so. After six years of severely under-funding the military, the President reversed himself and proposed increasing the defense budget. Once again, however, his rhetoric has far exceeded his actions.

Now, please don’t mistake these observations for a partisan tirade. Congress deserves as sharp a rebuke as the President. While many Republicans and Democrats in Congress recognize our problems and wish to devote greater resources to the military, they cannot restrain the oldest of all Congressional afflictions, an all consuming addiction to pork barrel spending. While Congress increased the President’s budget request, it diverted far too much of the additional money to garden variety pork barrel projects that had little, if anything, to do with readiness and the well-being of military personnel. In the most galling and self-interested and neglect of national security, Congress repeatedly refuses to close bases that everyone knows we no longer need, and can no longer support. It is unconscionable that we spend money on outdated facilities or unneeded weapon systems, when 12,000 enlisted personnel, proud young men and women, subsist on food stamps. That, my friends, is a week defense, and this nation deserves better service from us than that. The President’s
empty promises and the irresponsible spending habits of Congress, offer little remedy to our readiness crisis.

I believe that military service is the most honorable endeavor an American may undertake, but I have never believed that lack of military service disqualifies one from occupying positions of political leadership or as Commander-in-Chief in America. The people are sovereign and they decide who is and who is not qualified. But as in every walk of life, experience counts. And in an administration with so few in its upper echelons who wore the nation’s uniform, the inattention to our military and to our veterans, while inexcusable and dangerous, is sadly not surprising. This is the first administration in our history where we have a President of the United States, a Secretary of State, a Secretary of Defense, and a National Security Advisor, none of whom have ever spent one minute wearing the uniform of the United States of America. I promise you that will change. And I promise you, no young American in uniform will ever serve under the operational command of the Secretary General of the United Nations.

The American people must recognize the gravity of the problem before their employees in Washington will fear to do the wrong thing more than they currently fear to do the necessary things. I and others who share my concerns have failed to make our case to the people. I regret our failure very much, and I promise you that I will try harder in the future. We made some significant headway this year to address the highest priority personnel retention problems, and to better fund modernization, but many of our most critical decisions, such as the deployment of a national missile defense program; reassessing roles and missions; and improving the mobility of our forces to deploy, still suffer from inattention and a lack of dedicated resources. Until America’s political leaders show one tenth the courage and patriotism that have been the hallmark of Americans in uniform, we will keep squandering this priceless national asset, the greatest military in the history of the world.

We should be especially careful not to use the relief we feel over our apparent defeat of Mr. Malosivic, to indulge an impulse to pronounce ourselves smugly satisfied with the means we used to win that conflict. It would be a tragedy far outweighing the enormous good that was achieved by our victory if we used it as a model for meeting future military challenges. Nearly running out of cruise missiles, and the inexcusable delay in getting Apache helicopters to the theater should have raised an alarm, as should the fact that we went for a period of time without an operational carrier in the Pacific. Had North Korea chosen that moment to commit a truly irrational act, or China decided to resolve by force the Taiwan question, we would have faced much graver consequences of that neglect. The failure to learn the lessons of Kosova and repair our lagging readiness would be a perilous mistake, because surely even greater threats to peace and our national interest lurk ahead, particularly in Asia where China remains a potential flash point. It surpasses outrage that while 37,000 young Americans stand their posts in harm’s way on the Korean peninsula, and our carriers must be ready to rush into the Straits of Taiwan to check Chinese saber rattling, political donations from a subsidiary of the Peoples Liberation Army are funneled into the Clinton Administration’s campaign coffers, and nuclear secrets are hustled out the back door of our defense laboratories. That’s wrong, my friends, terribly wrong. An irresolute and ambiguous America whose pursuit of domestic political advantages supersedes security demands, and where photo-ops and false comedy and not sound security relationships are the primary object of foreign policy, invites instability and danger to our interests and values.
Our goal at home must be clear: political leadership that puts security ahead of politics; leadership that has vision about the nation’s standing in the world, not one’s political standing in the polls; and leadership that understands the nature of our interest in Asia, and how to protect those interests. And our goal in Asia must be no less ambiguous, a stable and secure region in which we staunchly support its free and democratic nations, while we confidently support and encourage political change in China. That’s the best guarantee that China will become a responsible great power. To the leaders of China we must say: If you desire to be a responsible member of the world community, we will support you. But if you want to join the club, you must play by the rules.

Press reports indicate that China is preparing a major new military exercises near Taiwan this fall. President Clinton should use his upcoming meeting with the Chinese leader Jiang Zemin to make it crystal clear that the United States categorically opposes military provocation in the region. If true, reports that China has decided to use force against Taiwan should convince the Clinton Administration to change its failed policy of pressuring only Taiwan to avoid open hostilities. China must be made to understand that the use of force would be very a serious mistake in judgment; a serious mistake with grave consequences.

Throughout American history, patriots like you have answered the nation’s call to defend the rights we cherish as God given. And as you honored our nation’s commitments, a grateful nation should honor its commitments to you. Many of the extraordinary contributions you and other veterans have made to our great country have been memorialized in bronze and marble, but more personally America—our government and our people—should show the same concern about your well-being as you have shown for our country.

Recently there has been a lot of discussion about the health delivery system in our country, about pending legislation that’s being called the Patient’s Bill of Rights. It’s a vital issue of enormous importance to our country. But what about a Veterans Bill of Rights? You and I know that many of the promises of benefits that were made or implied to active duty personnel and to us veterans have been ignored, changed, or abandoned over the years. This primarily is true in the area of veterans health care benefits. This disgrace, this dishonesty must end.

With regard to health care, the Veterans Bill of Rights should be relatively simple: honoring the promises that were made to every veteran, particularly those with service-connected conditions, and those who can not afford other medical attention. You have earned the right to receive timely high quality medical care in an atmosphere of respect for the individual veteran. In 1997, despite the increasing needs and costs of an aging veteran population, Congress froze the veterans health care budget. But we added further insult to that grievous injustice by cloaking our action with the kind of scam that is the fodder for the scornful reputation that many politicians too often deserve. We based future budget increases on collection of money owed to the VA by insurance companies, collections that are not being made and may never be made. I’m ashamed that Congress finds billions of dollars for pork barrel spending on subsidies for reindeer ranches and power plants fueled by chicken waste, but finds it so difficult to fulfill our promise of access to quality health care for those who unselfishly answered our country’s call.

It’s time we repair this disgraceful abrogation of our public responsibilities. That’s why it was not just my privilege, but a duty to lead a fight in the Senate this year to add three billion dollars to the VA’s budget authority and work for a reversal of congressional plan
to transfer 17 billion dollars from veterans funding to pay for a highway pork. Veterans
deserve better than that.

Though vital, increasing funding is not the only answer. An important improvement
to the current situation would be for us to see that the Department of Veterans Affairs serves
as the advocate for America's veterans. It must work closely with the veterans service
organizations to ensure that the concerns of all veterans are taken into account. The VA and
the Administration need to change their present course, and work diligently with the
Congress to ensure that veterans services are regarded as a top national priority. The
veterans health care system is your system and changes to it should be made with the advice
and consent not only of the elected leaders in Congress, but more importantly with the
veteran who has earned their consideration.

It is clear that the current national health care system is failing to measure up to our
expectations and our needs. We have much work to do to repair this abrogation of our
responsibilities. That's why among other initiatives I pushed for legislation to test an
initiative directing Medicare to reimburse the VA for Medicare eligible veterans with health
care costs, providing them with continuity of care, one of the program ideas presented in the
Legion's proposed GI Bill of Health.

Veterans demand of their health care system exactly what their country demanded of
their service: excellence and commitment. It's time we apply the creativity, focus and
funding necessary to make access to quality health care for veterans not simply a promise,
but a reality. We must increase funding to improve the quality of care, and expand the
options available to veterans for receiving that care, and in a timely, convenient and
respectful manner. We have let you down. We have let down the men and women who wear
the uniform today. I pledge to continue to do all I can to ensure that our commitments to our
veterans are honored, no matter what office I am privileged to hold.

My friends, as General Brady so eloquently stated, soon in the United States Senate we
will have a vote on the Flag Amendment. I listened carefully to his articulate presentation.
I'm deeply gratified that the Legion would commit its time and efforts and resources to this
incredibly important issue. I would like to close by telling you a brief story, that I hope
would make many Americans, whether they have served or not served, understand how
important this symbol is to many of us in this room.

The first few years in which we were kept captive, Everett Alvarez and so many of us
were kept in conditions of solitary confinement of two or three to a cell in Hanoi. In 1970,
thanks to the efforts of millions of Americans, including Legionnaires all over this great
nation of ours, the Vietnamese changed our treatment from conditions of solitary
confinement or two or three to a cell, to putting us in a large room of 25 or 30 prisoners in
each room. One of the prisoners who came into the room that I came into was a young man
by the name of Mike Christian. Mike Christian came from a small town near Selma,
Alabama. He came from an exceedingly poor family. When he was seventeen he enlisted
in the United States Navy. He later went to Officer's Candidate School; became an officer
and a bombardier navigator in an A-6. He was shot down and captured a little before I was,
and he was one of the finest, bravest men that I have ever known. The uniform that we wore
in prison was blue trousers, blue short-sleeve shirt, and by the way, sandals that were carved
out of automobile tires. I recommend them highly. The same pair lasted me for five and a
half years. As part of this change in treatment that I described to you, the Vietnamese
allowed us to have some packages from home, which were articles of clothing and scarfs and
small articles of clothing. Mike Christian fashioned himself a bamboo needle, got himself
a piece of white cloth and a piece of red cloth, and over a period of about two months he sewed on the inside of his shirt the American flag. Every evening in prison cell, before we had our bowl of soup of undetermined content, we would put Mike's shirt on the wall of our cell and say the Pledge of Allegiance. Now, I will freely admit to you that there were many times in daily life when saying the Pledge of Allegiance was not the most important or meaningful part of my day. In that prison cell, some had been there as long as six or seven years in the prison system, it was indeed the most important and meaningful part of our day to pledge our allegiance to our flag and country.

The Vietnamese came into our cell one day, searched the cell as they did periodically, and found Mike Christian's shirt with the flag sewn inside of it. They removed it. That evening they returned to our cell, called for Mike Christian to come out, which he did. They closed the door of the cell, and there for the next couple of hours they beat Mike Christian rather severely for the benefit of all of us. Following the beating they opened the door of the cell and threw him in, back into the cell. As you can imagine, he was not in very good shape. The cell in which we slept, in which we lived, had a concrete slab in the center on which we slept, and in each corner of the room hung a light bulb that shown dimly 24 hours a day. So as I said, we tried to clean up Mike Christian as well as we could. I went over to lay down and go to sleep on the concrete slab. As I did so, I just happened to look over in the corner of the cell. Sitting there between that very dim light bulb with a piece of white cloth and a piece of red cloth and another shirt and his bamboo needle, with his eyes almost shut from the beating that he had received, was my dear friend, Mike Christian, who was making another American flag. Mike wasn't doing that because it made him feel better, he was doing that because he knew how important it was to all of us in that prison cell long ago and far away, to be able to pledge our allegiance to our flag and our nation.

So I hope we can inform the American people that the Mike Christian's of this world and all over the world where there are quiet groves that once were killing fields, rest the bones of those who fought for freedom, usually somebody else's, in order that we might have the simple privilege of revering the symbol of hope and freedom.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: Our next guest this morning is a man of principles, and he has shown his determination to not compromise them in any way. He, too, is a Vietnam veteran, and a senior member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, an advocate of a balanced Federal budget, a smaller Federal government, lower taxes and less spending. He continues to work tirelessly in Congress to gain an accounting for America's unaccounted for POW's and MIA's. He is co-chairman of the Joint U.S.-Russian Commission on POW's and MIA's established by Presidents Yeltsin and Bush back in 1992. Join me in warmly welcoming American Legion Post No. 79 in Manchester, New Hampshire member, Senator Bob Smith.

Address: The Honorable Robert C. Smith
The United States Senate

I'm delighted to be here today. Let me also say since John Sommer is sitting here that you know what a great Executive Director you have. He's on the job everyday in Washington and he never lets any of us forget what's important to you as veterans. He does an outstanding job for you. Also a special hello to the New Hampshire delegation headed by Commander Jack Neylon. Thanks for the breakfast. And I'm proud to be a member of
the New Hampshire Legion Post 79. I did forget my Legion cap today, and I couldn’t find one big enough to fit so I’m sorry about that.

As most of you here in the convention know, and certainly the folks in New Hampshire know, at this convention a couple of days ago New Hampshire lost one of its own, Bill Olmstead from Post 4 in Keene, New Hampshire, who died here at the convention, with his family present, grandchildren, children. That was very sad, but I think Bill probably would have liked it that way. He was doing what he loved. He was working for his beloved American Legion. And so my condolences go to his comrades as well as his family for that terrible loss.

It’s always a privilege for me to address The American Legion. I addressed the California State Convention a few months ago. In 1994, I addressed your National Convention in Minneapolis, Minnesota. And after that they had a governor who was an independent by the name of Ventura. Now, I’m an independent having left the Republican Party. I have had some criticism about that. Some have made much of it. Let me just say I’m still ‘Classic Coke’; the contents are the same, although the label might be a little bit different. But I don’t think it matters what your label is, it’s what’s inside, and principle counts, not party.

My mom and dad are buried at Arlington National Cemetery on the hillside right underneath the Robert E. Lee mansion, looking across into Washington, D.C. On the morning that I resigned from the Republican Party, I stopped at my parents’ grave, and stood there for several minutes, looking out across those rows and rows and rows of tomb stones. I didn’t see ‘R’ or a ‘D’ next to anybody’s name, and I don’t think it matters one damn what their politics were. Who cares? They sacrificed for their nation, they gave it all, and party had absolutely nothing to do with it.

One of the things that has frustrated me about politics and the political party process—I had been a Republican for 50 years until July 13th, so I can speak with some authority—is that everybody has to poll somebody. For example, if I were to take a poll, I probably would have to find out what you all thought before I came here to speak, lest I might put my foot in my mouth. Politicians do that all the time anyway, and I think it’s important for you to hear what comes from my heart. If I make a mistake, so be it. We all make mistakes and that’s not a big deal. But could you imagine what it might have been like in history if the only reason we did anything was because of some stupid poll or some consultant telling us what to think? Could you imagine Ike at Normandy taking a poll deciding whether or not we should go? Or could you imagine Patrick Henry in 1773 before the Virginia Assembly standing up there before he said, “Give me liberty or give me—” and then pausing and saying, “I got to find out whether they want liberty or death before I make this speech.” I mean, give me a break. It just doesn’t make any sense. Lincoln took no poll when he ended slavery. He did the right thing. We don’t need more polls in this country, ladies and gentlemen, we need more leadership.

Speaking of polls, if I could just make a little light story here. I broke my promise here and I took a poll of Legionnaires, and I found out that when you speak to a group of Legionnaires, 40 percent of the Legionnaires will listen very carefully to what you say. They will be polite, they will listen to everything, and they’ll try to be attentive and respectful. Another 40 percent of Legionnaires will be thinking about some veterans issue that’s very important, and not paying any attention at all to what I’m saying. And then there is 20 percent of the Legionnaires who will be having sexual fantasies. So I’m delighted to know that at least 20 percent of you are going to enjoy the hell out of what I’m going to say today.
Now I want to be serious for just a couple of moments. I know you have had a lot of speeches and you’re going to hear a lot more, and I’m fully aware of it and I’m going to be very brief here. You know better than anybody that freedom is not free. It’s paid for with great sacrifice. One of the major problems that veterans face today is that we don’t have enough veterans in Congress who truly understand veterans issues. Senator McCain pointed out that the leadership, the President, the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense and others never wore the uniform. This is a serious problem for veterans in our country today, and I say that to you in all candor as a friend. It’s a serious problem.

Having been a veteran myself, I have a vision. I have one little reminder of my dad. I was only three years old when he died on March 28, 1945. I have one memory, and that’s in the doorway with him hugging my mother. I can still see him in uniform, and it was the last memory that I would have, because he went out that day and was killed in an airplane crash.

My wife and I visited Anzio, Italy during the 50th celebration of Normandy, and we stopped at Anzio with Senator Bob Dole. I will never forget it. Rows and rows and rows of these crosses on a foreign land where Americans had died. And in a moment that I will never forget, totally haphazard, totally accidental, we were looking at these crosses, and on one of those crosses was the name of a young man from New Jersey where my wife was born, who died on her birthday, May 29, 1944 at Anzio. That was a pretty vivid reminder of what freedom means and how important that is and what a fine line freedom really is. What it reminded me of is that we have got to strive to remain worthy of that sacrifice, not only of that young man, but for every veteran that that young man personified on that tombstone on that day. When the day comes that we don’t recognize and appreciate who you are and what you did, then America is in deep, deep trouble. I must tell you, we are fast moving toward that time and I’m concerned about it.

Probably most of you saw the movie Private Ryan. At the end of that movie when Tom Hanks tells Private Ryan as he was dying, earn it, that is a reminder, folks, of what we have got to keep in mind as we go through life. We’ve got to earn it. And I think right now there are people in the government who could care less, who have no appreciation for what you did. And I served with some of them, I regret to say. It’s tough for those of us like Senator McCain and me and others who have served in the military to bring the attention to these issues that are so important.

It reminds me of the words of Dr. Joseph Warren just prior to the Battle of Bunker Hill. Warren was a physician and the President of the Massachusetts Congress. He died at the Battle of Bunker Hill, and he didn’t have to go. As a matter of fact, his comrades begged him not to go. They said, “You’re a doctor. We need you to administer to us. Please don’t go into battle. Please don’t pick up arms.” He did. And before he died, and before he left for that Battle of Bunker Hill, he said, “Our country is in danger but not to be despaired of. On you depends the fortunes of America. You are to decide the important questions on which rests the happiness and liberties of millions yet unborn, act worthy of yourselves.” Unfortunately, many of our leaders are not acting worthy of the sacrifices that you have made in the spirit of Dr. Joseph Warren. You have heard, will hear, and will continue to hear a lot of words from people in politics at this convention. But if the words are to mean anything, they have to come from here, right out of the heart. If they don’t come from the heart, they are not worth the paper they are written on.

I’m reminded of the Jimmy Stewart movie, Mr. Smith Goes to Washington. When Jimmy Stewart who was not expected to be a United States Senator came to Washington,
he went around to the monuments in that movie. He was Senator Jefferson Smith in that movie, and he read the words on the monuments, and on the walls and on the marble. Because if those words mean anything, then we have to make them mean something. Words are nothing unless you are prepared to back it up with action.

I want to speak to you on three or four issues quickly this morning from the heart, as a comrade and as a veteran, not as a politician. And I'm prepared to be politically incorrect and tell you the truth, because that's the way I am. And the truth is that the American flag should not be desecrated. We do need that constitutional amendment. I support it and I will do everything in my power to see that it's passed. Now, at a recent hearing before the Judiciary Committee, which as you know passed the amendment, there was some testimony from the opponents who said that the flag was just a piece of cloth or a piece of canvas, and therefore we shouldn't be upset if it were burned. Well, let me just say to those people, here's a 20 dollar bill; all right? And here's a piece of paper. So if this 20 dollar bill is only a piece of paper, you send me the 20 bucks and I'll send you a piece of paper; fair enough? And then I will give all the money to the homeless veterans and other veterans in need.

It's a lot of nonsense. We all know it. It's absolute nonsense. That flag is precious. It's much more symbolic. You couldn't do any better than Senator McCain's example of the importance of that flag. It's not five black robes that should decide whether or not the flag should be desecrated, it ought to be the American people, and let the American people have a vote on it with a constitutional amendment. Then we'll decide, not judges from the Supreme Court.

I want to thank especially General Brady, who just spoke to you a few moments ago, and my friend Joe Caouette, from New Hampshire, because both of those guys have been leaders on this Flag Amendment at the National level. We're closer now than we've ever been and the votes are very close. We need to lean on some of these undecided voters and let them know if they don't support you on the amendment, you're not going to support them when election time rolls around. Believe me, that gets their attention. It doesn't have to be a complicated letter. I get these postcards every once in awhile on issues. And they're very simple. You vote this in; I vote you out. You don't need anything anymore complicated, so you say you vote against the flag, I vote against you. Sign it and send it in. Let them know what it's talking about.

Let me tell you another issue of the truth. The truth is that I don't have, and I don't think you have, confidence in our leaders that they're going to continue to support veterans health care, veterans benefits, and veterans programs. We're seeing that proven every day. Some of you had to wait months for medical appointments; some of your colleagues have passed away before they could get a VA claim adjudicated; the administration budget has not increased even as the active workload rises; and the number of aging veterans in need of care goes up. We heard a proposal two weeks ago from the Administration to add another one billion to the VA budget. Let me say to you as bluntly and as concisely as I can: that ain't enough. Folks, that's not enough money. This government and some of the leaders that speak to you, voted for it and supported it, this government just sent 18 billion dollars to the International Monetary Fund. Eighteen billion dollars to the International Monetary Fund while veterans sleep on grates in the largest cities of America. That's wrong and it ought to be stopped, and it ought to be stopped today, not tomorrow.

Do you know where your tax dollars go when you send them to the IMF? Let me tell you where some of them went. Your tax dollars that you worked for as a veteran while your comrades are doing without. I'll tell you where they went. Some of them went to Russia.
Russia sent some of those dollars to Iran. Iran bought nuclear weapons with them, and sent those nuclear weapons to North Korea. So you'll be pleased to know that you tax dollars are building nuclear weapons for North Korea. That's exactly what's happening to some of that IMF money. It's an outrage and it has to be stopped. We need to speak out to our leaders to stop it.

As a conservative, I'm supposed to be opposed to big government spending, and I am. But let me tell you one thing, I'm prepared to take whatever amount of money we have to take out of the IMF and give it to the veterans. If it's three billion, four billion, five billion, ten billion, whatever it is, take it out of the IMF and give it to the veterans of the United States, because they need it and they deserve it.

That's a constitutional responsibility that we have. And it derives from our obligation to provide for the common defense. You serve, we give you the best when you serve, and when you come home in need, you get what you need. That's it, pure and simple. To do anything else is not worthy of a great nation.

We spend money on the National Endowment of the Arts; we spend money on the Department of Education which tells local school districts what to do; 70 billion in the Department of Education; 99 million in the National Endowment of the Arts, and we can't find a few billion dollars to help our veterans. It's wrong.

In addition to the IMF, we have been sending a little bit too much money to the UN to suit me. We just sent a billion dollars to the UN to pay for arrears, our back debts. This body that the United States of America has almost carried on its back by itself for the past 50 years, we just sent them another billion that supposedly we owed them. I was one of only two Senators who voted against it. I'm proud that I voted against it. Let me just say this while we're talking about the UN, let's get it the hell out of America; send it to Havana. That's where it ought to be. Put it right next to Castro's residence.

I want to make one commitment to you, and I think you should try to follow it. I don't know what my political future is either. Right now, I'm a Senator, but either as a Senator or something else, I'll tell you one thing, the VSOs in this country, if a Smith Administration takes place, is going to pick the next Veterans Affairs Secretary. You will pick him and you will make the recommendation to me if I'm the President.

And finally another issue: POW/MIA accounting. The truth is, we don't have a full accounting. We have never had a full accounting. And those that tell you we have a full accounting are lying to you, pure and simple. Right now Madeline Albright is in Hanoi talking about betting more money for the Vietnamese, more trade, more aid. And they tell you that the Vietnamese are fully cooperating. And I'm telling you the truth, after 15 years of working this issue night and day, they are not fully cooperating. We need more documents declassified. They haven't given us the documents out of the Polit Bureau; they haven't given us the information on the shoot downs in Laos; and they haven't given us the information on the interrogation reports of POWs who never came home that they interrogated. They know what happened to them, and they haven't given us the information and we shouldn't be giving them aid; we shouldn't be giving them money; we shouldn't be giving them full diplomatic recognition until we get that information, period. To do anything less is wrong.

We are doing the same thing with China, full Most Favored Nation status to China. After all, China is only the country that stole our secrets, that's doing this, doing that, campaign contributions, you name it. They have the answers to what happened in the Korean War. Let me give you some good news, because as a member of the Joint
U.S.-Russian Commission, I spent some time in Moscow a few months ago, and we were able to get 10,000 documents out of the Russians because they are cooperating to some extent with us about shoot downs in Korea. That will help to account for many Americans missing from the Korean Conflict, because the Russians were piloting those aircraft that were shooting down Americans, and they gave us those documents, and we were helping to account for a lot of people as a result of that.

Another issue is military readiness. John McCain talked about it. The truth is that recruitment is down. We have people on food stamps; the pay is too low; our up tempo is a mess. We've got people all over the world, asking them to do more with less. We added 13 billion dollars to the Administration budget, and all of the Joint Chiefs said we needed 25 billion per year for the next five years just to get even. We have a mess on our hands and it's because we don't have enough people in government, in the Administration or in Congress, who understand how important this is to straighten this out. Our own children and grandchildren could very well be threatened in the future because of what we have done these past six to eight years.

The truth is, our national security is more in jeopardy now than ever in the history of the United States of America. We are vulnerable to missile attack because we fooled around and haven't built and deployed an NMD system. Our missile technology is being sold all over the world some by profiteers in our own country. It's falling into the hands of China, North Korea, and Libya. Iran and Iraq are developing weapons of mass destruction. China is threatening Taiwan; North Korea is firing and testing missiles right over the country of Japan. Chinese Communists have stolen the plans of every nuclear weapon in our arsenal, and we let the guys stay there for three years spying, knowing he was doing it. What has happened to America? And then the Chinese, on top of that, tried to get the Long Beach Naval Shipyard. Senator Jim Inhofe and I were able at least temporarily stop that. And the worst news of all, in my view, the Panama Canal. Guess what's happening there? 150,000 Chinese Communists now in Panama. They will control the Panama Canal on both ends as of January 1st, 2000. What happens? We just sit idly by.

We need leadership and we need it badly, and we need it soon. And if we don't get it soon, it's going to be too late. That's the truth. We need leaders who understand how and when to use military power. And the decisions that we make today over the next three to five years are going to determine whether or not our children live in freedom or under some God only knows government that we're not going to like.

So I call upon you, all of you, to continue to do what you do best, which is to keep the pressure on the politicians in this country to straighten this mess out before it's too late. We owe it to our founders and we owe it to those who served and fought, were wounded and died in the service of our country.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: I take great personal pride and pleasure in introducing our next guest. I have had the privilege of traveling with her as we have traversed the world in many ways. Sometimes we were even fortunate enough to be in the same place at the same time. She has been a steadfast leader of the world's largest patriotic women's organization. Under her lead by example philosophy, the American Legion Auxiliary has recorded another solid outstanding year of service to the veterans of this community and this country and this nation. Please welcome the National President of the American Legion Auxiliary, from West Hardin Unit 108 in Kentucky, our President, my friend, Miss Virginia Hobbs.
What a pleasure it is to come before The American Legion’s 81st National Convention. This has been a tremendous year for The American Legion, the American Legion Auxiliary, and for our entire American Legion family.

I am reminded of a line from Private Ryan, Saving Private Ryan, where the young soldier who was sought on the battlefield, said that he wanted to remain there with his family; that his comrades in arms were his family. That is how I feel about our organizations, that The American Legion family is my family. I truly believe it this year, and will continue to believe and exemplify that in years to come.

I would be remiss if I didn’t make mention that I can see the Department of Kentucky up here on my left side. Thank you for being there. I thank them because a while ago during our session I lost one of my contacts and can only half way see now.

You have had a great year under the leadership of your National Commander Butch Miller. As Commander Miller said, we have traveled some together, our paths have crossed, but we have been able to maintain communications wherever we were. Communications by using that marvel of technology called the computer, the Internet and e-mail. This is something which has made our lives easier, made it easier for us to communicate together and to you. We hope that you will take up our efforts in becoming more attuned to the means that we have of working smarter, not harder.

There’s a tremendous task ahead for members of our family to making sure that our leaders in Congress and our State Houses are educated about veterans and their needs; to making sure that they have a commitment to the families and to the children of this nation. We have a commitment to one another of making sure that we maintain the strength of our organizations, because The American Legion and the American Legion Auxiliary must always have those numbers of members to maintain our viability, to maintain our visibility, and to continue doing the good works that we do across the country.

I thank you for having elected in New Orleans such a dynamic leader for The American Legion. I am very proud that he has not only served with me this year as National Commander, but that we started the year as friends, and unless in the course of two days we have a falling out, he’s going to end this years as my friend, also.

Living around the military base I always heard the term being ‘short’. Well, now I truly know what it means because by this time tomorrow I will be awaiting the installation of our new National President. I thank you, members of The American Legion for all that you have done in support of the Auxiliary, for all that you do in the efforts of your community and in serving your fellow veterans. The American Legion family is one tremendous family, one that I am extremely proud to be a part of.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: Thank you, Virginia, for taking time out of your own convention to come over here and visit us.

Presentation: Certificate of Appreciation
Butch L. Miller, Virginia
National Commander

It’s been a great pleasure to have served this past year with a man who has become a friend and, as our National Chaplain, truly lives a life of God and country. Father Robert J.
Sweeney of Arthur Finnigan Post 1443 in New York. Father Sweeney, or as I like to call him, Padre Bob, is a U.S. Army veteran of the Vietnam War. He joined The American Legion in 1992. Among members of Arthur Finnigan Post 1443, as I said, near his home in Greenwood Lake, New York, Father Sweeney has served as post, county, and department chaplain.

It is with great pleasure that I take this opportunity to present to Father Sweeney a certificate of appreciation for his caring and devotion and service to this American Legion.

Padre Bob, this certificate of appreciation presented to Reverend Robert J. Sweeney, appointed and served as National Chaplain of The American Legion during the year 1998 to 1999, given in recognition of faithful and honorable service to The American Legion. If I can add one more thing that we didn’t put on here, because we weren’t really sure, and for coming up with a wonderful prayer for good weather during our parade, it is with great honor that I present this to you, the certificate signed by National Adjutant Spanogle and myself as National Commander.

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN SWEENEY: I would just like to thank Commander Butch, all of the staff of The American Legion, for the opportunity to serve you because you are truly family, and it is as a family that we will stick together and work for each other.

Presentation: Plaque of Appreciation
Anthony G. Jordan, Maine
Past National Commander

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: The next order of business is to recognize New Orleans, Louisiana, for hosting the 80th National Convention of The American Legion. I know personally I will always remember that convention, and I hope that many of you have recollections of good times there, not just the rain. To help with this order of business, I’d like to call on Immediate Past National Commander Tony Jordan of Maine.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER JORDAN: It’s a great honor more for me as the Immediate Past National Commander to present a plaque to the President of the 1998 National Convention Corporation of New Orleans, Past National Commander William “Bill” Detweiller. We have a plaque to give you. Thank you from the bottom of my heart for hosting an outstanding convention. I will always remember it and I’m sure Butch will, too.


PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER DETWEILLER: I am pleased to accept this plaque in remembrance of the 80th National Convention on behalf of the City of New Orleans, the city council of our city, and the citizens of New Orleans. Further, it gives me great pleasure to receive this plaque on behalf of The American Legion, First District Convention Corporation of Louisiana, the host corporation, and the Department of Louisiana and Commander Bobby Watts, and the more than 38,000 members of The American Legion, its Auxiliary, and Sons, who came together to seek and host our fifth National Convention since the founding of this great organization.

I realize that there was a little rain. However, I think for the most part people seem to have had a good time. I know there was one couple that came from New York that happened
to stop by the department office. The Department Adjutant of New York saw this young couple, and they looked kind of sad as they were looking at the material about the upcoming convention. And he brought them in and he said, you know, I realize that on your fixed incomes you may not be able to go down to New Orleans and enjoy the convention, but we want to do something and help you out a little bit. So we are going to send you to New Orleans, going to pay your way, pay your air, take care of you in a fine hotel, and I think you will have a wonderful time. Well, I think it was somewhere in October of last year the lady happened back by the office in New York to stop in to say thank you. And the people in the office were glad to see her. They said, "It’s great that you came back. How did you enjoy yourself?" She said, "I had a wonderful time, but can you tell me who that man was that I had to share the room with?"

Our biggest disappointment, I guess, was the rain in some ways. But at the same time, I think we had a great convention. If you missed last year’s parade, and I’m sure you enjoyed this one, join with us on June 6th of next year, 2000. The National D-Day Museum dedicated to the men and women who made those landings in both the Pacific as well as the Atlantic and in Normandy and on the European coasts, will open with a gala celebration including a parade. Our parade will be similar to The American Legion parades that we all enjoy since we are somewhat involved in helping to put it on. You are all invited to attend and participate. Shortly the D-Day Museum web site will go on-line. For those of you who have access to computers and the Internet, that information regarding the grand opening will be available. The museum will celebrate the D-Day invasions as I have indicated. Many organizations are preparing to have their reunions, military reunions, during the grand opening. I encourage all of you who can to come, attend and participate.

Mr. Commander, I thank you very much for the opportunity of hosting the convention at which you were elected and the convention that Commander Jordan presided at. We are always ready, willing, and able to host a convention; and we look forward to you returning as soon as possible.

Report: National Commander’s Report to the Convention
Butch L. Miller, Virginia
National Commander

Bound together by a sense of purpose, born in the fiery crucible of war, willing to be their brother’s keeper, believing wholeheartedly in God and the principles upon which their country was founded, the founders of The American Legion laid an enduring values-based foundation upon which millions have served. And it has lasted for 80 years. Dedicated Legionaries such as you have carried on the work of those that gave birth to The American Legion. Their work and yours has profited our great nation and bestowed honor on the memory of all generations who have fought and died to preserve the principles upon which America was founded.

We tend to describe our history and our accomplishments in some sort of panoramic terms while, in truth, every element of our success is directly attributable to individuals. Individuals, men and women, possessed of vision and imbued with the desire to serve, to leave the world a little better than they found it. During the course of my year of stewardship, I have been blessed to meet some of those individuals, those individuals who have made The American Legion the positive force that it is today.
One such person is Bill Brown, a Korean War veteran, a Legionnaire, assistant Sergeant-at-Arms in the Department of Georgia. Bill is 69 years young, but he’s not ready in any way to ride a rocking horse and watch the world go by. Every day he takes his nitroglycerin pills, and then he goes out to do his work for The American Legion. We met him on a membership tour in Georgia. It was a hot day in Georgia, the middle of the summer, and Bill was out there as a member of our team pounding on doors, stopping people on the street, looking for a veteran to start a new Legion post. It’s hard work pounding the pavement in the noonday sun in Georgia, but you would think that Bill would rather be fishing, doing something relaxing under a shade tree. But that’s not the Bill Brown that we know. He does what he does because he loves this organization. And as he says, I love this American Legion. Bill loves it. He loves it and he likes it just like you and I do. Like hundreds and thousands of others like us do. That’s what keeps The American Legion strong and vibrant and meaningful in this very complex world of ours. Bill Brown, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms, Georgia, is a metaphor in so many ways for all of us because we love America. And together we just keep doing things the right way and the good way.

Another for instance in this past year, you and your comrades raised more than $1 million to build a memorial for a group of veterans who we have all come to call The Greatest Generation. They grew up in a Great Depression while learning a work ethic that would rebuild the world after that war. When they came of age, they put their lives on hold and fought the greatest, bloodiest conflict of this century, if not all centuries. Those who came home, and there were many who didn’t, rebuilt the nation and the nations of the enemies they had fought. They pioneered industry at home, created the wealthiest and freest nation in history, and gave birth to an age of technology and progress in every field of human endeavor. These men and women, the veterans of World War II, richly deserve that National World War II Memorial, which very shortly will be built for them in Washington, DC. It will be a magnificent memorial and a magnificent moment when it’s dedicated. And The American Legion and you should be proud to have raised that $1 million plus, and we hope to add more so that that World War II Memorial can be built.

But I should submit to you that that memorial is redundant because, if the truth be known, the entire world as we know it is a memorial to what those ladies and gentlemen of that generation, the veterans of the Second World War, have accomplished. They richly deserve our thanks. Not just them, but every veteran who is called to our country’s service and responds.

Every veteran goes where he or she is sent, and every veteran is deserving of our nation’s thanks, especially those currently serving on active duty. Too many of whom are struggling, as we know, to make ends meet because of the shortages of pay and the cost of raising a family in today’s world. The American Legion has long been an advocate for better pay for our soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines. Because of The American Legion’s efforts, on New Year’s Day of next year, every active duty GI will receive a 4.8 percent raise in pay, the largest single pay raise since the 1980s because of what you and I have done. It’s a start, but that’s all it is, just a start. Because a 4.8% pay raise is not enough. It won’t ever be enough until there are no military families anywhere in this world dependent upon welfare, food stamps, or their families to take care of them while they defend our country. We have done everything to make that change, and we will continue to try to make those kinds of positive changes for those serving in our armed forces.

We have helped change the lives of hundreds who fell victim to national disasters in this last year. They lost homes and properties, and tragically in some cases, they lost loved
ones. Their homes and their worlds stood in the paths of things such as tornadoes, as those
to one, across Texas, Kansas, and Oklahoma. The American Legion National
Emergency Fund, the NEF, provided cash grants totaling tens of thousands of dollars to
those tornado victims in those three states. One such victim, Marjorie Griswold of Post 170
in Del City, Oklahoma, wrote the following letter after she received a $1,000 grant from The
American Legion. She said, “It will be a tremendous relief to get a new roof on my house
which was hit hard by an F-5 grade tornado on May 3rd. I will always work for the good of
The American Legion in any way that I can.”

When I took office, the NEF balance was $8,329. I asked you get me $1 for every
Legion member in your post so that we can respond when we are called. During the year,
our Legion family, you, contributed over $600,000 to the tax deductible charity trust fund
which is the NEF. Today, even after providing many grants throughout the years, our
current balance stands at $433,125, and it’s growing every day. Thank you for your hard
work and generosity. The American Legion is prepared to answer those calls should another
natural disaster hit any of your family.

Since the NEF was started in 1989, The American Legion—you—have contributed
more than $3 million helping others less fortunate than we are. These were not loans. They
were grants given from one comrade to another at a time when that comrade needed the help
the most. That’s what we veterans do. We take care of our own. We never know who will
need our help next. One day you are strong and vibrant, living tall, morale is high. The next
day laid low by accident or disease. You can be well one day and poor the next.

Take the case of James Colley. He parachuted into Normandy, spent a year in a German
POW camp, earned the Purple Heart. Shortly after I became your National Commander, the
Philadelphia Inquirer reported that this 81-year-old veteran, a true hero of World War II,
a member of that greatest generation, was about to be kicked out of the VA Medical Center
in Coatsville, Pennsylvania. Why? The answer is totally ridiculous, but he had become too
sick! At a time when he needed the promises in the VA more than ever in his life, they
decided that they would kick him out. Colley’s Alzheimer’s had worsened to the point that
the VA program under which he had been treated could no longer be used because that
treatment was given under the program for independent living. Colley was told he had to be
moved to a private nursing home. The government would pay for his care for two months
only, and then he was on his own. Colley was about to become a budget casualty. He was
going to be a loser when an outstanding hospital system with fine practitioners ran out of
money to care for him, he who had borne the battle and he was going to be kicked out. But
our American Legion found out about it, and we said no way. That won’t happen. As a
result of our direct intervention by our national staff, the Secretary of Veteran Affairs placed
an immediate moratorium on the removal of any elderly or disabled veterans from the VA
nursing facilities.

James Colley was saved, again, as he was saved from a World War II prison camp. But
unfortunately in February while still in the VA nursing home, he died. He never lost faith
that his government would do the right thing. And when Congress comes to its senses and
implements every provision of the GI Bill of Health, James Colley’s faith and the faith of
all veterans will become fact because they will be taken care of. The cruel but true and all
too prevalent budget cuts and shortfalls in our world of today that almost dislocated Jim in
the twilight of his life will never plague another patriot. Even though this was not an isolated
case in a system driven by dollars, the administration submitted a VA budget that we have
heard about that fell about $2 billion short of what is needed in fiscal year 2000 to simply
maintain the current level of services. Recognizing that there are hundreds, maybe thousands of Jim Colleys who will be facing a medical crisis and become a budget casualty, The American Legion has lobbied hard for an increase in the VA’s medical funding. I am pleased to say that the House Appropriations Committee heeded our call. The committee tacked a $1.7 billion addition onto the original recommendation. Although they never met, this next man I want to tell you about could very well have been thinking of James Colley when he himself was but a young veteran in the great war.

The Armistice had been signed. GIs were waiting to go home. One of them was George Washington Bentley. Then he saw an ad in the *Stars and Stripes* of that time. They were talking about a gathering that they were having. As George told me himself when I had the pleasure of meeting him in February of last year, “We didn’t know what was going on. We just thought they were going to have a get-together, and they were going to have some free refreshments and food. So we went.” He attended the meeting in Paris in March of 1919 simply because of his curiosity. He became a founder of The American Legion. In later life, the French government gave him the highest medal that it can bestow, The Legion of Honor. He was a member of Post 231 in Minnesota, the state where I grew up.

George Bentley, a great friend to all of us, was the last living surviving founder of The American Legion. Unfortunately, as I said, he transferred to Post Everlasting on June 4th at the young age of 101. And if you ever had the pleasure of meeting him, you would know that for him 101 was young. Numerous American Legion honor guards were there honoring and remembering the passing of George, but I’m sad to say that there was no formal military presence there. There was no military honor guard there. I don’t know if George’s family requested an honor guard or not. He certainly was deserving of one. But this I do know: Many families are very disappointed when they request honor guards for funerals and, again, they are told no and the memories of those families becomes a budget tragedy.

As I watched the final honors being paid to George Bentley and helped carry his coffin to its final resting place, I thought that it was a shame that our government wasn’t there to bid farewell to one of its true heroes. I am glad that The American Legion has been very successful in its attempt in doing something about that for thousands of families at least for the future. Under a new law that will take effect in January, the family of any veteran can request a military honor guard from the Department of Defense. There will be a toll free number that will be available for families to call. Where possible, the military will supply an honor guard. The American Legion believes that every veteran is a hero and every veteran deserves a burial with a military honor guard present. Burial honors include the placing of an American flag on a veteran’s coffin. We do this because the U.S. Flag is the unifying symbol of our nation, and our veterans fought for it and the values it represents. That is the unifying spirit of America’s people.

I am pleased to report that we are even closer than we have ever been to returning to the American people the right to protect our flag from acts of physical and intentional desecration. It is a right that the Supreme Court took away from us in 1989 by one vote, the narrowest of possible margins. In June, the House of Representatives passed the Flag Protection Amendment for the third time. During the past year, the amendment gained one supporter in the Senate, maybe two. Senator John Edwards of North Carolina has recently declared himself undecided on the issue. He had been against it before. We can only hope that he and others like him will see what this really means, that it is a values issue. It isn’t a free speech issue. Let’s cut to the quick. It’s simply values of what our country is. Let’s hope they come to their senses and vote on it.
As I have traveled back and forth across America, there is one thing I have learned for sure: the American people want their flag protected. There is no question about that. The American Legion is going to get that job done. Yes, it’s been a long fight, and it may last a little longer; but as I told one reporter, if we have to, The American Legion is going to fight until hell freezes over. Then we will put on our skates and we will fight them on the ice because that’s what we are here for. It’s not a matter of how long. It’s a matter of when. It’s the right fight, and that’s what we will do.

When I think of our flag and what it means, I am reminded of those three POWs who, when they were released from Yugoslavia’s prisons a short time ago, told of taking comfort from a hand-drawn American flag that one of the troops had in his pocket. That one image embodied for them hope, confidence, and the assurance that they would never be forgotten. Much like the same hope, confidence that Senator McCain explained this morning displayed by one prisoner, Mr. Christensen.

As all of America celebrated their release, I, like many of you, thought about America’s POWs and MIAs from other wars such as Vietnam and those before it. Many people think the terms POW and MIA were created for the Vietnam war. They were not. They have been present in every conflict that this country has ever been involved in. Every time The American Legion has gone to Vietnam, 13 in the past seven years, we have met with Vietnamese officials and urged them in the strongest possible terms to stop stalling and help and assist with our efforts to account for and return the remains of our POWs and MIAs, every single one of them. No good can come from prolonging this agony. I hope Secretary of Defense Cohen will add teeth to our demands when he visits Vietnam in the upcoming months. In the meantime, The American Legion will continue to fight for a full accounting of POWs and MIAs from all wars. Equally important, we will insist that the United States government enforces the provisions of the Missing Serviceperson’s Act, which the Legion helped write. This act will insure that future POWs are treated humanely and released properly at the end of the hostilities.

One of the things I am most proud of this year is that The American Legion has become an on-line organization. One year ago when I took office, 17 departments were on-line. I could e-mail them from whatever hotel room I was staying in anywhere in the country or the world. Today, as I stand here before you, I am very proud to say that of the 55 departments in this organization, I can now e-mail with 54 of them. I’m only missing one. I don’t take that one as a failure. I take that one as a challenge, and they will have a personal visit from me before this week is over.

Some people call me the Cyber Commander. Our National Adjutant has taken that title to heart. I’m still waiting for my cape which hasn’t arrived yet. But I am proud to be that Cyber Commander because in today’s world you can’t afford not to be connected to the rest of the world. Last October when I met with all of the Department Commanders in Indianapolis and gave them my e-mail address. I told them I’m just a click away any time day or night. Then when they started talking to each other, their most frequently asked question between each of them turned out to be what is your e-mail address. The same thing happened between our National Vice Commanders. I am very happy to say that during the year we kept track of each other using e-mail. They wanted to stay in touch with each other instantly. I saluted them for it. In today’s world, we have to be connected to each other if we are going to be and remain to be the best we can be.

In one area that continues to challenge us and in one area that that technology may have its greatest benefits in the future is that of membership. We need to build new posts in areas
where people and places that we don’t have posts now. Every place there is a high school should be an American Legion post. This has been our challenge. It has been the standard that we will meet.

Kentucky, Nevada, Alaska, Virginia, South Carolina, Georgia, and Hawaii exceeded their 1999 membership goals. Nevada and Arizona reached all-time highs. I would also like to mention that this is the fourth year in a row for those folks in Arizona. Michigan is laying a strong foundation for the future of our organization. It has created 19 new American Legion posts this year and is revitalizing one post that was on the brink of extinction. Michigan is truly thinking outside the box, and that is where we all need to start thinking.

Innovation works, and I’m going to take just a moment and brag just a little bit and tell you about one of the efforts of a particular post in Virginia that just happens to be my home post, Post 364. You may have read about this in The American Legion Magazine. It was on the front cover. My post adopted the 340 officers, men and women, of the USS Higgins, the Navy’s newest and, I might add, prettiest, destroyer. We saw it the other day down in San Diego. It is a brilliant ship. Signing up these members of the ship was based on an idea that my travel companion and aide, Bill Moriarity, a Navy retiree himself, came up with. Thanks to Bill and the support of post, we now have part of our post home floating, right now just at a pier in San Diego, but to be floating toward the Mideast shortly. That part of our post home is being paid for by the U.S. Government. It’s fully equipped with the latest weapons and technology, all because someone was thinking out of the box and his fellow members getting behind the idea.

It’s happening elsewhere. Past North Dakota Commander, Jim Clifford, advertised on a local T.V. cable channel. He invited viewers to an American Legion open house at Burlington fire station. When they showed up, he presented them with the opportunity to join The American Legion. As a result, that one night Jim signed up 15 new members and a new post charter.

By bringing in new members and going on-line, we perpetuate our service to America and multiply our good deeds to others. You, the members of The American Legion and your families, are a beacon of hope in a world that is confused and in some cases lost, a world whose values stand on shifting sands and whose vision of the future is murky at best and clouded at worst. Yet, you are clinging to the principles and the values that our founders built this great organization upon. You are passing them on to the nation’s youth, that youth that you saw before you today in the choir and the champions. You are passing them on to the young people through our many national, state, and local programs. And every time you reach out, you show someone somewhere that we still care, that we, the 4 million members of The American Legion family: The American Legion, the American Legion Auxiliary, and the Sons of The American Legion, still care and we are still serving America. And you should be darn proud of it because I am.

Tribute to American Legion Founders

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: The Founders of The American Legion were men with a compelling drive to continue service to God and country once they were back in their “civvies.” Over the years, those who had attended a caucus in Paris or St. Louis formed the Society of The American Legion Founders. They developed a medallion incorporating our American Legion emblem surrounded by the words “Founders-Paris-St. Louis.” They attached it with a ribbon so it could be worn proudly around their necks. We
haven't seen many of these worn at National Conventions in the past years. Sadly, we have no more living founders, and we will never see it worn again. That is why today we pay special tribute to those 20th Century visionaries.

George Washington Bentley, a proud doughboy from Minnesota who attended the Paris caucus because he was curious, transferred to Post Everlasting on June 4th, 1999, at the young age of 101, as I said before. Comrade Bentley was a simple man. But yet, he was an exquisite man, a very interesting individual. He was a man whose curious visit to that meeting in the Cirque de Paris made him one of 463 registered delegates, most of them just like George. They weren't sure what was really going on. They thought there was going to be free refreshments, sweets and food, but they soon caught the fire, the zeal, of the those visionaries who started the organizational effort, individuals such as Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., Lt. Col. George S. White, Major Eric Fisher Wood, and Lt. Col. William J. Donovan.

These four men pulled strings, influenced generals, and hand-picked those who could not know what journey they were about to take and that it would have such far-reaching impact. Others present in Paris went on to achieve great distinctions in other areas. Wood was a Brigadier General in World War II. Ogden Mills became Secretary of the Treasury. Frank D'Olier was the first National Commander, and later a president of a great insurance company. Two other future National Commanders were Alvin Owsley and James Drain. Our first National Adjutant, Lemuel Bolles, was also there. Bennet Clark became a U.S. Senator from Missouri and managed to enact laws affecting veterans of both World War I and World War II. A former national doubles tennis champion, Dwight Davis, was also there. So was John Winant, future governor of New Hampshire, member of the first Society Security Board and ambassador to England. And the list goes on. There was a future Congressmen from Massachusetts and Ohio, A. Piatt Andrew and Ralph Cole. Devereaux Milburn, one of the greatest polo players of the times, was also there. George Ijams served many years as Assistant Director of the Veterans Administration. Harry Foster became the mayor of San Diego, California. David Goodrich—yes, it is the name you remember—was a member of the rubber family, one of the names on the registration list. Vincent Carroll would become a judge in Pennsylvania. Walter Beals would end up on the Supreme Court of the State of Washington.

These 463 men who gathered in Paris simply concerned themselves with the details of organization. It was not in their plans to consider policy or philosophy. There was much work to be done. The American Legion would have the necessary foundation to carry on, that would be strengthened, defined, and empowered within the next eight months, from gatherings in St. Louis, Missouri, in Minneapolis, in small towns and villages across America. The American Legion seed had been planted, and it began to take root.

For those of us living in 1999, it’s hard to imagine how the founders of this organization were able to accomplish this in such a short time. Think of it. They didn’t have air transportation like we have. They didn’t have 70 mile an hour interstates. They didn’t have trains that traveled as fast as today. There was so little time. I believe it was because those men had a deep sense of urgency and the zeal that had been planted in Paris. That fire would not go out. Perhaps historian Richard Jones caught that urgency best when he wrote, “The American Expeditionary Force dissolved. It left its dead in France. It left its record for history. Its members were discharged from the armed services almost as quickly as they landed back home in America. To perpetuate their memories, continue in service to their country, care for the disabled, they founded the American Legion. In so doing, they had asked nothing of a grateful nation.” It seems to me that while they asked nothing, they gave
in every possible way in daily living the aims and purposes of The American Legion embodied in our preamble.¹

I call on Past National Commander Erle Cocke, Jr., who in 1983 was named the Honorary President of the Society of American Legion Founders. I believe he should have the honor of closing the book for this great society.

**Tribute to Founders of The American Legion**

**Past National Commander Erle Cocke, Jr.**

To say that I stand before you a sad man would be an understatement. When I was National Commander, more than 600 founders were at the Convention. In fact, there were 612 founders present when I became the First National Commander to ever address the Society.

They were my mentors. They were my confidants. And they certainly were my friends. They made it possible for you and for me to return home and to continue service to the country as civilians. They were Americans who had the passion for their country, their community, and for God Almighty. They are all gone but they will never be forgotten.

The star in Paris, developed in St. Louis, has been a real thrust throughout the perpetuation of The American Legion by those who saw so much future in it when it began. The Senior Chaplain of the American Expeditionary Force, the Very Reverend Charles Brent, was one of those in Paris back in 1919. His message struck with those delegates, and I see no reason why they shouldn't strike a chord with you and with me today as we look to the future and to the possibilities which await this great institution, The American Legion. Bishop Brent said, “I believe that the Army of today when it goes back to civilian thinking and civilian acting, it will be capable of contributing to the commonwealth of the United States, as well as the change of character of the whole country, and lift it up to the higher planes of political, industrial and religious life.” He was right.

As we come to the end of the 20th Century, it is time for each of us to recapture that passion for the service, for America certainly needs God, and America needs The American Legion.

Commander Miller, I believe it is the appropriate time and hour to ask the National Chaplain, Father Robert Sweeney, to offer a prayer as we mark the end of the Society of American Legion Founders.

...At this time the Delegation stood and uncovered.

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN SWEENEY: We are gathered as friends with memories that never can be erased. Tears of sadness, tears of joy, whether our distance from loved ones be measured by miles, or from the beyond. They paved the way, but the future is ours. For we speak of them as living memorials.

Let us pray. Heavenly Father, we honor and revere the memories of our mentors, the Founders of The American Legion, who have been called to Post Everlasting. They had the foresight to organize an association of veterans returning to their homes after the battle scars of war. They realized the basic needs those veterans would encounter upon their return. They believed that by associating together in mutual helpfulness as veterans, we would be

able to grow in strength in service to God and Country, thus serving each other as we support our youth and our community. By that bond forged in the fox holes and trenches of warfare we stand together, mindless of race, creed or sex. Bound as buddies who were united in war, we now stand indivisible in peace. We give thanks to The American Legion and the moral standards and family standards and values it has come to symbolize. We give thanks to the members of the Society of Founders of The American Legion who prepared the way, not for themselves, but for those buddies with whom they served and those who did not return. Amen.

...At this time the Delegates viewed a video.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: Some of you may remember that performance which was done by Brandi Williams. She sang that song at our National Convention in Orlando. Some of you may also be wondering why Past National Commander Erle Cocke was chosen to give that tribute. Those of you who don't know it, Erle was the youngest National Commander ever elected by this organization so far. He was 29 years old at the time he was elected, and he is the Senior Past National Commander of this organization. And I didn't think that there was anybody that deserved to give that tribute more than Erle.

At this time it is an honor for me to introduce to the delegates of this Convention a man who shares our zeal for helping veterans. He is the Dominion President of the Army, Navy and Air Force Veterans in Canada. A veteran of World War II two, serving first in the Canadian Army and then transferring to the Royal Canadian Air Force, welcome a man who has already received The American Legion's Amity Award, a great leader from Canada, our friend to the north, Bert Pritchard.

Address: Bert Pritchard, Dominion President
Army, Navy and Air Force Veterans in Canada

Before I say my remarks, I consider it an honor to be here before you to address you on your 81st Annual Convention. I have been a member of 56 years of the Army, Navy and Air Force Veterans in Canada, and I consider this my finest moment. Having said that, thank you, Comrade Miller, distinguished guests, and members of The American Legion, on behalf of the executive and all members of the Army, Navy and Air Force Veterans in Canada. I bring you greetings and friendship. It is a friendship which began between our associations during the early years after World War II, which led to the establishment of the Anavicus, the United States unit of Anavicus, a friendship like that of our countries, partly founded on history of military ventures over the years.

As an aside, Benjamin Franklin commented on being a friend in this statement: a false friend in the shadow that can see only when the sun shines. Certainly our countries’ history shows that ours have been forced often through very overcast skies. As brothers in arms we go back a long ways, and history shows that Canadians served with your armies during the Civil War. About 70 years later during another civil war in Spain, many Canadians served in the Abraham Lincoln Battalion. Not many years later, the first special service force, known by its members as The Force and founded in 1942 by Lieutenant Colonel Robert Frederick, was manned by Canadians and Americans, and earned an enviable record as being tough and unbeatable, achieving one success after another in the battlefields of Italy, France and Germany. In the 1950s in the hills of Korea, at the Battle of Kapyong Canada’s Princess Patricia’s held off a large attacking force of the enemy. Along the American units on the right would carry out a tactical withdrawal, and later to retake their lost ground. And
the Patricia's, as part of the Commonwealth Division, stood shoulder to shoulder with American forces to contain communist aggression in that far off peninsula. Early in the 1960s, in the rice paddies and hamlets of Vietnam, Canadian's served in the American units, and many gave their lives. On the Rhine in the 1950s, '60s and '70s we stood united as a bulwark to communist expansion in Europe. Here in North America, the mutual defense arrangement, known as NORAD, is another instance of service to brothers-in-arms.

Our long history of military service together is a telling reminder to all of our close association as neighbors. Today, we stand here in Anaheim, California, shoulder to shoulder to commemorate the sacrifices of our comrades who gave their lives.

Of course, rights have to be protected, and it has been the role of the warrior to do so. It is a role not very well understood by our political masters during times of peace. Let us work together in reminding our governments of the folly of forgetting about the need to keep strong and well-equipped forces in sufficient number to ensure that protection. As veterans organizations we have another challenge of reminding succeeding generations of Americans and Canadians of the values of which our brothers and sisters have made the supreme sacrifice, and tell them that those who gave their youth, vigor in the service of our countries, that did so for their well-being. Our fallen comrades are counting on us to tell the story and to never forget.

I wish you a successful convention. God bless our countries.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: Thank you, Bert. It's always very nice to have fellow Anavicus members here.

Many American veterans have worked closely with members of those in the American and the Canadian armed forces, at both the civilian and military levels. That service formed bonds of friendship which have continued to this very day. Our support and appreciation of the service of The Royal Canadian Legion is a natural extension of that mutual service. We are honored to have with us in Anaheim, the Dominion Vice President, and the first woman to hold that position, I might add. She served with the Royal Canadian Air Force. Welcome to the stage, the Dominion Vice President, Mary Ann Burdett.

Address: Mary Ann Burdett, Dominion Vice President
The Royal Canadian Legion

It gives me great pleasure, and is the greatest honor of my life to bring you greetings from Comrade Chuck Murphy, our Dominion President of The Royal Canadian Legion, and the 500,000 Legionnaires in Canada.

From the moment I arrived here I have been impressed. And this morning I have had my heart wrenched so many times, starting with the beauty of the sound of your All-American Boys Choir; the feeling of patriotism and concern for the protection of the American flag, something we as Canadians can understand as well; by all of your speakers, and perhaps especially by Senator McCain who has suffered those things which we cannot even begin to comprehend, and has come through to carry on, to lead us, to show us the way and help the veterans attain what it is they so richly deserve. For the next sessions I will bring more Kleenex™, but I thank you all so very much for adding to my knowledge.

When I first started with The Royal Canadian Legion, my father, who had a great affect on my life, gave me some advice. He said, “Sweetheart, when you’re making a speech,” he said, “make it like a young lady’s skirt, long enough to cover the subject and short enough to keep it interesting.” Yesterday, while wandering around Disneyland I took a look at some
of the young ladies skirts; went back to the hotel and threw away the first 20 pages of my speech. So you can thank my father and those young ladies for me not being as long-winded as I might have been.

As Canadians, we inhabit the second largest country, and are bounded by three oceans, and we share with you people a landmass. But more importantly, we share with you the ideal of freedom and equality for all. The bonds of service shared on this continent are strong. Four times we have served together in this century alone for the good of mankind. And today, Canadian and American troops are serving together once again in the troubled Balkans. We are allies in NATO and NORAD. Service to our individual nations and the protection of our allies are ideals which we as Legionnaires understood during our service days, and which we understand now as we continue to pursue the rights and benefits earned by our veterans in this primary area and in the area of nation-building. We stand together, Canada and the United States of America. The relationships we have formed as nations and the service organizations in war and peace are second to none.

Your President Kennedy once said, “That like a marriage, it is a relationship which no one should put asunder,” and he was right. We are neighbors because of geography; partners because of economics; and allies because we share the view of freedom and equality which few nations know, and many can only dream about.

We must make every effort to see that our knowledge and our caring of our veterans goes on to the next generation, that they become aware and remain aware of the sacrifices of their predecessors. This coming year, the millennium in Canada, in 1999 during our Remembrance Day time, The Royal Canadian Legion will be asking the Canadian people to stand for a two minute wave of silence across the country, from time zone to time zone at 11:00 o’clock. The 11th hour, the 11th day of the 11th month. We mean real silence, that cars will stop, that broadcasters will shut down, that everything will become silent as it becomes 11:00 o’clock, and that wave of silence will travel the country. We want to ensure that our young Canadian pay special tribute to their veterans that day.

In the year 2000 the Legion is spearheading the return to Canada of the remains of an unknown soldier. The remains will come from that famous battlefield of Vimy Ridge and will be returned to Canada for internment at the base our National War Memorial in our capitol city of Ottawa. Projects like these are why we as a Legion will continue to exist far into the future. We have a role to fulfill, and as long as we have men and women in uniform to stand for freedom and democracy, we, as Legions, will continue our role.

I thank you for your kind invitation to your Convention, the warmth of your hospitality, and the pleasures I have encountered here in your company. In closing, another one of my daddy’s famous sayings: “Sweetheart, when your mouth is open, your ears are closed.” So I’m going to sit down, close my mouth, reopen my ears and learn all I can from the most dedicated, knowledgeable and experienced Legionnaires I have ever encountered.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: Our next guest has traveled far to bring his greetings. He is a man who has a distinguished military career in the Republic of China. Today, he is the Secretary-General of the Veterans Affairs Commission of that country. Welcome Lieutenant General Wu, Chi-liang.
Proceedings of Tuesday, September 7, 1999

Address: Lt. General Wu, Chi-liang, Secretary General
Veterans Affairs Commission
Republic of China

It is my great honor to be invited to attend your 1999 National Convention here in Anaheim. I bring you greetings from the Veterans Affairs Commission of the Republic of China. Our Commission used to be called VACRS in short, and I think many of our old friends and your Past National Commanders, and Past National Presidents of the Auxiliary still remember us by that name. Well, whatever our name, our organization is always your ally in the West Pacific, and will always be willing to continue our relations with you.

January 16th, last year, I started to assume the Office of the Secretary General of the Veterans Affairs Commission of my country, the Republic of China. Since then, I have been informed that The American Legion and the VAC have been in very sound and close relationship for over 20 years. Each year our two organizations exchanged visits and each year our delegation to your Convention found the trip informative and impressive.

Last December I had the honor to meet with National Commander Miller and his party. It’s a pity they could not have stayed long with us in Taiwan, but I think they must have shared some of what they had seen there in Taiwan with their friends and colleagues. I hope what he shared was about what we were doing there for our veterans, and not about our traffic, especially not the scooter riders.

Our organization, the VAC, is an equivalent to your Department of Veterans Affairs in the federal level. We focus our services on providing medical care, home care, education assistance, and employment assistance to our veterans. Our philosophy is that veterans have given the best part of their life to serve the country and the people, and so, when they are retired, the country needs to reciprocate their contribution by providing them at least a decent life. In the past years, our delegations visited your VA centers and other service facilities; they brought back to Taiwan many ideas about how you serve your veterans and how your veterans and the American veteran organizations continue to show patriotism to your country, and we learned.

Ladies and gentlemen, veterans are respectful. The majority of us present today are veterans; when we were in active service we served our country with all our might, and after we retire, we are still patriotic and loyal to our country. That is the unique nature of soldiers, and we are proud of being soldiers once in our life. Let us keep this feeling and pass it on to our next generation and to theirs too. Then, like General Douglas MacArthur said in his prayer to his son: We will not live in vain.

In closing, I want to once again thank you for inviting me to participate in this great occasion, and wish every one of you good health, and a successful Convention.

GENERAL WU, CHI-LIANG (translated): To show our appreciation, on behalf of the State President of the Republic of China, Lieutenant General Wu, would like to present the Medal of Cloud and Banner on behalf of Dr. Lee Ten-hui, the president of our country. I would take pleasure to read the English translation of the certificate accompanying the Award of the Order of Cloud and Banner.

Mr. Harold L. “Butch” Miller, National Commander of The American Legion has distinguished himself by his outstanding contributions to the promotion of friendly relations between the peoples of the United States of America and the Republic of China, and to the enhancement of ties and cooperation between the veterans of our two countries. In appreciation of his meritorious service, National Commander Miller is presented the Order
of the Cloud and Banner with Cravat by the government of the Republic of China, in the accordance with Article 11 of the Armed Forces Decoration Regulations. Signed by Dr. Lee Ten-hui, President; Mr. Vin Sin Chau (phonetics) the Premier, and General Tun Ve, (phonetics) Minister of National Defense.

In addition to that, on behalf of the Chairman of Veterans Affairs Commission of the Republic of China, Lieutenant General Wu would also like to present to National Commander, Harold L. "Butch" Miller, a plaque. And the inscription reads: In appreciation of his outstanding contributions to the enhancement of friendship and cooperation between The American Legion and the Veterans Affairs Commission of the Republic of China. Signed by General Lee Ten-hui Chairman, Veterans Affairs Commission of the Republic of China on the date of September 7, 1999.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: Thank you, General Wu for your kindness and for your service.

The Chair recognizes Ron Murphy, Chairman of the National Convention Committee on Legislation and Rules, for the purpose of making a report.

Report: Convention Committee on Legislation and Rules
Ronald Murphy, Arizona, Chairman

Your Convention Committee on Legislation and Rules met at 10:00 AM on Sunday, September 5, 1999 in the Hilton Anaheim Hotel, Laguna A room in Anaheim, California. Forty-seven (47) delegates assigned to this Convention Committee were in attendance, plus sixteen (16) guests.

Following the preliminary activities to officially organize the Committee, the Permanent Chairman and Secretary of the committee were duly elected. I, Ronald C. Murphy, a delegate from the Department of Arizona, was elected Permanent Chairman. Claude B. Carpenter, a delegate from the Department of Arkansas, was elected Permanent Secretary.

The Committee then proceeded to the business by considering the Rules of the Convention. A motion was unanimously approved by the Committee to recommend the adoption of the Standing Rules of the Convention as they appear in the Uniform Code of Procedures for Organizing National Conventions of The American Legion.

A second unanimously approved motion allows the Permanent Chairman and Permanent Secretary to make technical corrections to the Committee Report, as necessary and appropriate.

A third unanimously approved motion authorizes the Chairman and Secretary to sign the report on behalf of the Convention Committee on Legislation and Rules.

The Legislation and Rules Committee did not receive any resolutions for consideration or action.

Under new business, the Committee heard remarks from Andre Quintero, Staff Member for the Office of Senator Joe Dunn, California State Senate. Mr. Quintero discussed the development of effective working relations between professional staff and veterans' advocates. He effectively outlined the numerous ways in which professional staff can best assist Department leadership in advancing the legislative agenda in their states through close liaison with professional staff member, as well as with lawmakers.
The Legislative and Rules Committee would like to offer the Convention Delegates with a brief report on current congressional developments impacting issues of primary interest to The American Legion.

Recently, the Senate Majority and Minority Leaders received letters from National Commander, Butch Miller, and Citizens Flag Alliance President, Pat Brady, requesting a vote on Senate Joint Resolution 14 on March 28, 2000. This vote would coincide with The American Legion’s annual Washington Conference.

Today, Congress returns from its August recess to resume work on the FY 2000 budget. In fact, the House is expected to take up the VA, HUD, and Independent Agencies appropriations bill either today or tomorrow. Unfortunately, the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee has not yet even produced their version of the bill. VA will need a $1.9 billion increase in current funding in FY 2000.

Only one appropriations bill for FY 2000 has been signed into law. That means the other twelve (12) bills are still in limbo. The American Legion, you and I, still has time to lobby Members of Congress to adequately fund programs and services important to America’s veterans and their families.

Yesterday, The American Legion opened a Command Post in Exhibition Hall A across from Emblem Sales. The Command Post is equipped with telephones and computer terminals. I would ask that each and every member of The American Legion family stop by and send a message to your lawmakers. The computers also give us the capability to send letters-to-the-editor of your local, hometown newspapers. The Command Post hours of operations will be until 5:00 p.m. today, tomorrow from 8:00 a.m until 5:00 p.m., and on Thursday, 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. Please have as many of your delegates visit that Command Post as possible. If you don’t call, they won’t listen.

On September 28, Legionnaires from across the country will accompany the newly elected National Commander to Capitol Hill. The purpose of this visit will be to discuss the legislative mandates adopted by the delegates at this National Convention. The highlight of this event will be the National Commander’s testimony before a joint session of the congressional Veterans’ Affairs Committees.

National Commander Butch Miller, as a duly authorized Delegate to this Convention from the Department of Arizona, I move the adoption of this report and the adoption of the Standing Rules of the Convention as they appear in the Uniform Code of Procedures for Organizing National Conventions of The American Legion. Mr. Commander, I so move.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: Do I hear a second?

...The motion was seconded.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: Any discussion? Hearing no discussion, those in favor of the motion signify in the normal manner. Those opposed? Ayes have it.

The Report of Legislation and Rules is adopted.

The Chair recognizes Ken Danilson of Iowa, Chairman of the National Convention Committee on Finance for the purpose of making a report.

Report: Convention Committee on Finance
Kenneth Danilson, Iowa, Chairman

This is the report of the Convention Committee on Finance. Forty-two (42) members met at the Hilton Anaheim, Capistrano Room 20, Concourse Level, at 9:00 a.m., September 5, 1999 in Anaheim, California. Paul M. Allen (Minnesota), National Finance Director,
opened the Meeting as staff liaison and made general announcements concerning convention activities. He then informed the committee that nominations were in order for Chairman and Secretary. Kenneth D. Danilson (Iowa) was elected Chairman and Carl E. Levi (Tennessee) was elected Secretary by unanimous vote. The chairman introduced National Treasurer, George Buskirk, Jr. (Indiana) who updated the committee on the status of the U.S. economy and its effect on the investment policy of the National Headquarters. The Dow Jones Average which closed the 1998 year at 9,181 is now at an all time high of 11,326. This continued strength, coupled with a cautious policy of the Federal Reserve to keep the economy from overheating by increasing fed rates, is expected to sustain a foundation for continued economic prosperity. Foreign economies are expected to recover longer term as a result of government intervention to improve their credit and corporate performance. While the U.S. economy Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is expected to grow at 3.5%, Europe should have a GDP growth of 2% in 1999. National Headquarters is projecting a operating surplus for 1999 of $4,262,443 which will be $1,860,067 higher than it was originally planned. Treasurer Buskirk then recommended that National dues be set at $9.00, no change from previous years. A motion from Silas Noel (Kentucky) was made that the 2000 per capita dues remain at $9.00. Anthony Minei (New York) seconded the motion and it was adopted by unanimous vote.

The chairman then recognized Dick McNally (Wisconsin), the Publisher/Editor-in-Chief of The American Legion Magazine. Mr. McNally reported that the magazine had a 1998 surplus of $1,968,698 and is projecting a $1,500,000 surplus for this year. Mr. McNally reported that even though the first and second quarter advertising revenues are down $623,945 from our revenue goal of $6,785,000, our third quarter advertising was very strong; strong enough, in fact to move us to the point where sales now exceed last year’s by a small margin. Some of this was due to a 7.5 advertising rate increase this year and that national advertising is more profitable. Mr. McNally then informed the committee that we absorbed an 11% increase in postal rates over the past year. The impact was mitigated by the fact that our printer, R.R. Donnelly increased the number of postal entry points from 127 to 197. The new three year contract with R.R. Donnelly reflects a price cut of $350,000 annually. Additionally, we have experienced a price drop in paper costs.

National Finance Director Paul Allen reported that the 1998 Olive & Co. certified annual audit, which was distributed to each delegate prior to the convention and published in the convention program, shows our total assets were at $111,132,912 a 10% increase over last year and our 1998 year end surplus was $3,957,122. He also informed the committee that we are anticipating about the same year end surplus in 1999. The National financial status is very sound.

Chairman Danilson then updated the committee on the financial status of The American Legion’s contribution to the Citizens Flag Alliance (CFA). As a federally chartered organization, the audit of The American Legion and the reports of the convention committees and the activities of the standing commissions are sent to the U.S. Congress, the Speaker of the House and the President Pro Tem of the Senate. They are then reproduced by the Government Printing Office, reviewed by the Internal Revenue Service, and are made available to any citizen of the United States upon request. Additionally, everything in its totality about the finances of the CFA are public record and available to the National Convention, and at every meeting of the National Executive Committee and the National Finance Commission. Furthermore, Carl Levi (Tennessee) who is Vice Chairman of the National Finance Commission is the Chairman of the CFA’s Internal Audit Committee. Mr.
Levi, CFA’s Treasurer George Buskirk and CFA’s Chief Financial Officer Paul Allen conduct periodical audits. Annually, all CFA records are audited by Alderding & Co., a certified public accounting firm.

Chairman Danilson then informed the committee in the interest of the fullest possible disclosure he asked the finance staff to distribute every resolution passed by the National Executive Committee, pertaining to the CFA, to the Convention Committee on Finance. These resolutions authorized The American Legion to invest $13,227,000 in the flag-protection campaign. Every penny is accounted for and we have documentation for all of it at National Headquarters in Indianapolis. Chairman Danilson then informed the committee that the CFA currently has around $550,000 cash on hand plus a $90,000 segregated account to pay for scholarships. He also informed them that the fund raising efforts are very successful, netting around $500,000 each year.

Brad Jorgens (Minnesota) moved to empower the Chairman and Secretary to write and/or amend the report on behalf of the Convention Committee on Finance. William Rochford (Maryland) seconded the motion, which was adopted by unanimous vote.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 10:05 a.m.

Brad Jorgens (Minnesota) moved to empower the Chairman and Secretary to write and/or amend the report on behalf of the Convention Committee on Finance. William Rochford (Maryland) seconded the motion, which was adopted by unanimous vote.

The American Legion is a family organization. This morning you heard from the President of the American Legion Auxiliary. Now it is my distinct pleasure to present to you the newly elected National Commander of the Sons of The American Legion. He is a man with a long list of service to veterans and their families in Oklahoma through his Sons leadership. Please welcome a member of Squadron 337 in Talala, Oklahoma, Commander Rick Cook.

Rick Cook, Oklahoma, National Commander
Sons of The American Legion

I bring you greetings from the Sons of The American Legion. We have completed a very successful year. Membership is almost 220,000 members, which is an increase of over five percent. VA&R participation has increased from last year’s numbers. With Child Welfare donations, we set a new record of 181,000 plus. This put us over the one million dollar mark since 1988. All other programs which the Sons of The American Legion participate have shown increases.

Some of our goals for 1999-2000: membership to one quarter of a million members. This is a bold step. We think we can reach it. We want increases in VA&R participation and reporting. We know the squadrons are out there doing the work, we just need to find a better method to get the reports. Our Child Welfare program is 200 K in Y2K. This is $200,000.00 in the year 2000. This is slightly less than our ultimate goal of one dollar per member. We will also strive to increase participation in all other programs of the Sons of The American Legion.

This year my project will be the World War II Memorial. My father was a member of the Army Air Corps, and served in the South Pacific in World War II. Recognition of these men and woman who served in World War II is long overdue.
A new project of the Sons of The American Legion is a development of a youth soccer program. Boys and girls of all ages from coast to coast are playing soccer in this great country. The popularity has steadily increased over the last few years. We hope to have this program developed and in place in the next year or so.

I thank The American Legion for allowing us to assist in serving our veterans of this great nation. I now introduce a few of the people with me today. Our outgoing Commander is National Commander Byron Robichaux from Louisiana, National Adjutant Brian O’Heare and my mother and father, Dorothy and Wilbur Cook. I would like to recognize the Department of Oklahoma for their support. And mostly, I would like to thank my wife, Jacquelyn, for her support the last nine years or so.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: When I was National Commander, one of the first trips that I took was back to Indianapolis. I happened to be there at a time when they said that the National Organization of the Sons of The American Legion was having a meeting at the Adam’s Mark Hotel. I walked in unannounced, and before I left they gave me a check for $15,000 to the NEF. That’s the kind of organization we have supporting us.

This morning you saw an appreciation award given to the City of New Orleans for its contribution in the success of the Convention last year. Next year at our next Convention in Milwaukee, a similar award, a recognition will be given to the City of Anaheim and the Department of California for their efforts. One of the things that we do as a Legion family in showing our thanks to the department for what they have done for us in providing a venue that we can have such a successful Convention, is to leave a little bit of something behind. And I’m not talking about the dollars that we bring here, I’m talking about something that means a little bit more. It means life. And one of those things is our blood drive that we conduct in every host city. The blood drive is open right now over in the Exhibit Hall, and I would ask all of you, if you possibly can, to go leave a little bit of yourself, something that means life, behind, so that the folks here in Southern California have something to remember us by and possibly save a life or two here in California. That’s the kind of generosity that American Legion members are known for.

As we come to an end of this opening day of the 81st National Convention, I want to also take a moment to encourage you to visit one more venue over there in the Exhibit Hall, and that is the iBelong booth. iBelong is a company that The American Legion has entered into an agreement with. They sell computer services, and through them The American Legion is going to step into the next century in advance of any other such veterans organization, I can assure you. Go over there and see what they have to offer. That represents in so many ways not only the future of this country in commercialism and in the information age, but it represents the future of this American Legion, and it should represent the future of you, as a member of this organization and your post and your district and your department. If you don’t care to participate in it, at least you can say you saw it before it ran away from you.

I call on the National Adjutant for the purpose of making some announcements.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGL: Immediately following the recess of this first day of our Annual National Convention, the Western Caucus will be meeting in this hall; immediately after we recess.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: I would like to see my National Officers in my office.
Delegates, please join me in a salute to the flag of our United States of America. Right-hand salute. One. Two! The Convention will now stand in recess until 9:00 o’clock tomorrow morning.

...At 2:10 p.m., the Convention recessed, to convene the following day, Wednesday, September 8, 1999, at 9:00 o’clock a.m.
PROCEEDINGS
SECOND DAY

Wednesday, September 8, 1999

...At 8:30 a.m., the delegates listened to the Prelude.
...At 9:00 a.m., the delegates assembled for the second day of the 81st Annual National Convention and the following proceedings were had:

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: I would now like to call this convention to order. Delegates please stand and join with me in a right hand salute to the very honorable Colors of our country. One. Two!

For the matter of an invocation, it is with great pride that I call to the microphone our National Chaplain Father Bob Sweeney of New York.

Invocation
Rev. Robert J. Sweeney, New York, National Chaplain

Heavenly Father, relaxed, refreshed, rejuvenated, we gather once more and place ourselves in Your presence. We give You thanks for the gift of this day, may we use it wisely and heed Your word and will. Grant us the grace to recognize Your presence in our lives and enable us to serve You by serving our neighbor, for we assemble to serve God and country. Should we at any time forget one, we fail to respect the other. God bless The American Legion. God bless the United States of America. Amen.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: Join with me in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance. Let’s do it in unison and in a true American Legion fashion.
... The delegates stood and recited the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: The convention is now in session...

Our first distinguished guest this morning is a fellow veteran, a fellow Legionnaire, a government leader, and a family man. He served in the U.S. Army in Vietnam. He has held elected government positions since 1976, including serving as a Congressman and Senator from Tennessee. He has a commitment to strong families. He is a co-sponsor of five separate bi-national commissions. But you and I, fortunately, know him as our Vice President. Please help me welcome to the stage a member of Charles E. Price Post 57 in Gordonsville, Tennessee, our Vice President, the Honorable Al Gore, Jr.

Address: The Honorable Albert Gore, Jr.
Vice President of the United States

It’s certainly an honor to be here. Let me first applaud your outgoing National Commander, Butch Miller, for a year of remarkable service. Thank you for your steadfast commitment to our nation’s veterans and for your love of our country. To all of the leaders of The American Legion, it’s an honor to join with you. I want to acknowledge my former colleague in the Senate, Orrin Hatch, who’s here, my former colleague Senator Alan Cranston, former Senator Alan Cranston who’s here, Secretary West and Mrs. West and other distinguished guests, Hershel Gober and all the folks at the VA.
I’m especially pleased to be joined here by a very special friend of mine, Bob Delabar of Seattle. Bob served with me in Vietnam and we also served together stateside. We had our first duty assignment together at Fort Rucker, Alabama, the Army flight center and then he went over to Vietnam before I did. We got close to each other. He was in Saigon, I was 25 miles north of Saigon, but it was close enough to commandeer jeeps on our down days. We spent time together over there. Bob’s presence reminds me of a gift that I received not too long ago from a Vietnam veteran in Chicago who helped put together a remarkable art museum that features art by Vietnam veterans. They engraved these words on the front of a canteen: “Each face will lose its name and time will not defer, for there will always be the bond between whom we are and where we were.”

I know that a lot of you are like me in remembering that some of the greatest times in my whole life were the times spent with my buddies in the Army. We did a lot of things together, had a great time together and it’s fun to look back on all those times.

Time has certainly passed. I was reminded of that recently. Before I went to Vietnam, I got married and Tipper and I recently celebrated our 29th wedding anniversary. It seems like yesterday. We have four children now and nine weeks ago, we became grandparents for the first time. That’s been the big excitement for us. I don’t think I’ve mentioned yet that my grandson was born on the 4th of July. Are there any other grandparents out here? Could I see a show of hands? When I come around shaking hands afterwards, I want you to give me some advice because I’m a rookie. But what I’ve been told so far is that evidently the preferred technique is to just give that grandchild whatever he wants. And then if it causes any problems, give him back to his parents.

This is really a homecoming for me. My dad was a member of The American Legion. We lost him in December, three weeks shy of his 91st birthday. My uncle, my mother’s younger brother, Whit LaFon, has been active in The American Legion virtually all his life. He is a past Tennessee Department Commander, a past National Executive Committeeman. He’s been coming to these annual meetings almost every single year for 40 years. And he’s here with us again today and I want to acknowledge my uncle, Whit LaFon.

And, of course, with all that, you’d better believe that I’m proud to be a member of The American Legion myself, Department of Tennessee, Post 57. I was honored to wear my country’s uniform during the Vietnam War. It’s for this reason that my commitment to the veterans of America has always been a lot more than a policy position. It is a personal and moral standard to bear.

A great nation is not built on fear. It’s built on courage, your courage. And when we send our courageous young men and women into harm’s way, we had better be prepared to take care of them. That is America’s sacred obligation.

Today, I want to talk about three areas that are critical to our men and women in uniform, to our veterans, and to all who love freedom. The first is a strong national defense. For all my public life, I have stood for a strong America, from my consistent advocacy of military forces second-to-none, to my vote in favor of the Gulf War in 1991. I have always known what you know: that nothing we do for our veterans after the battle is going to matter if we don’t back them up while they’re in the trenches and on the front lines, fighting for us. So you have this iron-clad commitment from me: so long as I am in a position to do something about it, America will be the strongest force for peace and freedom in the entire world.
In my years in the House and in the Senate, one of the issues I worked hardest on was facing down the Soviet threat and reducing the mortal dangers of nuclear war. Today, the Soviet Union is gone and freedom is on the advance everywhere.

Without the people in this room, without an America that stood tall for freedom, decade after decade, we could never have ended the Cold War, made America more secure, and brought peace and freedom to hundreds of millions of decent people at home and abroad. I thank you and I thank all the veterans that you stand for and represent. History will record that in the 20th Century, America's legions were the world's first line of defense against tyranny and oppression.

But victory calls on us for renewed vigilance, in the face of new and continuing dangers. As we move forward, we must honor this simple principle: let us never ask our servicemen and women to do what they have not been equipped to do. Let us match their courage with armor. Let us always equip them to do what we ask. That's why we're now fighting for the first long-term, sustained increase in defense spending in a decade. We want our Armed Forces ready to deploy in any crisis when they're needed. We want our forces to be the best equipped in the world well into the next century. And we want our forces to be strong enough to meet and overwhelm traditional forms of aggression, as well as newer threats, such as terrorism and nuclear proliferation. And so I ask for your help: together, let's keep our defenses strong.

Second, our soldiers, sailors, and airmen offer us no less than their lives. Surely, we should offer them the highest quality of life. We owe our men and women in uniform not just military strength and readiness, but also high living standards, and a high quality of life to make certain that their service is not only rewarding, but well-rewarded. We want to do right by our troops by upgrading and replacing aging equipment, barracks, and family housing. We are proposing the largest military pay raise since 1982. And we are going to reinstate military retirement benefits that were taken away over a decade ago.

Third, I pledge an unshakeable commitment to our tested American warriors, our veterans who have returned home from active duty. Often, as I travel around this country, veterans young and old will come up to me and express their gratitude for what our country does for them. But let's face it: we don't give our veterans anything. You have earned it, with sweat, courage, blood, and sacrifice. You've earned a gratitude no price can match. And America must do more for those who have stood ready to risk everything to keep us free. That's why, when I was first in Congress, I co-founded the Vietnam-era Veterans Caucus. At a time when all too few respected our service, much less welcomed us home, we fought to bring attention to the plight of those Americans who had served during Vietnam and came back to civilian life with needs that were being ignored. And in the last seven years, we have made real progress in improving and expanding benefits for all veterans.

You did not delay in answering your country's call; your country, in turn, should never make you wait. You should get your benefits faster, with less bureaucracy. So we are working to improve the processing of veterans' claims. And incidentally, I'm proud to report that all the critical systems supporting veterans' benefits and health benefits are now ready for the Y2K challenge and back-up plans are in place to make sure that our veterans benefits are completely secure.

In addition, every veteran's final resting place should be a place of due dignity and honor. We are opening four new veterans' cemeteries around the country, near Dallas, Cleveland, Chicago and Saratoga, the largest expansion in our national cemetery system.
since World War II. I went to a veterans funeral not long ago. I’d like to tell you a little story about it.

Whit LaFon’s younger brother, Everett LaFon, was called ‘Punk’ all his life. He served in World War II. As a kid, because he was the youngest and the littlest, somebody looked at him on a wagon with all the other older, bigger kids and said, “Why, he looks just like a pumpkin.” And that became ‘punink’ and that became ‘Punk’. I never called him ‘Punk’. I always called him Uncle Everett. When he came back from World War II, a lot of people didn’t realize what he had been through. I only learned about it a lot later because he never talked about it very much. The truth is, he had kind of a rough life. He went off to Alaska and helped to build the pipeline. Worked as a fireman. Saved some lives there. He devoted himself in his later years to veterans, to The American Legion, to the VFW. When I say he had kind of a rough life, some of you know what I mean. When he died, lots of folks came to the funeral. Some people didn’t know quite what to say. But then, with the honors came a telling of the story of his service. When he was young, along with many of you, he saved the world from totalitarianism and protected our freedoms. When that flag was folded in proper manner, it was one of the greatest honors of my life to stand as a representative not only of my uncle, but of the United States of America and hand that folded flag to his kids. He raised a boy who’s a colonel in the Air Force, a military doctor, a girl who’s a teacher, one of the finest in the country. And when I presented that flag, and everybody there reflected upon what he had done for our country as a veteran, that was all that mattered. I want you to know that’s one of the reasons I fought hard to be able to tell you today that we’re committed to making honors details available to every single veteran whose family requests them. I think that’s something that needs to be done in our country.

For all veterans and all Americans, we also have to build on the programs and commitments that make life worthwhile for all of our families. For example, we have to save Social Security, so it’s strong for today and for tomorrow as well. Like your hard-earned veterans’ benefits, Social Security is yours, you paid into it all your lives and I’ll be damned if I’m going to allow it to be cut or weakened or taken away. We need to stand by and not privatize any part of it.

And that’s why I will fight against the reckless tax schemes that some have put forward in this Congress that would put us right back into deficits, in order to shower new benefits on special interests, instead of taking care of first things first. I’ve got a different idea: we should use that surplus, your surplus, to save Social Security first and strengthen Medicare, and provide prescription drug benefits for our seniors and completely pay off our national debt for the first time since Andrew Jackson was President, a generation before the Civil War.

As we strengthen Medicare, we must do more to allow veterans to take their Medicare benefits to veterans’ hospitals. We’re working to do that, and I urge you to join me in persuading Congress to pass our plan into law. It’ll help strengthen veterans’ hospitals. We’ve already brought health care closer to your homes, by adding hundreds of outpatient clinics, to a total of over 600, so even more veterans get the care they need when and where they need it.

I worked closely with The American Legion to improve veterans’ health benefits in our budget. I heard your concerns loud and clear. I shared them. And I acted on them. That’s why, two months ago in a ceremony in Tennessee, I announced that this administration would ask for an additional one billion dollars, above and beyond our current request to Congress, to reduce waiting times, expand outpatient care, and improve long-term care in
the VA medical system. And I'll fight to see that that increase is passed into law. And I
know we have a lot more to do. I want to ensure that each and every veteran treated by our
VA system gets the quality of care they need and deserve.

So this is the heart of my commitment to you: to stand for a strong national defense;
to make sure our troops have all the resources they need while they are standing up for us;
to make sure our veterans receive the benefits they fought for and thoroughly earned. This
is the kind of commitment that you deserve. Together, let's build an America where not a
single veteran is homeless, or hungry, or without the care that he or she needs. Let's build
an America where we have a full accounting of every POW, and every brave soldier missing
in action. Let's build an America where we honor the values that you fought for, the values
that have sustained me and my life and career: faith, family, and freedom for all people.

Thomas Jefferson once said that "the cement of this Union is the heart blood of every
American." I believe that. Of all our citizens, it is truest said of our veterans. Not long ago,
I was looking through an old copy of The American Legion Magazine. My family has
received it for as long as I can remember, no doubt because of Uncle Whit. It contained this
description of the American veteran, which rang so true to me: A veteran "takes personal
pride in the freedom of others, in men and women attending the church of their choice; in
friends voting how they choose; and in children sleeping quietly, without fear to interrupt
their slumber. A veteran is every man grown up a little taller, a person who understands the
awesome price of life's intangibles of freedom, justice and democracy. His motto is to live
and let live. But if he had to, if he had to choose between servitude and conflict, the veteran
would once again answer a call to duty. Because, above all else, a veteran is an American."

I'd like to close with a story from Tennessee that was told to me by a constituent of
mine from Murfreesboro, Tennessee. This happened when I was in my last year in the
United States Senate. He knocked on my door and told me that he was born in
Czechoslovakia—it's now called the Czech Republic, that part of the former
Czechoslovakia—and he had escaped 25 years ago by riding a motorcycle across the
Austrian border so fast and so suddenly that the border guards didn't have time to lift up
their machine guns and kill him, the way they killed so many who were trying to escape
communism. He came over here to the United States and made a life for himself and married
and then he watched with a thrill in his heart, 20 years later, when the so-called Velvet
Revolution freed Czechoslovakia from communist rule. He said to his wife, at that time after
he had watched some of that drama on television, that he wanted to go back to his former
homeland and see if he could help put in this transition to democracy and freedom. He went
back to the little town where he had been born. They had pretty much secured their freedom
then but the Soviet tanks were still there. While he was in his home town helping to organize
people, the tanks pulled back across the border. He said that as that curtain of fear was lifted,
everything changed immediately. The first thing that the people in that little town did was
to build a small monument to the American GIs who had come in to free that part of
Czechoslovakia at the very end of World War II. That was before the Iron Curtain fell.
Then, he said, within a half an hour, something happened that amazed him. Everywhere he
looked, he saw little American flags. It was almost like a movie set. He said he couldn't
understand how that had come to pass until he looked a little bit more closely at those flags
and suddenly he realized each one of them had 48 stars. The people of that town had saved
them, hidden them under their beds or in their cellars during all that time since the GIs had
come, until freedom was finally secure.
The United States of America stands for freedom and with people all over the world reaching out for what we have. It’s awfully important for us to stand together in support of what our country represents. I’m proud to be an American. I’m mighty proud to be one of you. And I look forward to fighting side by side with you again, this time to build a 21st Century in which America will always be secure, and our freedom and justice will continue to be a light to all nations.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: We have another very special guest with us, a true champion. Three very strong traits mark the values of our next guest. Those traits are service, hard work, and perseverance. As Legionnaires, we have seen these traits guide him as he has led the fight to gain the Constitutional protection for the American flag. He has led this fight in the United States Senate and anywhere else that that fight needed to be conducted. He continues to strive to protect the principles of limited government, tax restraint, and integrity in public service. Welcome the Chairman of United States Senate Judiciary Committee, a true and long-term friend of the veteran and our champion on the flag issue. It is my honor to introduce to this Convention, our friend, our champion, Senator Orrin Hatch.

Address: The Honorable Orrin G. Hatch
The United States Senate

I want to thank you, Butch, and all of the other leaders of The American Legion sitting behind me for what you do for this great organization and all you accomplish throughout all of our lives, from our children right on through to the grave. This organization is one of the greatest this world has ever seen, and I am grateful to all of you.

I hope you don’t mind if I single out three special guys from Utah: Terry Shaw, Val Smith, and, of course, Bill Christoffersen. Bill has been a true leader and has done his level best to make sure I get it right. And I know he is visiting my office next week, so I will be sure to hear about it if I don’t.

Some of us up here on Capitol Hill might learn a thing or two from the Legion about getting all sorts of divergent interests working together for the common good. I know it hasn’t always been easy. I am sure you guessed by now that what I’m hinting at is the legendary rivalry among the branches of our armed services. In Steven Ambrose’s widely praised book on D-Day, he quotes one of the Normandy invasion planners as saying, "nothing was ever proposed that didn’t meet with heated opposition. If the Corps wanted it, division did not. If the Army proposed something and the Navy agreed, the Air Force was sure to object." When I saw that quote, it occurred to me that he left out the Marines. Of course, we can’t leave out the Marines. Of course, we can’t leave out the Marines. In fact, let me tell you a story that probably won’t surprise you because it came from the Marines. It’s about a Navy admiral and an Army general.

It seems that during the invasion of the Philippines this general and admiral were both in a landing craft when it suddenly overturned in the surf. The admiral immediately began shouting, “General, General, promise you won’t tell my men I can’t swim.” And the General yelled back, “All right, Admiral, as long you promise not to tell my men I can’t walk on water.” But just let me make my point by saying if The American Legion can get the Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force, and Coast Guard all working together, I think that there’s hope that even the Republicans and Democrats on Capitol Hill can get something meaningful accomplished this year. At least I hope so.
We truly live in a miracle moment in our nation’s history. Consider this: for the most part, we are prosperous. We are living in peace. Although there are some in our country who need immediate help. America is the undisputed moral, military, and economic leader of the world. Our economy is the most efficient, most productive, most dynamic economic engine the world has ever seen. And it is driving a worldwide economic revolution that may one day bring to the poorest and most forgotten a way of life reserved only for the wealthiest and the most privileged. Our future is bright. We have the chance and the unique opportunity to live in an America of hope, freedom, individual dignity, and plain old neighborliness and goodness of heart. We have the opportunity to give all people the right to learn, to earn, to succeed, to fail, and to try again. We have the opportunity to bring peace and prosperity to the rest of the world. So the question we face is this: Do we have the courage and conviction to seize this blessed moment? Our answer must be yes.

I wish my wife of 42 years could be here with us today, the mother of our six children, and the grandmother of our 19 grandchildren. But she couldn’t, so you are going to have to put up with me. I have to say, we were working down the street in Salt Lake City one day, and Elaine was trailing a little bit behind me. We were looking in the windows of one of the major department stores, and I noticed that she had stopped and talked to one of the window washers. So when she finally caught up with me, I said, “What was that all about?” She said, “Well, I used to date him in high school.” I said, “Well, I guess you are glad you married me.” She said, “Oh, I don’t know.” She said, “If I had married him, he would be the United States Senator from Utah.” How true that is.

So today I want to speak, I want to speak more in detail. I was going to speak about two of the most insidious threats to our country’s future and why I believe that it’s imperative these be addressed in the days and weeks ahead, but I am going to add one more after the Vice President. Those threats are over-taxation, an erosion in our military capabilities, and finally protection of our beloved national symbol, the American flag.

Now, I wasn’t going to speak about tax relief, but I did want to set the record straight after hearing the Vice President. What we have done in Congress is we have set aside of this almost $2.9 trillion projected surplus, we have set aside three-quarters of that to protect Social Security, Medicare, and for debt reduction. But we didn’t think it was wrong to set aside one-quarter of it to give back to the American people who are overtaxed today paying 40 percent taxes, wartime taxes during times of great peace and prosperity. And so we have set aside a quarter of it for you. Now let me tell you about that. What’s so wrong with setting aside a quarter of the projected monies so the taxpayers get some benefit? What do we do with that? We cut marginal tax rates one solitary percent across the board. We get rid of that vicious marriage tax. No wonder people don’t revere marriage today. But we get rid of that marriage penalty. Number three, we reduce capital gains rates from 20 percent down to 18 percent. By the way, it was the Hatch/Lieberman Bill that reduced them from 28 percent to under 20 percent. Last but not least, we get rid of those awful death taxes where the family farm and the family business have to be sold because they are land rich and asset poor but have to pay a 55 percent death tax on top of that when they die. So the family loses the family farm and the family business. It’s time we fight for tax relief in this country. And I am sick and tired of people who won’t. Now I would like to talk more on that, but I had to say that much.

Let me talk a little bit about military readiness. Our nation’s capacity to protect and defend itself is seriously eroded, a fact unfortunately not recognized by many in our country today. How has this happened? It is relatively simple. We are not taking care of our people.
We are not taking care of our equipment. Our military policy is haphazard. Nearly eight years of neglect has taken its toll. Army recruitment is coming up 8,000 short this year. We need almost 1,000 more Air Force pilots. Navy ships can’t deploy because of critical skill shortages. 50 percent of skilled Air Force enlisted technicians are quitting. One-third of pilots are turning down aviation continuation pay, a type of bonus sometimes as high as $100,000 but requiring a long-term service commitment. Readiness has dropped from 68 percent, which is all Reagan could get it to under that so-called big build up, from 60 percent down to 30 percent.

Now look, military personnel don’t seek wealth but they do seek pay for service and risks. Military pay comparability with civilian equivalency has not yet been achieved. It hasn’t been achieved since 1982. A record number of military families are subsisting on food stamps. That’s deplorable. It’s outrageous, and we’ve got to stop it.

To add insult to injury, military health care, the single most important quality of life benefit for a service member, is an embarrassment to our nation. To put it bluntly, Tri-care is broken. We need a GI Bill of Health under Medicare so that you can get the health and the assurance and the health care that you need. I’m going to try to work to get that for you.

What about the equipment we provide our soldiers and sailors? Since the Gulf War and the “strategic pause” escorted in by the ABM Treaty and Star 2, we have reduced our army divisions by 30 percent, our carrier battle groups from 15 to 12, and our fighter wing equivalent forces by almost 50 percent. We have all but eviscerated our bomber forces. We have taken a ten-year procurement holiday shorting aircraft modernization programs so that today 75 percent of our wartime aircraft are better than 20 years old. But it gets much worse.

According to the Congressional Budget Office, over the next five years we will buy only 49 percent of the needed Navy and Marine fighter aircraft, only 4.3 percent of needed Air Force fighter aircraft, 3.3 percent of scout and attack helicopters, and only 3.2 percent of such critically needed ground combat systems as tanks, infantry fighting vehicles, and self-propelled artillery. And the most deplorable statistic of all, we will buy zero, I repeat zero, percent of needed aircraft, tankers, and bombers. To put this in prospective, over the strenuous objections of Democrats, Ronald Reagan was able to build military spending to 6.2 percent of the gross domestic product. Even so, this figure was more than one-third less than the level of military spending under President John F. Kennedy. This year military spending will go down to 3.2 percent of G.P. In fact, the President’s own budget projects this to decline to 2.9 percent over the next three years.

And the final cause for this decay in our military’s capability is the reality that the policies governing our military operations do not make sense. I will make it plain and simple: bad leadership affects morale. As a result of this administration’s policies, we could have aging equipment being put into battle by troops whose military operational training is badly distorted by morale damaging and limited value missions. Leave peacemaking to the United Nations. Leave nation-building to suitably trained civilian organizers.

Let me tell you what our military priorities should be. First, we must recognize that increasing our defense capabilities is a national urgency, and it must be our national priority. No measure of education spending or healthcare spending or social spending will matter one whit if we do not have an adequate defense. That will require a change of view at the top.

Secondly, we must take care of our soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines when they are in training, when they are deployed, and after they have left the service of their country. We have to be concerned about them. We forced an additional $9 billion in defense spending on the President as part of the last year’s Omnibus Appropriations Bill. Just this
year, Congress passed as one of its first priorities the Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines Bill which boosts the salaries and benefits for our men and women in uniform. And it’s about time, but it isn’t enough. And we need to do more. We must fix Tri-care. We must improve living conditions for the military. We must close the pay comparability gap. And since we will never pay our soldiers and sailors what they deserve, I believe that enlisted military personnel below the rank of sergeant or petty officer should no longer have to pay federal income taxes. That should be one of the benefits of working for our military. It is a national disgrace that any military family has to depend on food stamps. We have to start taking care of those who are taking care of us.

Third, we must be committed to fighting terrorism, not pardoning it as we have seen. We can’t send a mixed message. For your information, we have more than 1,500 known terrorists and terrorist organizations in this country, dedicated to the overthrow of this country. I am speaking as one who is on the Select Committee On Intelligence, one of the few who has ever served twice, Now I have to say the administration is doing a good job in stopping and at least fighting terrorism in this country. But it was in 1996 on Meet The Press that I recommended to the President he ought to watch out for Osama Bin Laden. I said he is going to kill Americans. Of course, ultimately he did.

Fourth, we must remember that an ICBM attack against the United States is our greatest military threat. Yet it took us years to convince the Clinton-Gore administration that the threat was not 15 years away but is actually much closer. This is the first year where we have been able to convince our friends on the other side that we have to have an incoming nuclear defense strategy and defense system that will stop incoming nuclear weapons if necessary. We must stabilize nuclear countries like Russia and China. We must contain rogue states like North Korea. And we must diffuse potentially devastating conflicts like those in India and Pakistan.

Fifth, when our military is sent to intervene, that action must be justified not just from a political perspective but on military grounds with clear objectives. Our military is not something we should loan out. If you want our armed forces, you get all of our armed forces, and we want American generals to lead our armed troops without question.

Now Congress, and I have to say something here. I recommended the lift and strike policy back in 1992 before Srebreniza. When the President finally did decide to go into Kosovo, I, along with Senator McCain and others, supported him. We didn’t believe it was right to say you would not commit ground troops. You should never take any power off the table when you are dealing with people like Milosevic. But I was very disappointed because had this been a Republican president I think a lot of those Republicans would have voted for the armed intervention and a lot of the Democrats would have voted against it. But because it was a Democrat president a lot of Republicans voted against it and most all the Democrats voted for it. I thought that was deplorable. We ought to be consistent in our support of the military, and I intend to do that as long as I serve.

Now Congress has taken steps to address these pressing needs of our military, but we cannot do it by ourselves. We need an administration that shares a commitment to these principles. We are the only superpower left. To quote James Mosey, the former head of the CIA, there are 50 poisonous snakes out there developing biological, chemical, and nuclear weapons, most all of which are dedicated against the United States of America. The enemies of freedom and justice have changed, but they still exist. We must never, never, allow our national defense to become second rate. Never.
Now before I close, I want to talk about the third threat to our national future. That's a lack of respect for our heritage and for our country. Nowhere is that irreverence more evident than in the unspeakable acts of violence against the most important symbol of our country, the American flag. The American people revere the flag. It is our unique symbol representing the commonly-held belief in liberty and justice that we all have. Regardless of our ethnic, racial, or religious diversity, we respect the flag as a symbol of our unity, our oneness. The flag has inspired men and women to accomplish courageous deeds on the battlefield. Each day it inspires children in the classrooms throughout this country who all pledge allegiance to this common symbol of our unity, the American flag.

I never fail to be amazed at the incredible risk borne by our founding fathers who declared independence from Britain or the incredible courage and determination of ragtag Continental Forces who fought for our independence. When you consider the odds of victory, you realize what a gamble the dream of independence was for them. When a passer-by inquired of Benjamin Franklin what type of government the new country was to have, he said, "A republic, sir, if you can keep it." We have kept it, and it has often been at great cost. Nearly every generation has sent its sons to fight for the values embedded in our Constitution. That is why I feel so strongly about protecting our flag from physical acts of desecration, and I know you agree with me. I know you have agreed with me each time we have brought our amendment to protect the flag before Congress. We are so close to passage. Each time we have been beaten back, but only by the smallest minority. Like our forebears, we are going to press on. We are ultimately going to become victorious.

Let me share with you excerpts from an article I found on the Internet. It is by a fellow named Melvin Butterfield at Juno.com, and I am going to quote him.

To those who want to burn the flag, just ask permission. For those who want to light Old Glory on fire, stomp all over it, or spit on it to make some sort of statement, I say let them do it but under one condition: They must get permission from three sponsors. First, you need permission from a war veteran. Perhaps a Marine who fought at Iwo Jima. Maybe a Vietnam vet who spent years tortured in a small filthy cell unfit for a dog, or a Korean War soldier who helped rescue half a nation from Communism, or a Desert Storm warrior who repulsed a bloody dictator from raping and pillaging an innocent country. Next, you need a signature from an immigrant, from one of those who risked everything simply for the chance to be an American. Go to a naturalization ceremony and see for yourself the tears of pride, the thanks, the love, and respect of this nation as they finally embrace the American flag as their own. Ask one of them if it would be okay to tear up the flag. Last, you should get the signature of a mother. Not just any mother. You need a mother of someone who gave their life for America. It doesn’t even have to be from a war. It could be a cop or a fireman. Maybe a Secret Service or NSA agent. Then again, it could be a common foot soldier as well. When that son or daughter is laid to rest, their family is given one gift by the American people, an American flag. So if you want to desecrate the American flag, before you spit on it or before you burn it, I have one simple request. Just ask permission. Not from the Constitution. Not from some obscure law. Not from the politicians or pundits. Instead, ask those who defended our nation so that we may be free today. For we cannot ask permission from those who died wishing they could just once, or once again, see, touch, or kiss the flag that stands for our nation, the United States of America, the greatest nation on earth.
I remember the day, I was ten years of age, when I heard my mother crying. I was playing in the woods down in front of the house. I ran from the woods. This was the first and only time in my whole lifetime that I saw both my mother and dad crying. My dad was a big, old, tough building tradesman. He taught me his trade. I worked for ten years in the building construction trade unions. In fact, to get myself through school I worked as a janitor once. When Ted Kennedy found that out, he said, Orrin, you should have stuck with it. But I ran from the woods, and I saw my mom and dad crying. There was a sergeant there. He had just told them that my brother, my only brother, who had flown ten missions, shot down on three of them, twice made it back through enemy lines to Fogia, Italy, in the Second World War, that he was missing in action on the third try. It happened to be on the Ploesti Air Raid, which will go down in history as one of the greatest sacrifices by our American airmen. Better than 80 percent of our people died that day. Most of them knew they were going to. But they knocked out the Austrian oil fields upon which Adolf Hitler and his Wehrmacht and his Luftwaffe had depended. I remember when they brought my brother back. They found his remains. I got all the records. I never shared them with my mom and dad. My mother, that ate her alive every day of her life, as it has many a Gold Star Mother in this country. The records were so bad of what happened. There was such a little bit left of him that I didn’t want her to know that. But I got to tell you, when they brought him back, they gave my mom and dad the flag that rested upon his coffin. My mom and dad are dead now, and I own that flag. I have to say it’s one of the most important possessions I’ve ever had.

Now look, the bill I have authored, the amendment I have authored with Senator Cleland, that great Democrat, the bill that your membership has steadfastly supported with so much enthusiasm, is only 13 words. “Congress shall have the power to prohibit the physical desecration of the flag of the United States.” Thirteen words. It doesn’t say Congress has to protect the flag. It says Congress shall have the power. The only reason it does that is because our Supreme Court decided for all of us to throw out 200 years of 49 states prohibiting desecration of the flag in one fell swoop and then did it again in a second opinion. Anybody that tells you we can have a statute take care of this, they don’t understand constitutional law. The only way to take care of it is with a constitutional amendment. We passed two statutes, and both of them were considered unconstitutional, but the second statute passed with over 90 votes. If we pass this constitutional amendment, we will pass that second statute that had 90 votes on it, and we will pass it so fast their heads will be spinning. It will protect the flag of the United States of America once and for all, and everybody in this world will know that we stand for that symbol and we’re not going to let anybody defecate on it, urinate on it, spit on it, or desecrate it in any way, or burn it.

The Vice President mentioned that the people in Czechoslovakia revered the American flag so much that they had kept them all through the war. Now if the people of Czechoslovakia revered our flag so much as to keep the 48-star flags, that the Vice President mentioned, throughout the whole World War so that they could fly them in the end as attribute to those who liberated them, how much more should we, the people who live under that flag? We ought to.

Now you have asked me not for a campaign speech, and I won’t give you one. But suffice it to say though that next year’s election will prove crucial for the very things we have been discussing this morning: fair taxation, a strong defense, national unity and respect for our country and values that have made this country the greatest country in the world. On each of these issues, I have tried to always stand for the things that are right. But in closing,
Proceedings of Wednesday, September 8, 1999

I want to share with you my very own personal story about the flag in addition to my brother.

I recall one dreary Washington morning about, oh, three years ago. It was dark and rainy. I was alone in my Capitol Hill office. It was 6:00 a.m. in the morning. I was probably the only member of Congress on Capitol Hill at the time. Our country faced a critical election, a national referendum, which would determine whether we would be continually guided by President Clinton and Vice President Gore or whether we should turn our stewardship over to a new leadership. I was disturbed over many of the policies of the Clinton-Gore administration. I was particularly galled that the Vice President had aggressively urged U.S. satellite manufacturers to use more foreign rocket launch vehicles. He took this action despite the fact the U.S. rocket industry, which, in my opinion, had helped to win the Cold War, was reeling, was facing extinction from NASA and DoD cutbacks. That morning I thought about our country and all it stood for. I thought about the discontent, the despair, about how poverty and dissidence caused sadness everywhere. Out of nowhere I had such a clear picture of our tremendous history, about our ancestors, our friends and our family who had lived and died for freedom. I thought about my older brother, Jess, whose flag-draped coffin was my most vivid memory of World War II. I gazed toward the Capitol, that beautiful Capitol, and I thought about the patriot’s dream, about how it had lived on for over 200 years in the yearning hearts of all Americans. That arch of freedom’s light shown through the gray day illuminating my work, and uplifting me as I realized how important it was to keep the fires of freedom burning. At my desk I began to pen a series of patriotic songs later to become my most popular album, Freedom's Light. It is my favorite of the eight musical albums that I have written. One of the songs, Old Glory, has particular meaning for me. Part of the lyrics go this way, “I hear the sound of a distant drummer. I hear the trumpets call. I hear the tramp of bandsmen marching stirring my heart and soul. I hear the Stars and Stripes forever. I hear the symbols crash. Leading the way in the grand parade, I thrill to my country’s flag. I love Old Glory. In her I see the hopes of all men who would be free. I love Old Glory. Long may she wave over America, the homeland of the brave.”

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: Thank you, Senator Hatch.

If any of you missed Monday’s Fight For What’s Right Rally and have not visited the Command Post over in our Exhibit Hall, I ask you to do so. Those of you that have visited, go back again. The Command Post is located next to Emblem Sales in the Exhibit Hall. Please take advantage of the telephones and e-mail capabilities that we have over there to contact your Senators. It’s never been easier folks. Let them know that first of all Old Glory must be protected. Second, that the VA Budget and that extra 1.7 billion dollars is a very minimum that we will accept as veterans. And let them know that an adequate defense budget goes along with that. We must provide a creditable defense force to protect our nation. We have staff over there that will make it very easy for you. Each and every one of you is here representing a number of people back in your department. Do that representation proud, go represent them at the Command Post, and represent all the veterans. Let Congress and let the Senate know what The American Legion wants, what we the veterans of the Legion want, and what is right for this country.

I introduce the National Vice Commander from California, Mr. Leo Burke.

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER BURKE: For 24 years the man I’m about to introduce demonstrated a strong commitment to veterans, in virtually all areas of veterans programs in a very strategic location, the U.S. Senate. He was a leading advocate for
effective programs to fulfill the nation’s obligations to those that served and sacrificed so much for our country’s defense and world peace. His basic philosophy underlying his approach to veterans benefits could have come from the Founders of The American Legion. He believes such benefits are a continuing cost of providing for this nations’ defense, that America has a fundamental obligation to meet the needs of veterans, particularly those who suffer from service-connected disabilities, and of the survivors of those who died in battle. It is indeed an honor to introduce to you a U.S. Army veteran of World War II, and a member of American Legion Post 302 in Culver City, California, a former United States Senator from California, the Honorable Alan Cranston.

Address: The Honorable Alan Cranston  
Former United States Senator

I was dedicated to veterans issues throughout my 24 years in the U.S. Senate, beginning at the height of public discord over the conflict in Vietnam, until the day I left after the Gulf War. We worked together on many issues. The Legion was great to work with on the development, for example, of the Montgomery G.I. Bill, on to your leadership on problems relating to Vietnam veterans exposure to Agent Orange.

I must tell you that now I am concerned by what is happening. For example, in VA’s health care system, funding for this vital program is included under very unrealistic statutory limits on domestic spending, known as caps, along with a host of other federal programs. It’s a zero sum game. Any gain in one program, comes at the expense of another. If VA health care isn’t given a priority, and I don’t think it’s getting that, veterans suffer. In this era of budget surpluses, we shouldn’t be penny-pinching veterans health care. To stop this, veterans must be united. Millions must speak out; must tell Congress and the Administration this is not acceptable. Veterans health care must be a priority.

Congress has changed. There are fewer veterans there now, and there seems to be far less appreciation of military service and the nation’s obligations to veterans. This has shown up in a number of ways. One of the most obvious was the vote last year in both Houses to shift hundreds of millions of dollars from veterans benefits in order to pay for highway projects. That was a disgrace.

There are also reasons to be concerned about the Executive Branch. I thought President Clinton got off to a good start when he picked a great fighter for veterans, Jesse Brown, as his first Secretary of Veterans Affairs. Jesse fought within the Administration, he took the fight to Congress, and with your help, he usually won. Now there is a vacuum. Dr. Kizer, the Under-Secretary for Health is gone. Secretary West is leaving. This leaves the VA budget in a very difficult situation. I played a major role on getting the VA into the cabinet, but the value of that is lost if the Secretary doesn’t make himself heard.

Through the years, VA’s health care system has been seen as separate from the rest of the U.S. health care system. This may have made sense at one time, but not now. VA must be better understood by those outside the system so that there will be a broad base of support. The U.S., and indeed most of the world, is just starting to come to grips with the need to take care of the largest population ever of older people. VA has played a great leadership role in developing geriatric medicine and in creating and putting in place alternatives to institutional long-term care. This expertise must be recognized. VA’s role must be expanded both to serve World War II and Korean veterans, and to leave a legacy for the rest of the country. VA can be a role model in this area.
I'm particularly proud that my staff and I created the opportunity for veterans to gain judicial review of their claims before the U.S. Court of Appeals for veterans claims. Judicial review was a long time coming, but there was a consensus that it has turned out very, very well. The court provides final oversight of the benefit system, and serves as an important safeguard for individual veterans in their quest for fairness and justice.

Veterans benefits are an essential, tangible way for all Americans to meet our national obligations to veterans. But I have always felt that it's also extremely important to honor their service and sacrifice by working for peace. Those who fought to protect our nation and to create a more peaceful world, want a world in which America is safe and secure, and in which their children and grandchildren can live in peace and never face the horrors of war.

I hope the day will come when there will be no more war and no more veterans. However, there hasn't been much progress lately. This has been the bloodiest century in all history. There have been 170 wars just since World War II. They killed 35 million people. Ninety percent of the victims were civilians. There are 35 wars raging today. And it could get worse.

Shortly after Hiroshima and Nagasaki, I met Albert Einstein. He warned me that if the bomb was developed further and ever used all out, the human race could be exterminated. The bomb has been developed further. The explosion of one nuclear warhead could now let loose more destructive energy than all that has been released from all weapons fired in all wars in history. That's one bomb. And there are thousands on the loose in the world.

Yesterday, the first act of this Convention was, “The Future is Our Legacy,” honoring young champions. What future will there be for those young champions and for all young Americans and youngsters everywhere, and for all the generations of the yet unborn, if total human genocide is the lethal legacy of our generation?

The leaders who are presently responsible for America's defense warn that the only significant threat today to the security and survival of our country, is nuclear proliferation. Yet, proliferation is occurring right before our eyes. Once we were the only nuclear power. Then we were joined by the Soviet Union, France, and the United Kingdom. Then China joined the club, and Israel, then last year India and Pakistan. Today Iran, Iraq, North Korea terrorists, and even criminal drug syndicates seek the bomb. There is no secret now about how to make it, and there's grave danger that loose nukes or their component parts can be bought or stolen in chaotic Russia, where command, control and custody is rapidly deteriorating. It is more likely now than it was during the most stable days of the Cold War that weapons of mass destruction will be used. Former U.S. Secretary of Defense William Perry says, “It isn't a question of whether, but of where and when.” I say to you that the notion that nuclear weapons can be retained forever and never used accidentally or by decision defies all reason, all logic. U.S. General Charles Horner, who commanded Allied Air Forces in the Gulf War, flatly predicts that a nuclear weapon will be exploded in some city in the next 10 years. Former U.S. Ambassador Robert Gallucci, who negotiated a nuclear weapons deal with Iraq and North Korea, agrees. Galucci predicts that it will be an American city blown up in the next 10 years and describes how it could happen. One of these rogue governments fabricates one or two nuclear weapons and gives them to a terrorist group created for this purpose. The group brings one of these bombs into Baltimore by boat, and another one up to Pittsburgh by car. And then the message comes to the White House: Adjust your policy in the Middle East or on Tuesday you lose Baltimore, and then Wednesday you lose Pittsburgh. Tuesday comes and we lose Baltimore. What does the
United States do? We might have no idea who is responsible, not a clue. We wouldn't know who to deter, who or what to counterattack with nuclear or conventional weapons.

The fatal bombing of the World Trade Center in New York City was perpetrated by fanatic fundamentalists who proclaim they intend to wage a holy war against the United States as long as we keep our "infidel" forces in Islamic lands. Do any of you doubt that they would have used a nuclear bomb if they had managed to lay their hands on one?

More and more American leaders, among them many generals and admirals, are coming to believe that the only way to eliminate the threat of a nuclear holocaust is to eliminate nuclear weapons, not, of course just ours, but every nations nuclear weapons. Listen to what a few of them have to say. General Collin Powell: "I hope that we will eventually see the time when the number of nuclear weapons is down to zero, and the world is a better place.”

General Lee Butler, former Commander in Chief, Strategic Air Command said: “The likely consequences of nuclear war have no politically, militarily or morally acceptable justification. Therefore, the threat to use nuclear weapons is indefensible.” General Andrew Goodpaster, former Supreme Allied Commander Europe said: “Increasingly, nuclear weapons are seen to constitute a nuisance and a danger, rather than a benefit and a source of strength.” Finally, from General Charles Horner, Commander Allied Air Forces Gulf War: “The nuclear weapon is obsolete. I want too get rid of them all.” General Horner once told me, “We generals don’t like weapons we can’t use.” Each of the five nuclear major powers have lost a war to a non-nuclear nation without resorting to nuclear weapons. Nuclear weapons have cost the United States five trillion, seven hundred million dollars so far, and presently costs 37 billion dollars a year, diverting money from conventional weapons we could use, and diverting money from health care, education, and yes, veterans benefits. Among many other noted Americans who have spoken out about nuclear dangers and for abolition, are Ronald Reagan, John F. Kennedy, Dwight D. Eisenhower.

I urge you, my fellow Americans, fellow veterans, fellow Legionnaires, to think all this over with great care and all due deliberation. The stakes are immense. Life itself is at stake. I know there are many questions to ask. There are also many answers to be given. It would be great if one of you, maybe a Californian, might decide to offer a resolution that might say something like: The United States should enter into discussions with other nuclear powers, leading to negotiating a universal treaty for the verifiable and enforceable outlawing and prohibition of all nuclear weapons. After prudent, prolonged prayerful debate, you just might perform a totally unexpected act of supreme and historic leadership.

I close now by once again quoting General Butler, who said, “We cannot at once hold sacred the miracle of existence, and hold sacrosanct the capacity to destroy it. Deterrence at best is a gamble no mortal should pretend to make. At worse, it invokes death on a scale rivaling the power of the Creator.”

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: Senator, I want to thank you for being here with us this morning and for all those mornings over your 24 year career in the Senate. And it was with great pride that I would like to present to you The American Legion Veterans Advocacy Award. And if I can, I would like to read it.

"Presented to Senator Alan Cranston. For your unrelenting commitment to our nation’s veterans and their families throughout your distinguished 24 year U.S. Senate career. You authored legislation and successfully fought for the rights and benefits of those who served America in our armed forces. As Chairman of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee, the referenced resulted in enhanced health care for veterans, improved education and employment assistance programs, and an increased compensation for service-connected
disabilities. The 2.8 million men and women of The American Legion gratefully acknowledge your dedication, sir, compassion and acknowledgment on behalf of all the veterans. Presented this 8th day of September, 1999 at this Convention, the 81st of The American Legion.”

Senator, it is indeed an honor to be here and present you this award, because I know you deserve it. And I have a son who is a veteran right now. He’s a Captain in the Marine Corps. You stood up for me; you are standing up for him. Keep up the good work.

Our next guest oversees the most diverse cabinet level department with nine agencies, 40,000 employees, and a five billion dollar budget. He has a special interest in promoting small, medium and women owned businesses, many of those owned and operated and employ many veterans. He’s been a Deputy Mayor of Washington, D.C., and a Chairman of the Board of Governor’s of the Wesley Theological Seminary in that city. Welcome the Deputy Secretary of Commerce, Robert Mallett.

Address: The Honorable Robert Mallett
Deputy Secretary, Department of Commerce

I’m a little nervous here today, not because of this very large crowd, but I know that you’ve been exceedingly patient, and not because you saw fit to make the Vice President of the United States and two United States Senators the opening acts, and me the main attraction. What worried me was that you have Kevin Sladik, who might be in the crowd, and I understand that Kevin won your oratorical contest. I was very happy to see Kevin win that contest because he’s a Texan like I am. Are there any other Texans here today? I knew there would be.

I feel a little the way Winston Churchill did once he really appreciated American military power, and he felt very warmly towards our country. There was a story I once heard told about Sir Winston, he was on his way over to the United States to visit, and he was visiting, riding over on the Queen Mary. He was sitting in the big dining chair in the state room after dinner, sipping an after-dinner drink as he liked to do. At one point he turned to his science advisor, Lord Cherwell, and he said, “If all of the liquor I ever drank was poured into this room, would it reach the ceiling?” And Cherwell whipped out his slide-rule and he went to work. And after while he said, “Sir Winston, I regret to inform you that the alcohol would only reach up to your chin.” Churchill looked up to the ceiling and he said, “Oh, so little time. So much to do.”

Now, you invited me here today to talk a little bit about the census that’s coming up in the year 2000, and I’m going to do that. But first I want to spend some time telling you how much I wish that my family could be here with me today, and how proud I think they would be. I was speaking with my father on Sunday and mentioned to him that I was coming out to speak to The American Legion in Orange County. He said, “You? The American Legion? You have been invited to speak to The American Legion?” I said, “Yes, I have.” He said, “Will wonders never cease?” He said that because—I will think he was proud of me in a very odd way—out of the entire bunch of men in my family, I am the only PFC in the bunch. I am the only one who got invited to speak at The American Legion and because I come from a military family of sorts. My father is a veteran; my brother is a veteran; my father served during the Korean War; and I have five uncles who served during World War II. One of my uncles was buried last year, a highly decorated soldier who earned a purple heart and is buried in Arlington Cemetery. I had another uncle who used to tell us all the
time that he was in the Navy. When I heard Anchors Aweigh this morning with Peter Ole playing it, I thought about him. He said, “I was in the Navy for 12 years, 10 months and eight days, and I remember every moment of it.” Now, although these men aren’t with us today, I still remember them, and I still remember their stories around our dinner table, and I can hear their voices. And in a real way I know that they are here with me today and they share my father’s pride.

But not only have the men and women of The American Legion won the wars that kept us free, you have done something else that no other institution in our country has managed to do as effectively. After all, we are a country of different people. We are black and red and brown and white and yellow. We are from every continent on the planet, and every country on the planet. Now, I have a theory. Now it’s a bit of a pop theory so it’s my theory, and I believe this, and here it is. Over the last half century, the single best model in this country for bringing the country together from all walks of life and all hues, has been the military. The armed forces have taken Americans from all walks of life. It is the great equalizer in our country. And it’s shown those men and women how to learn, how to work, and how to grow together. So I salute you for that, my friends. It has helped to change our country and to change it for the better. The examples set by the men and women who served in America’s wars during this century will be equally compelling in the next one. So today we lift each other up. We have a partnership that was created in war with your courage. It is creating prosperity in peace for us all.

But of course even the best partnerships can only go so far. If America is to stay prosperous, it must have the best workers, getting the best education, going to the best schools, and going to work in the best plants and factories in the world. While there are a lot of tools, we have to do that. You invited me here today to talk about just one, and I will now do that for you, and then I will sit down.

It’s the 2000 census. We are in countdown mode at the Census Bureau, which is an agency of the Commerce Department. Every 10 years we take a census of the population of the United States, and we get a snapshot, a portrait of what our country is. We have exactly 205 days before the countdown ends, and the census begins on April 1st, 2000. A lot rides on it, and there is a lot to do. But let me briefly tell you why the census is so important, and I guarantee you I will sit down.

A lot of people know that the census is used to determine reapportionment, that is, how many seats in the U.S. House or Representatives that each state will get. You know that it’s used for redistricting; that is, how you draw the political boundaries in your individual jurisdictions. Not that’s important, but it’s not all important. What most people don’t know is that the census is also used to distribute Federal funds every year, over a 180 billion dollars a year, and that’s just the Federal side. The census is also used for the distribution of state, county and local government funds, and that’s a lot of money. It’s used to decide what areas are eligible for grants to help create jobs. It is used to train for seniors and the Older Americans Act. It is used to show where we need to build roads, schools, bridges and highways. It is used to help companies decide where to place new factories where the people are going to be. It is used to monitor the Civil Rights laws. It’s used by states and towns to plan for hospitals and hospital districts. It is used for services that improve our children’s health, and it is used for veterans. It must provide a complete and accurate count of all of our veterans.

Now, how do we make sure that the census is an accurate snapshot of our country? How do we make sure that everybody is counted? We do this every 10 years, and we’ve
been doing it since 1790. But in 1990 it was the first census in modern times that wasn’t as good as the census before it. Now the Bureau is working very hard to make certain that doesn’t happen again, and it is meeting its deadlines. But we need your help and we need it badly. We need you to work with families of your members. Tell them that it’s essential to fill out their forms and to get their neighbors to fill out their forms. But we need more than that. The census is looking to hire 864,000 people to carry out the census in the year 2000. The only bigger mobilizations have come during times of war. We hope that some of you are part of that army for that enormous peacetime mobilization, and that you will alert people to jobs and census work, especially enumerated jobs. Those jobs pay anywhere from $8.25 an hour, to $17.24 an hour depending on where you live. But we need more than that. We need local legislators and community organizations to create partnerships with the Census Bureau, because only if we all get involved, will we all be counted.

I hope that you will visit the census booth in the Exhibit Hall and sign up to help in the areas in which you live. I hope you will get your friends to sign up. Because if we do that, if we can work as partners to create the most accurate census ever, then we will have provided America a powerful tool. Those numbers that we will collect together painstakingly one by one by those of you who are willing to help, will provide a portrait of the American family as it is. And they will help us to realize the vision of America that you have helped to create.

...At this time National Vice Commander Goulart assumed the Chair.

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER GOULART: Here in California veterans have one of the strongest advocates ever in charge of their State Department of Veterans Affairs. A Marine veteran of service in Vietnam, he was wounded during the Tet Offensive in 1968. When he returned to civilian life, he distinguished himself as an activist and advocate for his fellow veterans. That reputation has kept him busy working for his state, more than three million veterans both in state government, as a legislative aid working for the U.S. Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs. I’m proud to introduce to the delegates of this Convention, a member of The American Legion Post 804 in Los Angeles, the Secretary of the California Department of Veterans Affairs, Tomas Alvarado.

Address: The Honorable Tomas Alvarado, Secretary
Department of Veterans Affairs for the State of California

I’m honored to welcome you to California, again, as was done earlier by Bruce Thiesen, our Past National Commander. I hope the weather is fitting for your travels and what you need to do here to enjoy our magnificent state. I also want to express a profound appreciation for allowing me the privilege of sharing the stage with such distinguished leaders in the veterans community and champions of veterans. When I was informed that I was going to have a speaking role here at this magnificent convention. I said, “What am I going to say to these individuals that probably know more about veterans affairs and veterans advocacy than I do?” I also asked myself, if I sit up here and talk about what was previously discussed, they have already heard that before, and they are just going to be wasting their time sitting there, and I’m sure you have other things you can do.

I thought of the countless individuals I could recognize that have given all that they have to improve the delivery of health care, education and employment benefits within the Veterans Administration and the Department of Labor. But in my short 30 years as an advocate for veterans and their families, one person comes to mind as a man who put focus
and substance in his efforts to address the needs of veterans, and that man is Senator Alan Cranston.

I personally credit Senator Cranston for my standing here before you here today. He opened the windows of opportunity by allowing me to be associated with him for over 20 years as he crafted veterans related legislation. As a Vietnam veteran attending San Jose State, I and many of you here today were the recipients of his cutting edge legislation. The Senator was here today to receive an award for his legislative achievements that positively affected all veterans throughout this great nation of ours, and their families. I realized that he would be too modest to highlight all that he has done for all of us throughout his accomplished 24 year Senate career.

Comrades, the following profile I'm about to outline may sound like a campaign pitch for a candidate. Rather, it's a brief legislative history of a man who we all owe an enormous amount of gratitude. As far as I'm concerned, veterans, and great veterans organizations such as The American Legion, will not likely find another Alan Cranston in future years of advocacy. His tenacity and vision will remain second to none. Let me just inject you with a prominent summary which I hope will serve as a reminder to all of us of what this great man has done for veterans of our nation.

I want to begin by asking that you remain mindful that Senator Cranston never once hesitated to articulate that this nation has a fundamental and national obligation to meet the needs of veterans, particularly those who suffer from service-connected disabilities, and survivors of those who died in battle. This was his driving force. More importantly, Senator Cranston had a very special and deep concern for disabled women, Vietnam era and Vietnam veterans. I am an offspring of that concern. Beginning in 1969 Senator Cranston supported 20 increases in VA service-connected compensation, and dependency and indemnity compensation, and for you old-timers, it’s DIC. All of us in this room have benefited as a result of that effort. He authored or was the principal sponsor of this legislation in nearly every instance in his 24 years as a member of the U.S. Senate.

Senator Cranston was a champion for the disabled veterans. He rose to the occasion with the following, and I remind you in each category this is just a partial list of what this man has accomplished. In 1980 he authored legislation that led to the first comprehensive restructuring for VA Voc Rehap program, the first since 1943. In 1982 he led the fight to restore certain Social Security benefits to the survivors of those who died in battle. This was his driving force. More importantly, Senator Cranston had a very special and deep concern for disabled women, Vietnam era and Vietnam veterans. I am an offspring of that concern. Beginning in 1969 Senator Cranston supported 20 increases in VA service-connected compensation, and dependency and indemnity compensation, and for you old-timers, it’s DIC. All of us in this room have benefited as a result of that effort. He authored or was the principal sponsor of this legislation in nearly every instance in his 24 years as a member of the U.S. Senate.

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The Senator’s special concern for Vietnam era veterans was clearly evident during his tenure in the Senate. You actually would have to live in solitary confinement not to take note of this man’s efforts to make educational institutions readily available for Vietnam era veterans. He authored and co-authored every major legislative proposal that was enacted to improve education and employment assistance programs between 1969 and 1992. He was instrumental in the establishment of special programs for assistance for economically and educationally disadvantaged veterans. Senator Cranston’s deliberate efforts are the reason
that we as Vietnam veterans had assistance such as the special GI Benefits; bill benefits for high school diplomas; tutoring allowance; pre-discharge education programs; expanded veterans outreach services; VA work study programs; and the successful veterans cost of instruction program. For some of you older guys that are in our 50s, it’s the old VISA Program that was enacted in the early ‘70s at the local colleges.

Although Senator Cranston’s record on employment for veterans is very extensive, he took a strong lead and demonstrated his concern for veterans employment in 1982. He co-authored provisions of the Job Training Partnership Act, that declared for the first time that veterans employment is a national responsibility. In 1983, he authored legislation in the Senate that led to the enactment of the Emergency Veterans Job Training Act of 1983. In 1988 Senator Cranston again authored legislation to establish a stable statutory funding base for veterans employment and training programs administered by the Department of Labor. Anticipating the need for employment and training information services for soon to be released military personnel, in 1989 Senator Cranston authored legislation that established a joint VA Department of Defense, and Department of Labor pilot program which subsequently led to the Transition Assistance Program, still in existence today.

Senator Cranston was the principal Senate author for all veterans health care legislation, enacted between 1969 and 1992. In 1969 he chaired the first Congressional investigation on the difficulties VA medical facilities were having in meeting the needs of veterans wounded in the Vietnam conflict. This Senator took the lead in efforts to foster the development of new methods by which the VA might furnish health care services to eligible veterans. He also authored laws which authorized the VA to furnish preventive care, adult day health and respite care.

Senator Cranston’s determined vigil on health care issues led him to chair numerous hearings on Agent Orange, as you heard him say previously. During the years as Chairman of the Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs, he authored and co-authored all major legislation enacted relating to Agent Orange. In 1979 he again chaired the first Congressional hearing on veterans exposure to radiation. Senator Cranston authored legislation enacted in 1991 to provide the VA specific authority to give these exposed veterans medical care for conditions related to their exposure.

Senator Cranston also chaired the first Congressional hearing on the readjustment needs of our Persian Gulf veterans and their needs. In 1991 he authored legislation to allow veterans who served in the Persian Gulf, Panama, Granada, and Lebanon wars, to use the vet centers.

There are other merits that can be attributed to this man’s magnificent career as a true and gifted champion on issues and programs affecting veterans, such as fighting for an adequate and equitable VA pension program for elderly and nonservice-connected disabled wartime veterans, and the survivors of wartime veterans.

He spoke on judicial review just briefly. Some of you may be mindful of what a disgrace this was. It was in a complete total unfair fiasco. To correct this inequity, Senator Cranston co-authored measures that passed the Senate in 1979, ‘82, ‘83 and 1985, that would give the right of appeal to Federal court to a veteran or survivor whose claim for VA benefits is denied. This in effect prevented the VA from subjecting veterans to second class citizenship.

I presented you with a clear profile of a man whom I’ve admired all my public life. As an advocate administrator, I have gone the extra mile to apply what I have learned from him. His legislative and programmatic concepts, and his commitment to veterans not only had
character, but were laden with responsible compassion for veterans and their dependents. I’m honored to have shared this stage with him. I feel the flavor of completion in my life by a mere association with his policies, his agendas, and his political astuteness.

Senator Cranston’s retirement from the Senate has left us with a great absence of a true veteran’s advocate. It is doubtful, and I will remain optimistic, but I do hope that in my lifetime another elected official of his caliber and determination emerges and rises to the occasion. Senator Cranston’s legendary concerns for veterans will always remain with us, and I thank him for allowing me to be a small part of it.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: Our next guest today is the President of the Board of Directors of the Women In Military Service For America Memorial Foundation. This is a woman who knows how to succeed in any mission, and she has. She led the effort to build the nation’s memorial for all women in military service, a memorial that was long overdue. She’s a retired Air Force Brigadier General, a fellow Legionnaire, a friend of all veterans. She is a member of American Legion Post 477 in Chrisman, Illinois. Please help me welcome to our stage, Brigadier General, retired, Wilma Vaught.

Address: Brig. General Wilma L. Vaught, USAF (Ret.)
President, Women in Military Service for America Memorial Foundation, Inc.

I want to say that I’m proud to have grown up in Illinois, and that’s why my membership in the post is in Illinois. I’m proud to have served 28 and a half years in the United States Air Force. I’m also proud to be a resident of Butch Miller’s home state of Virginia. I’m also proud to be a Life Member of The American Legion.

I have been privileged that eleven of the last 12 American Legion Conventions I could come and give an update report on our progress on the Women In Military Service Memorial. Since it was dedicated in October of 1997, you may wonder why I am still back. Well, the reason I’m still back is it’s not finished yet. We still owe money for it because we had to borrow money. Most of the exhibits remain to be done. But we have completed almost two years of operation. We have had a chance to analyze what we have done; where we have been.

Last year, 1998, we had a total of 170,000 people come and visit the memorial, and many of those were American Legion members, American Legion Auxiliary members, and of course the many other service women and just guests to Arlington National Cemetery.

As I think about the memorial now, after I have watched it through this period of time, it is a different kind of a memorial. We always knew it would be a living memorial, but we now understand some other things. It is a place of remembrance; a place of recognition. And every time that I am there and some family member comes in to pay tribute to some woman who has served, and perhaps she’s no longer living, and tears come to their eyes as they walk through that memorial, I am proud of it. It is also a place of meeting. A place of ceremony. We have many promotion, retirement, re-enlistment ceremonies, as well as some memorial services. It’s a place of education and learning. I am proud to say that during this last year we had some wonderful speakers come: Tom Brokaw; Coki Roberts; Betty Fridan and many others who came and spoke to those who came to hear them. We’re also actively engaged in doing educational kits which are available to the VA medical centers and to military installations across the country each March for Women’s History Month.

As I think back to two years ago at this time, we were frantically working to get ready for the dedication. But there were many other people who were preparing to come and visit
the memorial. One of those persons was Betty Jean Hanson-Miller, who was a Navy nurse in World War II. As she got ready to come to the dedication, sat down and wrote her memories of World War II. Her booklet was about a quarter of an inch thick. She wrote, "The dramatic events," of which she was a part, "were put away in my mind and forgotten, or if they surfaced were not discussed. It was not until the recognition of the Women In Military Service Memorial that I became aware of these memories once again. Writing about my past brings such memories to life. Perhaps there is healing in this for me, a need I never recognized as I took on the pain and suffering of others. I cried my tears for them that were never before shed as I wrote my story. In looking back from areas of stress that never resolved grief or fear were: ... severely burned patients. There is an odor about them that clings to you. Overseas we didn’t have equipment to air condition the wards to free them of the odor. A nurse, who worked night duty with me have in the psychiatric ward and became suicidal, a psychiatric patient herself. A patient who hung himself in one of the bathrooms, and I found him and held him up until help could come. Psychiatric patients with horrendous experiences in battle. A patient who slit his wrists and died. I was not on duty but I had cared for him during the day. It makes an impact. Amputees, but most of the men were very courageous; a positive help to others."

At that time we didn’t realize that women suffered just the same as soldiers out on the battlefield from what we now know and call PTSD. So she didn’t have anybody to turn to. She had to resolve her problems herself, and she tucked them away. But she also wrote, "Through prayer and scripture, the Lord healed my scars of war. I am thankful that wherever I was His strength and guidance were there to sustain me. I sought Him and He answered me." This is the kind of person we’re recognizing at the memorial, and many just like her.

I would ask you to do the following: when you come to Washington, D.C., be sure and come to the main gate at Arlington National Cemetery and visit this memorial that honors all women. I would ask you to help us in finding women to register. We have only found about 350,000 of the 1.8 million who have served, and I have tried for 12 years now to find them, and I can’t do this job. It takes someone like you out in the towns and cities and farms and villages across America, to find them, because most of them have never stepped forward and acknowledged that they were veterans. I ask for your help. I would ask you to stop by and visit our booth, because for The American Legion Convention we are having this special sale of our commemorative coins. If you haven’t gotten one of those I wish you would come by and help me. And Butch, I have one reserved for you. Thirty dollars.

The American Legion leads the veteran organizations in terms of its donations. You have now donated $243,020.28, and that does not include the $1,100 check that was just given me since I have been here, from the Department of Texas for it’s annual donation. I would like to challenge The American Legion to give $400,000, and that’s one dollar for every woman who served in World War II. There have been just over 1,000 posts, districts and departments that have donated out of the over 14,000 posts. I would like to see every post make a donation, even if it is only a dollar or two or five dollars, so that I can stand before you and say that 100 percent of The American Legion posts have supported this tribute to our American women. I thank you for your support. When you are in Washington, do come visit me, and if I’m there I would be glad to meet you.
NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: In case you have been doing any quick math, that’s about 68 cents per member. I think we can do that. Thank you, Wilma, for your fine effort. We will help you take care of that memorial.

**Presentation: 1999 National Law Enforcement Officer of the Year**

Butch L. Miller, Virginia, National Commander

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: The next order of business is to honor an individual for setting the example in community service as a law enforcement officer. I don’t think that bond is any stronger between any group of people than between veterans and law officers, firemen, EMTs. There’s something very special between us. When we did our thing in the military, you couldn’t leave when you wanted to. These gentlemen can, but yet they choose to do this each and every day of their lives.

Our 1999 Law Enforcement Officer of the Year waited until he was a young man of 42 to become a police officer. What blossomed is not only a police officer who has saved the lives of others but a community activist coordinating the neighborhood resource team. This team tackles family, public safety, tenant organization, a jobs program, diffusing community tension, and more. It’s a holistic approach to the problem-solving method. And it works thanks to our officer, our Law Enforcement Officer of the Year 1999. Welcome a member of Miami Dade Police Department, Officer Ron Tookes, and his wife.

It is with great honor that I present this plaque to you. It says, “America’s finest. The American Legion National Law Enforcement Officer of the Year Award presented to Police Officer Ronald Tookes, Miami Dade Police Department, Miami, Florida. For distinguished service above and beyond your assigned duties, rendered through selfless dedication to community service and professional achievement. By your demonstrated performance, you have personified the versatile police officer who represents America’s finest. The American Legion congratulates you and wishes you continued success in an already illustrious career.” This award is given this 8th day of September 1999, at this 81st annual convention in Anaheim, California. It is with great honor that I present it to you, Ronald.

OFFICER RONALD TOOKES: Thanks to The American Legion Post 311 in Miami, Florida, and to Post Commander Stanley Gold, to The American Legion Florida and Southeast Regional organizations, to this national organization, and all the dignitaries here this morning, it was each of you that made it possible for me to stand here today. Accept my sincere gratitude for selecting me your 1999 National Officer of the Year. I accept this honor on behalf of my fellow officers in Miami, the Miami Dade Police Department, the citizens of Miami Dade County, and all law enforcement officers serving in this great country. Before I finish, I must thank my wife who stands behind me daily as I tackle and do law enforcement chores in Miami.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: The Chair now recognizes John Brieden of Texas, Chairman of the National Convention Committee on Economics.
Report: Convention Committees on Employment and Veterans Preference and Other Economic Matters

John Brieden, Texas, Chairman

At 9:00 a.m. on September 5, 1999, a total of 95 delegates assigned to the Convention Committees on Employment and Veterans Preference and on Other Economic Matters convened in Room A9 of the Anaheim Convention Center, Anaheim, California, to consider 61 resolutions assigned to the committees for action. John Brieden (TX) was elected general chairman and Bob Boxdorfer (MO) was appointed general secretary. Henry Field (SC) was elected chairman of the Convention Committee on Employment and Veterans Preference, and Len Shaw (IA) was appointed secretary. Paul Morin (MA) was elected chairman of the Convention Committee on Other Economic Matters, and Ben Lee (NJ) was appointed secretary.

In response to a call by the National Adjutant, a screening committee consisting of the chairman, Al Robotti, Robert Boxdorfer (MO), Henry J. Field (SC), and William E. Christoffersen (UT), met at 9:00 a.m. on Friday, September 3, 1999, in Mezzanine Room 3 of the Anaheim Hilton Hotel, Anaheim, California, to consider resolutions. The report of the screening committee was presented to the convention committees and was adopted with Resolution 51 (CA) set aside for separate consideration. Several resolutions were explained and discussed without being set aside. Resolution 51 was considered, discussed, and approved by the convention committee.

A motion was made, seconded and approved to authorize the chairman and secretary to sign the committee report on behalf of the committee. A motion was made, seconded and approved to allow the chairman and secretary to make technical corrections to the report without changing the meaning. The meeting was recessed at 10:00 a.m. subject to recall by the chair.

[letter received for reading at the National Convention]

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
SECRETARY OF LABOR WASHINGTON, D.C.

It is a privilege for me to send my sincerest personal greetings to the participants at The American Legion's National Conference in Anaheim and to all Legion members throughout this great country. Your many activities supporting family and community have helped instill freedom's heritage into the very fabric of our daily lives.

This year, you are meeting while brave men and women in uniform are once again far from home and loved ones, standing freedom's watch to bring peace and security to people threatened by tyranny far away. In addition to our armed forces professionals, many citizen soldiers have temporarily turned their plow shares into peace keeping swords to assist in critical humanitarian operations and provide necessary administrative and logistical support. While they are in the field, we wish them God speed and a safe return home.

When our reservists and National Guard members are ready to resume their civilian lives, the Department of Labor stands ready to marshal all the resources at its disposal to make sure that they, and all veterans, have access to skills training and employment services they have earned. The enactment of the Workforce Investment Act provides unprecedented opportunity for major reforms that will result in a reinvigorated, integrated workforce
investment system. The Act establishes One-Stop delivery systems which will integrate multiple employment and training programs, including those for veterans, at the “street level.” This integrated system will simplify and expand access to services for all job seekers and employers.

Our dynamic economy offers an unprecedented opportunity for veterans to find not just jobs, but to use the considerable technical and interpersonal skills that they acquired in the military to build strong, stable civilian careers for themselves and their families. America’s veterans continue to be an important national resource as part of the civilian labor force, as active members of community organizations, and as a unified and articulate voice of national conscience, reminding us always that price of freedom is high.

As Secretary of Labor, it is my honor and my obligation to work for an America where every woman and man can find useful work with rising wages. I am committed to an America that offers opportunity for our youngest people, security for older people, and respect for the achievements of the millions of Americans who have willingly postponed personal gain and sacrificed family pleasures to proudly wear the uniforms of our armed forces.

Together, we can make sure that our vision of America will be a reality fulfilled, not a dream deferred. I thank you for your service and wish you every success as you enter the 21st century.

Sincerely,
\ss\ Alexis M. Herman

Committee on Employment and Veterans Preference Committee
Recommended Action on Resolutions
Approval

Resolution No. 16: Veterans Employment Opportunities Act, 1998
Origin: CO
Submitted By: Economics (Employment & Veterans Preference)

WHEREAS, Title: Veterans Preference Act, Veterans Employment Opportunities Act, P.L. 105-339, addresses veterans’ employment issues; and

WHEREAS, The Veterans Employment Opportunities Act (VEOA) was signed into law on October 31, 1998; and

WHEREAS, This law gives the responsibility of enforcing veterans preference to the Veterans’ Employment and Training Service (VETS), U.S. Department of Labor; and

WHEREAS, This is an excellent piece of legislation, which has put teeth back into an otherwise ignored law, truly never enforced by the Office of Personnel Management; and

WHEREAS, Veterans preference is often misunderstood by non-veterans and managers of federal agencies and often intentionally circumvented; and

WHEREAS, The Act provides redress by the veteran, which could result in a prohibited personnel practice by the federal hiring authority that could lead to a fine, suspension or termination of the personnel who violate the Act; and

WHEREAS, The Act further ends circumvention of veterans preference in a reduction-in-force (RIF) by a federal agency to protect non-veteran employees who are lesser qualified than the veterans; and
WHEREAS, This is an earned benefit of the veteran, who must be qualified for the position, and it is not a given fact that the veteran will be hired; and

WHEREAS, Though the Act is beneficial, it has flaws which need to be remedied, such as veterans preference in merit promotion within the agency, and the Act should involve all hiring authorities, not targeted at Schedule "B" appointments, and veterans preference should be invoked in the Priority Placement Program, which is a program in which displaced federal employees are placed in a RIF; and

WHEREAS, These were all original intents of the sponsors of H.R. 240; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Anaheim, California, September 7, 8, 9, 1999, That The American Legion lobby for technical amendments of the Veterans Employment Opportunities Act to replace what was omitted from the original format of H.R. 240.

Resolution No. 18: DVETS Residency Requirement Reaffirmed
Origin: CO
Submitted By: Economics (Employment & Veterans Preference)

WHEREAS, The American Legion has traditionally sponsored and supported the requirement that the United States Department of Labor Directors (DVETS) and Assistant Directors (ADVETS) for Veterans' Employment and Training be required to hold a two-year residency within the state to which appointed immediately prior to appointment; and

WHEREAS, DVETS and ADVETS operate in a complex system of networked political interactive communities; and

WHEREAS, Interaction with and involvement in veterans' organizations within the state is essential to the advocacy and activities work required of the DVET and ADVET; and

WHEREAS, Considerations to remove the residency requirement have been negative in their intent, and often abused by the agency responsible for enforcing Title 38 USC, the Veterans' Employment and Training Service; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Anaheim, California, September 7, 8, 9, 1999, That The American Legion oppose any movement to thwart the intent of the law and support retention of the residency requirement for Directors and Assistant Directors of Veterans' Employment and Training, as contained in the United States Code, Title 38, Chapter 41, Section 4103(b).

Resolution No. 30: Employment of Veterans in Government Work Force
Origin: MA
Submitted By: Economics (Employment & Veterans Preference)

As amended

WHEREAS, Our federal government specially selected as mentally, morally, and physically fit certain members from its society, specially trained this group, subjected them to stringent rules and regulations, removed them from home, family and employment, asked of them a special sacrifice, and required some of them to suffer wounds they will live with forever; and

WHEREAS, A grateful nation, through its representatives in the Congress of the United States and state legislatures, has, in recognition of the special service and loss of employment opportunity while defending the country in time of need, extended a long
Proceedings of Wednesday, September 8, 1999

history of employing the returning veterans by enacting the Veterans Preference Act as contained in Title 5, USC, and Chapter 3-3, South Dakota Code; and

WHEREAS, The term “veteran” includes every category of society (sex, age, religion, ethnic group, race, and creed; and

WHEREAS, Absence from the highly competitive job market due to military service creates an unfair and unequal burden on veterans in competing for employment with non-veteran peers upon completion of military service; and

WHEREAS, The Veterans Preference Act accomplished the legislative purpose of honoring veterans and provides a small advantage in competing for federal and state jobs; and

WHEREAS, There are prominent groups and individuals in the United States today who ignore the employment disadvantages accrued by individuals due to military service, who blindly allege that preference is “discriminatory,” who ignore the many judicial determinations upholding veterans preference, who blatantly overemphasize the advantages of veterans preference although presumably aware of the fact that approximately 28 million veterans in our population have not chosen or been successful in obtaining a federal or state position; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Anaheim, California, September 7, 8, 9, 1999, That the President of the United States, the Congress, the governor of each state, and the state legislatures be informed that The American Legion deplores each and every attempt to degrade, dilute, or modify the historical precedent of giving job eligibility preference to those who were taken from their communities to serve their country in time of war or armed conflict, and that the President and governors reject any and all proposed legislation that would reduce the employment opportunities for veterans in the federal or state workforce.

Resolution No. 51: Disabled Veterans as Priority Under Americans with Disabilities Act

Origin: CA
Submitted By: Economics (Employment & Veterans Preference)
As amended

WHEREAS, The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 gave new and deserved emphasis to the employment problems of people with disabilities and recognized them as a specific group who need special consideration; and

WHEREAS, The attempt is made in other laws also to address these problems, specifically the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 for the handicapped; Title 38 USC, Chapter 42 for disabled veterans who have barriers to employment; and the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended, which mandates the non-discrimination in employment requirements covering race, religion, age, sex and national origin; and many employers are required to have a written Affirmative Action Plan in order to avoid discrimination against any of these groups; and

WHEREAS, Title 38, USC, Chapter 42 also contains specific requirements for federal contractors and federal agencies to take affirmative action to hire and promote minorities and disabled veterans; although in actual practice there is no breakdown by priority of affirmative action for minorities, disabled veterans or the handicapped as specific groups; and
WHEREAS, Recognizing the high incidence of employment problems among disabled veterans is not enough; and in order to implement the plans and ensure actual practice of affirmative action, the disabled should be considered separately from minorities for preferential treatment by all entities who have affirmative action requirements under law; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Anaheim, California, September 7, 8, 9, 1999, That The American Legion urge Congress to enact legislation that gives disabled veterans priority in affirmative action as a group within the other designated groups for which affirmative action is required.

Resolution No. 54: Hire A Veteran Week
Origin: WI
Submitted By: Economics (Employment & Veterans Preference)

WHEREAS, The United States of America recognizes the importance of “Hire a Veteran Week” to promote the betterment of veterans; and

WHEREAS, It is known that of the unemployed, the percentage of unemployed veterans is greater than the non-veterans; and

WHEREAS, There is presently no national “Hire a Veteran Week” program targeted only to veterans; and

WHEREAS, By having a national “Hire a Veteran Week” the United States of America publicly encourages the hiring of veterans; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Anaheim, California, September 7, 8, 9, 1999, That The American Legion goes on record to have the United States of America institute a national “Hire a Veteran Week” during the week of Veterans’ Day in the month of November each year, and urge all citizens, and especially those charged with the responsibility for hiring personnel, to recognize and support the hiring of veterans; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That this resolution be submitted to the President of the United States, members of the Senate, members of the House of Representatives, the Veterans Administration, and the Secretary of Labor.

Resolution No. 79: Recognition Of Military Service And Pay When Calculating Starting Federal Civilian Salaries
Origin: MD
Submitted By: Economics (Employment & Veterans Preference)

As consolidated with 99 (VA) and 136 (UT)

WHEREAS, The Office of Personnel Management’s interpretation of Section 531.203 of Title 5, Code of Federal Regulations is as follows: “These regulations provide that a hiring agency may consider a rate of basic pay previously received by the individual in a position in any branch of the Federal Government as his or her ‘highest previous rate.’ The highest previous rate is used at the agency’s discretion and no employee is guaranteed the use of his or her highest previous rate in setting his or her pay. Although this law does not allow the use of military pay rates to determine the rate of basic pay that may be paid to an individual upon appointment to a civil service position, agencies do have the ability to pay above the minimum rate of the grade when the new employee has superior qualifications or the agency has special needs for a candidate’s service”; and
WHEREAS, That interpretation has the potential for placing a former member of the Armed Forces at a financial disadvantage because it does not require the hiring agency to consider the applicant’s military experience and highest military pay as the basis for calculating that person’s starting salary when entering into federal employment as a civilian; and

WHEREAS, One scenario that illustrates this point is as follows: Employee A has worked for the same agency for 10 years and has a pay rating of GS-11, Step 10 ($52,927 per year). That employee subsequently transfers to a GS-10, Step 1 ($37,057 per year) position in another agency. Under current law, the hiring agency may, at its discretion, adjust Employee A’s Step level upward from Step 1 to Step 2 through Step 10 ($38,292-$48,173); and

WHEREAS, Employee B leaves the Armed Forces as a Major after 10 years of service and accepts a GS-10, Step 1 position at a Federal agency. No matter how pertinent this employee’s military experience may be to the civilian job for which they have been hired, the only way his/her starting pay can be increased is if they have “outstanding qualifications” or if the hiring agency “has special needs for a candidate’s service.” Thus, it is unlikely that Employee B’s starting salary will be adjusted unless there is a substantial shortage of qualified applicants; and

WHEREAS, In the above scenario, it is entirely possible that Employee A and Employee B could be hired by the same agency, to do the same job, with Employee A having the potential of being paid as much as $11,116 more per year than Employee B; and

WHEREAS, This quirk in the law clearly discriminates against the former Armed Forces member because the hiring agency is not required to take that person’s military experience and military pay history into consideration when calculating his/her starting salary; and

WHEREAS, Another thing that makes this situation discriminatory is that while in the military, the veteran was in fact, in the service of this country’s Federal government; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Anaheim, California, September 7, 8, 9, 1999, That The American Legion seek and support legislation that requires Federal agencies to take a candidate’s military experience and military pay history into consideration when computing that applicant’s starting salary.

Resolution No. 84: Tax Credits For Certain Employers
Origin: MD
Submitted By: Economics (Employment & Veterans Preference)
As consolidated with 10 (DC) and 131 (UT)

WHEREAS, More than 265,300 members of the armed forces reserves and National Guard served on active duty during Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm (1990-1991); and

WHEREAS, According to Defense Manpower Data Systems, since 1991, an additional 63,938 members of the reserve components served on active duty during the military operations known as Southern Watch, Joint Forge and Uphold Democracy; and

WHEREAS, The vast majority of those men and women left jobs and careers in the civilian community to answer the call of their country; and
WHEREAS, Many of those veterans and their families suffered economic hardship as the result of that service because the military salaries they received while on active duty were often much lower than the salaries paid by their civilian employers; and
WHEREAS, While some employers were able to make up the difference between their employee’s military pay and their regular civilian salary, most employers could not, or would not, make up the difference between the two; and
WHEREAS, There is no incentive for employers to make up the difference between an employee’s military pay and their regular salary; and
WHEREAS, The financial disadvantages suffered by many members of the armed forces reserves and National Guard who are called to active duty could very possibly serve as a major impediment to the recruitment and retention of a competent reserve component of the military total force; and
WHEREAS, The recent downsizing of armed forces resulted in increased reliance on reserves and National Guard units for military operation; now, therefore, be it
RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Anaheim, California, September 7, 8, 9, 1999, That The American Legion sponsor and support legislation providing tax credits to any employer who either pays an employee who is called to active duty their regular salary or who makes up the difference between that person’s military pay and their regular civilian salary.

Resolution No. 86: Support Revision Of VETS Performance Standards
Origin: MD
Submitted By: Economics (Employment & Veterans Preference)
As consolidated with 129 (UT)
WHEREAS, Federal law required the Veterans’ Employment and Training Service (VETS) to establish performance standards for evaluating state employment services for veterans; and
WHEREAS, At a 1997 hearing before the House Veterans’ Affairs Subcommittee on Benefits, the Government Accounting Office (GAO) criticized VETS because its current performance standards focus more on process than on results; and
WHEREAS, The Department of Labor’s 1997 Annual Report showed that while nine states met that agency’s performance standards, they placed fewer than 10 percent of veteran registrants; and
WHEREAS, A 1997 report by GAO indicated that 18 states placed fewer than one-in-five veterans who came to the Employment Service for assistance; and
WHEREAS, The American Legion finds these statistics unacceptable; now, therefore, be it
RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Anaheim, California, September 7, 8, 9, 1999, That The American Legion seek and support a revision of existing Veterans’ Employment and Training Service reporting requirements for measuring performance standards and for determining compliance with requirements for providing employment services to veterans.

Resolution No. 123: Job Protection For Service Connected Veterans Requiring Visits At VA Facilities
Origin: OH
Submitted By Economics (Employment & Veterans Preference)
WHEREAS, It is the intent of Congress to ensure that no veteran shall be denied employment, reemployment, advancement or discrimination in employment for serving the country’s call to colors, whether such service was voluntary or involuntary, as provided for in the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act, formerly the Veterans’ Reemployment Rights Act; and

WHEREAS, Veterans or disabled veterans who are required to report for mandatory compensation or pension physical examinations are considered as a “standard” or “regular” absence from work; and

WHEREAS, Thousands of employers throughout the country have very stringent attendance policies, that DO result in termination for continued attendance violations; and

WHEREAS, Veterans who are required to report to the Department of Veterans Affairs for compensation and pension examinations, as well as treatment for a service connected or service aggravated condition, are exposed to termination, lack of promotional opportunities and other forms of unjustifiable retaliations from employers; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Anaheim, California, September 7, 8, 9, 1999, That The American Legion urge state and federal legislators to adopt and enforce provisions of protection from any employer, against any veteran who is required to report to the Department of Veterans Affairs for compensation or pension evaluations, vocational rehabilitation, counseling, or treatment for any service connected or service aggravated condition, that is being treated by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Resolution No. 133: Change The Date Of Employ The Older Worker Week
Origin: UT
Submitted By: Economics (Employment & Veterans Preference)
As consolidated with 82 (MD)

WHEREAS, The American Legion has long concerned itself with the difficulties encountered by older workers seeking to obtain and retain suitable employment; and

WHEREAS, “Employ the Older Worker Week” was initiated by The American Legion in 1958 as a means of promoting employment opportunities for older Americans; and

WHEREAS, Because of the Department of Labor’s promotional efforts on behalf of this Legion program, it has become a national observance; and

WHEREAS, Other government agencies and private sector organizations also participate in various ways in “National Employ the Older Worker Week”; and

WHEREAS, Federal agencies and private sector organizations have requested that the Legion’s observance be changed from the second full week in March to the last full week in September, starting in the year 2000, so that their promotion of the observance can be more effectively coordinated; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Anaheim, California, September 7, 8, 9, 1999, That the annual observance of “National Employ the Older Worker Week” take place during the last full week in September, beginning in the year 2000.

Resolution No. 134: Support Of America’s Older Workers
Origin: UT
As consolidated with 8 (DC) and 81 (MD)
WHEREAS, The American Legion has traditionally supported programs that help older Americans to live happy, healthy, productive lives; and
WHEREAS, The American Legion also has a long history of supporting older workers and promoting employment opportunities for them; and
WHEREAS, The American Legion regards older workers as a national asset because of the many fine attributes they bring to the workplace such as a strong work ethic, experience, maturity, and stability; and
WHEREAS, Factors such as inadequate pension benefits have forced many older Americans to work past what is considered the normal retirement age; and
WHEREAS, Because of corporate downsizing, and other circumstances, many older workers have become unemployed through no fault of their own; and
WHEREAS, Because age discrimination still exists, a displaced older worker may find it difficult, if not impossible, to find suitable new employment; and
WHEREAS, A recent study found that 43 million Americans are over the age of 60; and
WHEREAS, That same study also found that approximately 13% of those persons who are over 60 years of age are living at or below the poverty level; and
WHEREAS, No doubt many of those individuals could and would work if they could find suitable employment; now, therefore, be it
RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Anaheim, California, September 7, 8, 9, 1999, That The American Legion reiterate its long-standing advocacy on behalf of America’s older workers; and, be it further
RESOLVED, That The American Legion continue its support of programs that benefit older Americans.

Received and Recorded

Resolution No. 5 (WY) 1999 NC: Ensure American Legion Representation on All State and Local Workforce Investment Boards
Resolution No. 13 (SD) 1999 NC: Support a Strong Veterans' Employment and Training Service
Resolution No. 19 (CO) 1999 NC: Support Veterans' Employment and Training Service
Resolution No. 25 (MA) 1999 NC: Service Members Occupational Conversion and Training Act (SMOCTA)
Resolution No. 26 (MA) 1999 NC: Ensure American Legion Representation on All State and Local Workforce Investment Boards
Resolution No. 27 (MA) 1999 NC: Support a Strong Veterans Employment and Training Service
Resolution No. 28 (MA) 1999 NC: Support LVVER Program
Resolution No. 47 (CA) 1999 NC: Vocational Rehabilitation Program for Disabled Veterans
Resolution No. 48 (CA) 1999 NC: Transition Assistance Program to Be Fully Funded
Resolution No. 49 (CA) 1999 NC: The Employment Service to Be Fully Funded
Resolution No. 52 (CA) 1999 NC: Ensure American Legion Representation on All State and Local Workforce Investment Boards
Resolution No. 55 (MT) 1999 NC: DVOP/LVER Staff to Remain Public Employees
Resolution No. 91 (IA) 1999 NC: Ensure American Legion Representation on All State and Local Workforce Investment Boards
Resolution No. 102 (OR) 1999 NC: Ensure American Legion Representation on All State and Local Workforce Investment Boards
Resolution No. 108 (FL) 1999 NC: Ensure American Legion Representation on All State and Local Workforce Investment Boards
Resolution No. 120 (OH) 1999 NC: Expansion of Veterans Preference and Priority Service
Resolution No. 121 (OH) 1999 NC: Oppose Elimination of DVOP and LVER Programs
Resolution No. 122 (OH) 1999 NC: Workforce Investment Act States to Partnership with Federal Agencies
Resolution No. 126 (UT) 1999 NC: Ensure American Legion Representation on All State and Local Workforce Investment Boards
Resolution No. 148 (NE) 1999 NC: Ensure American Legion Representation on All State and Local Workforce Investment Boards
Resolution No. 162 (WA) 1999 NC: Ensure American Legion Representation on All State and Local Workforce Investment Boards
Resolution No. 167 (NC) 1999 NC: Oppose Report of Congressional Commission on Service Members and Veterans Transition Assistance
Resolution No. 168 (IN) 1999 NC: Ensure American Legion Representation on All State and Local Workforce Investment Boards
Resolution No. 172 (MI) 1999 NC: Adequate Funding for Veterans' Employment and Training Service
Resolution No. 173 (MI) 1999 NC: Oppose Elimination of DVOP and LVER Programs

Referred to the Standing Commission on Economics

Resolution No. 50 (CA) 1999 NC: Women Veterans in Need of Employment Assistance
Resolution No. 53 (CA) 1999 NC: Support a National Task Force for Changes to Title 38 USC, Chapter 41
Resolution No. 56 (MT) 1999 NC: Amend Veterans Employment Opportunities Act of 1998

Committee on Other Economic Matters
Recommended Action on Resolutions
Approval

Resolution No. 7: VA Home Warranty Rules
Origin: DC
Submitted By: Economics
As consolidated with 85 (MD) and 130 (UT)

WHEREAS, The Veterans Benefits Administration's Loan Guaranty Service administers the Department of Veterans' Affairs direct loan and loan guaranty programs; and
WHEREAS, The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's recently issued interim rule, which would severely curtail the FHA home warranty program, will also impact veterans who purchase newly constructed homes with VA loans; and
WHEREAS, In order for a veteran to obtain a VA loan on a newly constructed home, the home must be either inspected during three crucial stages of construction, or covered by a commercial ten year structural warranty; and

WHEREAS, The Loan Guaranty Service at the VA has historically adopted HUD’s regulations of FHA/VA-insured mortgage policies such as the HUD policy reducing new home termite infestation warranties to one year; and

WHEREAS, Officials in the Loan Guaranty Service are presently studying HUD’s interim rule that eliminates the ten-year warranty and the Construction Valuation Staff is in the process of preparing recommendations on the issue for the Director of the Loan Guaranty Service; and

WHEREAS, Only 2% of structural damage occurs in the first year a house is built, while 77% of structural damage takes place when homes are 5 to 10 years old; and

WHEREAS, Warranty companies have paid more than a billion dollars repairing structural damage in new homes over the past 25 years; and

WHEREAS, If the warranty period is reduced to one year, as the proposed HUD regulations require, the huge costs of repairing structural damage in these homes will fall on veteran home owners, who cannot afford this burden; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Anaheim, California, September 7, 8, 9, 1999, That The American Legion opposes elimination of the 10-year warranty and inspection provisions which provide essential protection to veteran home owners, safeguarding their new home investment during the years when major structural damage is most likely to occur.

Resolution No. 83: Support Improved Services For America’s Veteran-Entrepreneurs
Origin: MD
Submitted By: Economics
As consolidated with 11 (DC), 35 (MA), and 132 (UT)

WHEREAS, Small business is the backbone of the American economy; and

WHEREAS, According to the Small Business Administration’s Office of Advocacy, during 1992, 51% of the Gross Domestic Product was generated by small businesses with 500 or fewer employees; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Labor predicts that by the year 2005, small business will be the largest employer in the nation; and

WHEREAS, Veterans own and operate approximately one-sixth of this country’s 24.2 million small businesses; and

WHEREAS, Veterans fought to protect and preserve the American way of life and the free enterprise system; and

WHEREAS, Despite the 1974 enactment of Public Law 93-237, which mandated the Small Business Administration to provide “special consideration to veterans of the Armed Forces and their survivors and dependents,” the agency made only a token effort to define and implement that policy; and

WHEREAS, Over the past decade, the Small Business Administration has made it luminously clear to both Congress and the veterans’ community that veterans are not an agency priority; and

WHEREAS, During that same time period, the Small Business Administration’s Office of Veterans Affairs has been hamstrung because the agency refuses to provide the support and resources necessary for that office to meet its mission; now, therefore, be it
RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Anaheim, California, September 7, 8, 9, 1999, That The American Legion support any legislative or administrative proposal that will increase and improve federal assistance to America’s veteran-entrepreneurs.

Resolution No. 135: Homeless Veterans
Origin: UT
Submitted By: Economics
As consolidated with 9 (DC) and 80 (MD)
WHEREAS, Despite a healthy economy, the percentage of veterans in this country’s homeless population remains disproportionately high; and
WHEREAS, Although the exact number of homeless persons is unknown, experts agree that at least one-third of all homeless served honorably in our armed forces; and
WHEREAS, In many urban areas the percentage of veterans in the homeless population is believed to be upwards of 50 percent; and
WHEREAS, Based on anecdotal information, it appears that both the number of female veterans, and the number of veterans with dependents, in the homeless population are increasing; now, therefore, be it
RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Anaheim, California, September 7, 8, 9, 1999, That The American Legion renew its commitment to assisting homeless veterans and their families; and, be it further
RESOLVED, That The American Legion continue to support the efforts of public and private sector agencies and organizations with the resources necessary to aid homeless veterans and their families; and, be it finally
RESOLVED, That The American Legion seek and support any legislative or administrative proposal that will provide medical, rehabilitative and employment assistance to homeless veterans and their families.

Resolution No. 184: Reaffirm Support For Department Of Veterans’ Affairs Loan Guaranty Program
Origin: Economics
Submitted By: Economics
WHEREAS, The Serviceman’s Readjustment Act of 1944 (P.L. 346, 78th Congress) established, among other things, a home loan guaranty program that was to be administered by the Veterans Administration, which later became the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA); and
WHEREAS, The two purposes of the original program were to help returning World War II veterans in their readjustment to civilian life and to stimulate the economy by assisting those veterans in obtaining mortgage financing from the private sector; and
WHEREAS, Because of the popularity and success of the DVA Loan Guaranty Program, and because it benefited the American economy as well as eligible veterans, Congress decided to make that five-year pilot program permanent; and
WHEREAS, To date the DVA has guaranteed well over 15 million loans to eligible veterans and has, for the most part, maintained a default rate that compares very favorably with the default rate on private sector mortgages; and
WHEREAS, While many of the veterans who have participated in this program could have obtained private sector financing, many others could not have qualified for conventional mortgages; and

WHEREAS, Congress has made numerous changes over the years in attempts to improve this VA program, including authorizing various pilot programs; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Anaheim, California, September 7, 8, 9, 1999, That The American Legion reaffirm its strong support for the Department of Veterans Affairs’ Loan Guaranty Service and its programs; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion support any administrative or legislative efforts that will improve and strengthen the Loan Guaranty Service’s ability to serve America’s veterans.

Received and Recorded

Resolution No. 24 (MA) 1999 NC: Support the Small Business Loan Program
Resolution No. 33 (MA) 1999 NC: Support the Small Business Administration
Resolution No. 63 (ND) 1999 NC: Home Improvement and Structural Alterations Grants

As a delegate from the Department of Texas, I move the adoption of this report.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: The report has been given. Is there a second?

...The motion was seconded.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: Any discussion? All those in favor of the report, indicate in the usual sign. Those opposed? Ayes have it. The report of the Economics Commission is adopted.

Presentation: Employer of the Year Awards for Hiring Veterans

Butch L. Miller, Virginia, National Commander

It is now time to extend special recognition to three employers for their outstanding record of making it a priority to hire veterans. That special recognition comes in the form of The American Legion Employer of the Year Award. We recognize three such organizations as 1998 Employers of the Year. The awards are given in three categories. One for companies employing 50 people or less, another for companies employing from 51 to 200 people, and third, for companies with more than 200 employees. Each is nominated by a post, and then that advances through department to the national competitive levels.

The 1998 Employer of the Year Award in the under 50 employees category goes to Computer Science Corporation, the Utah Test and Training Range. The company’s vice president, Phillip Randall, is here to accept the award.

The award reads, “The American Legion National Award, Outstanding Employer of the Year 1998, presented to Computer Science Corporation for an exceptional record in the employment of veterans. Presented at this 81st Annual National Convention, Anaheim, California, September 8, 1999.”
It's truly difficult to adequately express our gratitude for the great honor you have bestowed upon us today. CSC’s defense group and, in particular, our flight test support center which serves the missions of both the Utah Test and Training Range at Hill Air Force Base, Utah, and the Air Force Flight Test Center at Edwards Air Force Base, California, have long respected the great value that veterans bring to the civilian workforce. We believe that as veterans have stood tall for us when we needed them, then we as employers in the federal sector should stand tall for them. On behalf of all our employees, especially our veterans, thank you for this honor and thank you for the outstanding support you provide to the military.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: Our award in the 50 to 200 employee category goes to Jacobs Construction of Lemont, Pennsylvania. The owner of the company, Jim Jacobs, is here to accept the award.

The award reads, “The American Legion National Award Outstanding Employee of the Year 1998. Presented to Jacobs Construction for, again, an exceptional record in the employment of veterans, presented at this 81st National Convention, Anaheim, California, September 8, 1999.”

Jim Jacobs, Owner
Jacobs Construction
Lemont, Pennsylvania

I really appreciate the Legion inviting us out here and recognizing our company for our veterans hiring policy and for the training program that we instituted about five years ago. The construction industry in general is having a severe shortage of skilled labor. In Pennsylvania we’re definitely feeling the pains. I have been able to augment our employees with vets. I was a ten-year Navy veteran. When I got out of the service, I was looking for a good job. In some cases, our veterans are using the employment that we provide them as stepping stones. They are going to Penn State, getting advanced degrees. We have been successful with some of our veterans that have taken our two-year training program, and they are still with us. So we’d hire a vet in a heartbeat. And I guess there’s a real shortage of them. But every time we get an opportunity to help a vet out, we’ll do it. So thanks again for having us at your convention. I really appreciate the thoughts with this award.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: The award in our last category, the more than 200 employees, goes to Georgia-Pacific Plywood of Crossett, Arkansas. It’s a pleasure to have the company’s resource manager, Larry Livingston, here to accept the award on behalf of Georgia-Pacific.

Again, the award reads, “The American Legion National Award, Outstanding Employer of the Year 1999, presented to Georgia-Pacific Plywood for an exceptional record in the employment of veterans, presented this 81st National Annual Convention, Anaheim, California, September 8, 1999.”
As a Navy veteran and National Guard veteran, I would like to thank you. I would like to thank the State of Arkansas, The American Legion, and Georgia Pacific Corporation for giving me this opportunity to come out here and accept this award. It will be placed on the wall where everybody can see it. They know that we hire veterans and are proud of it.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: To all the employers, please stand up. Let’s show them how much we appreciate the fact that they stand up and hire our veterans.

Presentation: Chapel of Four Chaplains Legion of Honor Bronze Medallion
Jack R. Childs, Southwest Regional Director
The Chapel of Four Chaplains

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: Please welcome Jack Childs, Southwest Regional Director of the Chapel of the Four Chaplains, for this purpose of a presentation.

MR. CHILDS: It’s a real pleasure to be here with you today to represent the Chapel of the Four Chaplains in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. No tradition of American society is more precious to or characteristic of our culture than that of voluntarily reaching out to neighbors in need. Such selfless service is part of both our civic and our religious heritage. The Chapel of the Four Chaplains, a national nonprofit organization, is founded upon one shining manifestation of our heritage, that of four Army chaplains who, after giving their life jackets to soldiers who had none, linked arms with one another and went down with the U.S. Army Transport USAT Dorchester after it was torpedoed on February 3rd. This historical event began at ‘torpedo junction,’ the U-boat infested icy waters on the North Atlantic during World War II. On January 23rd, 1943, the Dorchester, an old coastal steamer quickly pressed into military service, left New York harbor bound for Greenland. The Dorchester was escorted by three Coast Guard cutters. Two patrolled the flanks. The third, the Tampa, was 3,000 yards out front. Most of the men were seasick, green with nausea. The weather was bitterly cold. With gale force winds, ice began building on the decks slowing the Dorchester to ten knots.

Moving along among them were four Army chaplains, George L. Fox, Alexander D. Good, Clark V. Poling, and John P. Washington. The chaplains talked with and listened to the men, soothing apprehensions, offering encouragement, sharing jokes by their concern and their camaraderie with men and one another they brought solace.

On February 2nd, 1943, the Tampa sonar detected the presence of a submarine. She dropped back and swept the periphery of the convoy but failed to find the submarine’s position. That evening the Tampa returned to the patrol up front, and the other ships followed. The Captain ordered the men to sleep in their clothing with life jackets close at hand. They were only 150 miles from Greenland. With daylight there would be air cover from the American base. It was just after midnight on February 3rd, 1943, an enemy submarine fired a torpedo towards the Dorchester’s flank. The missile exploded in the boiler room, destroying the electrical supply and releasing suffocating clouds of steam and ammonia gas. Many on board died instantly. Some were trapped below decks. Others, jolted from their bunks, groped and stumbled their way to the decks of the stricken vessel. Taking on water rapidly, the ship began listing to starboard. Overcrowded lifeboats capsized. Rafts
drifted away before anyone could reach them. Men clung to the rails frozen with fear unable to let go and plunge into the dark churning waters below.

The testimony of survivors tells us that the sole order and the only fragment of hope in this chaos came from the four chaplains who calmly guided men to their boat stations. They opened a storage locker and distributed life jackets. Then they coaxed the men, frozen with fear, over the side. Soon the supply of life jackets was exhausted. Several survivors reported watching in awe as the four chaplains either gave away or forced upon other young men their own life jackets. These four men of God had given away their only means of surviving and saving themselves in order to save others. The chaplains gathered together and led the men around them in a prayer and a hymn. They linked their arms together as the slant of the deck became severe. And just that way, with their arms linked in brotherhood and their heads bowed in prayer, they sank beneath the waves.

It was a heroic act. It was not the only heroic act aboard the Dorchester, but it was especially significant because of the identity of these four young men, two Protestants, one Catholic, and a Jew.

Today, as it has in these many years, the Chapel of the Four Chaplains serves the memory of these brave men and carries their message of interfaith cooperation and selfless service to every part of our country. To recognize and encourage acts of volunteerism, brotherhood, and sacrifice among Americans of every age and station of life, the Chapel established the Legion of Honor program. The Bronze Medallion is an award given by the Chapel in recognition of exceptional selfless service on the part of an individual who contributes to the well-being of others at the national and world level and to a spirit of interfaith cooperation.

It is my privilege today to recognize one of your members who has clearly exemplified these characteristics for the past year. He has served as your National Commander of The American Legion, the nation’s largest veterans group. He served in the U.S. Army from 1966 to 1974 and began his American Legion journey when his father signed him up in 1972 in Minnesota. After his military service, he spent more than 20 years with the Department of Veterans Affairs. He has held numerous positions at the state and local levels.

On behalf of the Chapel of the Four Chaplains, I am pleased to present to Harold L. “Butch” Miller the Legion of Honor, Bronze Medal in recognition of his service to all people regardless of faith. This award symbolizes to all Americans and for all time the unity of this nation founded upon the fatherhood of one God.

I present you with this medal of honor, and plaque on this day, September 8th, from the Chapel of the Four Chaplains.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: It’s not hard to travel with the spirit of the four chaplains with you all the time as much traveling as all National Commanders do. In this world when things can go bad so quickly, obviously somebody was looking over us as we traveled this great country because we didn’t have hardly any problems. Every landing was a safe. Every takeoff was safe. So, obviously not only your prayers and your thoughts were with us, but I have a good feeling that these four chaplains were with us all the way. And I know that the Post Everlasting is well represented and have chaplains probably better than anything we have here on this earth, but for a good reason. They are obviously close to the Lord. I will bestow it on the wall and remember it every day of my life.
NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER TINGLER: Today we have a new award to present. It comes from The American Legion partnership with Hire Quality, an employment service designed to help young men and women leaving the military to find a job. I am happy to tell you that the system is working. It’s working so well that just last month we signed a permanent agreement with Hire Quality to continue providing their service free of charge to veterans. Of course, I can always tell you the service is working. But sometimes it’s best if you can hear it for yourself. Just listen a moment to the comments from veterans who have a job thanks to Hire Quality.

...At this time a video was viewed by the delegation.

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER TINGLER: With me to present the first American Legion Employment Center Award is the chairman and CEO of Hire Quality, a retired United States Marine Major General and a member of The American Legion, Department of California, Matthew Caulfield. With General Caulfield at my side, I would like to read the inscription on the plaque that we are about to present. “Certificate of appreciation presented to Suburban Propane Partners, L.P., Whippany, New Jersey, for their devotion to mutual helpfulness by hiring during 1998 and 1999 over 100 veterans with expectations of adding an additional 100 veterans by the end of this year. This award is a testament to a record of outstanding contribution to the employment of veterans.” The inscription is “Presented at the 81st Annual National Convention of The American Legion, Anaheim, California, September 4-9, 1999, in cooperation with The American Legion Hire Quality, a company dedicated to assisting the military community through their Career Services Division to find suitable employment for those men and women who have honorably served their country in the Armed Forces. This certificate of appreciation is hereby presented and given at the hand of The American Legion, National Commander Butch Miller and the Chairman and CEO of Hire Quality, Major General Matthew Caulfield, USMC (Retired), to a company who has demonstrated a progressive vision for recognizing invaluable human assets and thereby ensuring the economic well-being of our veterans.” Here to accept the award, Human Resource Director of Suburban Propane Partners, William Hulsey.

Before we conclude this first award, I would like General Caulfield to share with all how this company of Hire Quality is making a difference. But before I do, I would like to present one of our newest members, Bill, with this cap for The American Legion of Washington Post 110. And his 2000 membership card.

MAJOR GENERAL CAULFIELD (Retired): As anyone knows, particularly former Marines know, there is nothing that’s more a matter of pride to me than to be referred to as a Marine. Right next to that is to be referred to as member of The American Legion after what I have seen the Legion do in the last two years in terms of solving a very difficult problem.

Today we read the newspapers about low unemployment, and we look at our members, the men and women of our Armed Forces, and we say how could they ever have a problem getting a job? They are the best men and women we produce. You know better. You know you can’t network from Bosnia nor from Okinawa. You can’t network aboard a ship, and you are going to be discharged two weeks after you get off that ship.

The difference between these young men and women and your generation is that 65 percent of them are married, and the overwhelming number of the men and women who are
married in our Armed Forces have children. They need a job, and they need a job now. But not any job. They are held as an example in the community. They did not go out and flip burgers somewhere. They did not go out after high school to find themselves down somewhere with a bag of whatever. They decided to do something very difficult. They wanted to improve themselves. They wanted to be like their forefathers. They wanted to be someone. And my God, they are someone. They are the finest young men and women we have in America. They have honorable discharges. The honorable discharges, in fact, are testimony that they earned the right to participate in the very best jobs in America.

Because they can't network and have never gone to a job interview in their entire lives and because service demands deployments, nor allows them even time to fill out a resume, they are today the most discriminated group of people in the country in terms of getting good jobs. Not any jobs but good jobs. And the reason is very simple. What the all-volunteer force has done is essentially removed all of the experience, the environment, of the military away from the job site.

Let me give you an example. I'll bet most of you, when you were discharged and you went in to get your first job, were probably met by another veteran who was the hiring manager. He understood you completely. If not, his or her brother was a veteran. If not, their father was a veteran. If not, they at least dated a veteran. Today that's totally different. It is almost never that a young man and woman leaving the Armed Forces meets anyone other than a 26- to 30-year-old hiring manager who is a college graduate who has never served a day in the military, who doesn't know anybody who served in the military, who has never dated anybody in the military. When this young man with the virtue of the very best values we inculcate in the military, the best training superior to any civilian training, walks into that job center, frequently he's like a person from outer space.

This conversation that I am talking about, National Adjutant Spanogle and I had two years ago. That led to The American Legion doing something real about it. It is to build a bridge between that young man transitioning from the Armed Forces into civilian society to find veteran-friendly companies. Not companies that CEOs talk about how great it is to hire a veteran for public relations reasons, but companies that really do. And, in fact, we count them. We know the companies we do business with, and we know how our young men and women are treated. Thanks to Bob, who told me the only way we can really solve this is for all of us, people like you and me, is to do something about it. And the Legion did something about it. That's why I'm so proud today.

We have had this year 122,000 young men and women call us on an 800 number absolutely free, whether they are in Okinawa, aboard ship, which they can even do these days with e-mail, the first words they here are, “Welcome to Hire Quality. We are sponsored by The American Legion. Can we help you?” And we then help them. We spend almost an average of 20 minutes on the telephone helping them, absolutely free. At the end of the call, we say, “Incidentally, John or Peter or Harriet, thank you very much for serving our country.” It's amazing how few times that is said to those men and women. Most of the time we are the only ones that say it. I'm very proud of The American Legion, of what you have done. I wish each of you could stand in our call center and listen to the young people from Germany and Okinawa and those places who talk to our counselors. You would be very proud of your Legion.

I would like to last simply thank National Adjutant Spanogle, Commander Miller, the National Executive Committee, my good friend Herman Harrington, and every member of the National Staff. It's always a pleasure to go to National Headquarters. In fact, I hate to
admit it, it's sort of like going back to the Marine Corps. It's so pristine, so orderly, and so well run.

At this time, I would like to introduce a company that decided not only to hire people coming from the military, but to actually change the culture of the company by giving military people, these young men and women departing the Armed Forces now, management jobs in key jobs in Suburban Propane. It's close to a $1 billion company, and they intend to change the culture of that company with members of the Armed Forces of the United States in key managerial positions.

MR. HULSEY: Before I start my remarks, I'm reminded of Andy Warhol who once stated that everybody has their 15 minutes of fame. If allowed, mine starts now.

Suburban Propane Partners Limited is a publicly traded master partnership of the New York Stock Exchange headquartered in Whippany, New Jersey. We have been in the customer service business since 1928. We are, at the present time, the nation’s third largest supplier of propane gas. The partnership serves over 700,000 residential, commercial, industrial, and agricultural customers throughout more than 350 customer service centers located in over 40 states. Suburban Propane's relationship with Hire Quality began in May 1998. Hire Quality is a Chicago-based organization specializing in search and recruitment of candidates who have successfully finished their careers in the Armed Forces. Their network provides unique access to potential candidates who have a proven track record, have worked in a drug-free and diversified work environment, and are highly trained. Suburban Propane's 350 customer service centers are located in both urban and rural communities. With current employment running less than 1 percent in some locations, finding qualified candidates is challenging.

Our partnership with Hire Quality is focused on identifying and pre-qualifying drivers, service technicians, customer service representatives, and managers. Since we have established our relationship with Hire Quality, we have hired over 200 former men and women of the Armed Forces. This relationship has given us the ability to move quickly when positions need to be filled. Hire Quality is a professional organization to do business with, not to mention the valuable service it provides to the men and women who have served our country well. On behalf of my CEO, we are proud to accept this award. It will hold a place of honor in our Whippany, New Jersey, corporate office.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: Seabury & Smith, RxAmerica and Kirke-Van Orsdel are among our corporate sponsors and partners. They offer The American Legion a discount prescription program and administer the life insurance program and health insurance plan. Legionnaires, SAL members and their families have saved more than 17 million dollars since 1995 through the prescription program. Currently just 4 percent of our members are taking advantage of the savings offered by this program. Through KVI, the insurance plans have generated more than 2.3 million annually in revenue to The American Legion for use in Legion youth programs. To tell us more of the three companies and their products is Bruce Henderson, a member of American Legion Post 34 in Broad Ripple, Indiana.

BRUCE HENDERSON: It is truly an honor and a privilege to be with all of you again this year. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of you out there that have helped promote all of the programs.

One that I'm especially involved in is The American Legion Discount Prescription Program. We have made great strides to get the word out to all of our members, although there is a lot of work left to be done. I'm happy to report that the exact number of amount
of savings is $17,043,350 that our members that have used the program have saved since August of '95. That's an average of 17 percent.

A few things to remember: you are already enrolled simply by being a member of The American Legion, SAL or Auxiliary. Thousands of participating pharmacists across the country are available to you. Just call the toll free number to inquire about a participating pharmacy in your area. Your biggest savings will be on the use of generic drugs, so be sure to ask your doctor or pharmacist if a generic is available.

RxAmerica has a convenient mail service option with a state of the art facility. You can have a 90 day supply sent directly to your home. Spouses of deceased members are still eligible. However, since the addition of the Auxiliary, requests for these cards have diminished greatly. If there is a need, please contact your Department Headquarters. The program has generated in excess of $1,277,775 in revenue for The American Legion, and that includes the individual departments. If your pharmacist has any questions, call the toll free number.

And finally on another subject, Commander, KVI, Division of Seabury & Smith, on behalf The American Legion insurance programs and their carriers would like to make a donation of $5,000 to the Child Welfare Foundation.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: Thank you for that generous donation.

Tim-Cor Financial is another one of our corporate partners. It's offers a tax deferred annuity through the Indianapolis Life Annuity Company. The current first year interest, pay attention to this now, the current first year interest is 10.25 percent. And Legionnaires have taken advantage of this and have invested five million dollars in annuities to date. This is just one more example of how your membership in The American Legion truly works for you. With us today is Jimmy Luther, President of Tim-Cor Financial, and a member of SAL Squadron 155 in Carmel, Indiana who will conduct a drawing to find out who gets that nice TV that they were raffling off.

MR. LUTHER: Just for a second, I would like to thank all of the folks that stopped by this year; all the new friends who we met, and all the friends who we have met in the past several years, I really appreciate meeting you, and thank you for working with us. The Commander will choose the winning name.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: The name is Maxine Barnes. We have a phone number and will contact her.

Still another corporate partner is MBNA America Bank. Since 1987, MBNA has contributed over 19 million dollars to our American Legion programs. This has been accomplished by all Legionnaires who use that very familiar American Legion credit card. MBNA has also donated $45,000 to the National Emergency Fund, and has pledged $50,000 in matching funds for The American Legion credit card donations to the Citizens Flag Alliance. You might also be interested to know that Legionnaires, you and I and those like us, have over 325 million dollars on deposit in MBNA in CDs and money market accounts because of their above average interest rates that they pay on those deposits. Once again, your American Legion membership works for you. That's just another example of how it does. With us is Executive Vice President of MBNA, Frank Andrews, a member of American Legion Post 10 in Newark, Delaware, to determine the winners of the three $1,000 CDs.

FRANK ANDREWS: It's my privilege to be here in front of you. Since 1987, MBNA has been a proud partner of The American Legion. Every moment of every day Legionnaires place their trust and their confidence in MBNA, and we thank you. Today, MBNA is
continuing its support of the National Emergency Fund by donating $5,000 for the important work that it does to those Legion families and communities stricken by natural disasters.

As Commander Miller said, we are drawing three, $1,000 certificates of deposit today.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: The first lucky winner is Wendy Caron, Blaine, Washington. The next lucky winner is Jean Hinheagle of Rapid City, South Dakota. The next one is Roy Pressley, Waynesville, North Carolina.

The Chair now recognizes our hard working Chairman of the National Convention Committee on Americanism, a gentleman that I have had the privilege of meeting all over the country because he's out there traveling for The American Legion and our Children & Youth programs and our Americanism programs, Mr. Joe Caouette of New Hampshire.

Report: Convention Committee on Americanism
Joseph Caouette, New Hampshire, Chairman

Fifty (50) members of your Convention Committee on Americanism met at 8:30 a.m. on Sunday, September 5, 1999, in the Anaheim Hilton and Towers, Anaheim, California, to discuss matters of Americanism-related resolutions that were assigned to the Committee.

The Committee organized by electing Joseph E. Caouette, Jr. (NH), Chairman; David Rehbein (IA), Vice Chairman; and Melvin Chapman (OH) as the Secretary.

The Committee discussed 8 resolutions that were assigned to the Committee. The resolutions that were considered continue to reflect the desire by Departments of The American Legion to address matters of patriotism and government, and to maintain strong general Americanism programs that compliment the organization and benefit the Nation.

A motion was made and seconded that the Convention Committee on Americanism authorize the chairman and secretary to sign and deliver the report, on behalf of the Committee, to the National Convention. Motion carried.

Eight (8) resolutions were considered with 1 being approved; 2 received and recorded; and 5 referred to the standing Americanism Commission.

Recommended Action on Resolutions
Approved

Resolution No. 1: Reaffirms Determination of The American Legion to Secure Constitutional Protection for the Flag of the United States
Origin: Americanism
Submitted By: Americanism

WHEREAS, The American Legion has kept faith with the American people and the membership of the 140 organizations of The Citizens Flag Alliance, Inc. in its decade-long struggle to restore legal protection to the Flag of the United States; and

WHEREAS, On June 24, 1999, the United States House of Representatives approved House Joint Resolution 33, a flag protection constitutional amendment; and

WHEREAS, Forty-nine state legislatures have asked Congress to propose such an amendment; and

WHEREAS, All that is necessary for the amendment to go to the states for ratification is a favorable vote by the United States Senate during the 106th Congress; and
WHEREAS, The American Legion intends to hold to its commitment and keep that faith with the majority of Americans who know that legal protection for the Nation’s banner is the right thing to do; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled at Anaheim, California, September 7, 8, 9, 1999, That The American Legion reaffirms the decade-long mandate of its membership, its commitment to The Citizens Flag Alliance, Inc., and its responsibility to those who died defending the Flag of the United States to secure for the flag, through an amendment to the Constitution of the United States, protection from acts of physical desecration; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion shall not abandon this objective of constitutional protection for the Flag of the United States before the matter has, as part of the ratification process, been presented for deliberation and disposition by the legislatures of the 50 United States.

Received and Recorded

Resolution No. 34 (MA) 1999 NC: Oppose Foreign Manufacture of American Flags
Resolution No. 160 (NY) 1999 NC: English Language Be Declared as the Official United States Language

Referred to the Standing Americanism Commission

Resolution No. 57 (MT) 1999 NC: National Constitution Month
Resolution No. 116 (OH) 1999 NC: The Chapel of Four Chaplains
Resolution No. 155 (NY) 1999 NC: Pearl Harbor Day
Resolution No. 166 (NC) 1999 NC: Petition Boy Scouts to Recognize Department Scout Leaders of the Year with Square Knot Award
Resolution No. 169 (IN) 1999 NC: Project Read USA

Mr. Commander, as a duly elected and registered delegate from the Department of New Hampshire, I move the adoption of this report.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: Do I hear a second for the adoption of the report?

...The motion was seconded.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: Is there any discussion? Hearing none, those in favor signify in the usual manner. Those opposed nay? The ayes have it. The report of the Americanism is adopted.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: With the adoption of the Americanism Report, it is appropriate to announce the winners of two Americanism awards.

The Frank Belgrano, Jr. Award is given annually to the department rendering the most outstanding service during the 12 month period beginning August 1st to the Boys Scouts of America program. This year’s winner I am happy to announce, is the Department of Illinois.

The Ralph T. O’Neill Education Award is given to the department within the United States, documenting the greatest activity in using The American Legion School Media Program. This winning department shows what can be accomplished by an active involved organization. The winner this year of the Ralph T. O’Neill Education Award is the Department of Wyoming.
NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: The William Randolph Hearst Americanism Trophy is an impressive award named in honor of one of American journalism’s most prominent and influential figures. It is given to the department achieving the most outstanding results in conducting Americanism programs. The winning department is selected by the National Americanism Commission on the basis of total resources, manpower as well as financial, devoted to Americanism activities during the Legion program year. I call on the Chairman of that committee, Joe Caouette, to have the pleasure of making the announcement of the winner.

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN CAOUETTE: It is my pleasure to announce the winner of the William Randolph Hearst Americanism Trophy, which recognizes the department submitting the best report of Americanism activities for the past year. The award is provided annually by the Hearst Corporation for selection made by The American Legion’s National Americanism Commission.

This year’s recipient for the third time in the last 10 years is the Department of Ohio. Let me briefly mention some of the Americanism activities in the Department of Ohio, in this year’s report. Americanism in Government Test Program. The Ohio Department, creator and founder of this program, had nearly 300 posts and units participating in the 1998-99 test program covering over 500 high schools. Several other departments have used the Ohio Americanism in Government Program as a model to create similar, though obviously smaller programs. Buckeye Boy at Boys State, the largest Boys State program in the nation, had 1,375 young men attend the 1999 session held at Bowling Greene State University. The department has 140 American Legion sponsored Scouting units, with over 3,700 Scouts participating. The department had 118 entered for the 1999 baseball season. The department provides monies and volunteer support for the Ohio Special Olympics Winter Games/Summer Games, the state bowling tournament, the state basketball tournament, and law enforcement torch run at the state games. The department hosts a breakfast at the Special Olympics Winter Games, which feeds over 400 athletes and support personnel annually. This is just a cut of the programs, of all of the programs being promoted in the Department of Ohio. It is my hope that we can get more departments across the United States to compete for the William Randolph Hearst Americanism Trophy, which is really an award granted to the department for promoting the Americanism programs within your departments.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: Kermit Ellis of the USO will now join me. Northwest Airlines is a proud sponsor of the USO. In keeping with the tradition of honoring those that so tirelessly and unselfishly defended our freedoms, Northwest Airlines is raffling off two round trip confirmed coach seat tickets to anywhere in the United States, the 48 contiguous states. It is a privilege for Northwest Airlines and the USO to participate in this American Legion Convention, and we would really like to thank them for their hospitality and generosity. Now for the big moment we have all been waiting for. I can’t tell you how much I’m looking forward to winning an airplane ticket so I can go somewhere.

It’s obvious that the guys have been in the Convention and all the ladies have been signing up for these contests. Marry Ann Gefroh, from Linton, North Dakota. 800 Northeast 1st Street is the lucky winner. She can fly from North Dakota to anywhere, round trip, two people.
MR. ELLIS: On behalf of the USO, we would like to thank The American Legion for its support throughout the year and throughout the years in the past. We have enjoyed great support with the USO and with The American Legion, and we hope it will continue in the future and that our sponsors will continue to support us as Northwest Airlines has.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: You have heard it before and I’m sure you are going to hear it again in the years to come. Membership is our lifeblood of this organization. The next award I am privileged to make is to a man who set that membership recruiting standard. The National Recruiter of the Year gathered 499 new members to The American Legion organization last year. One of the smaller numbers that he has recruited I might add. He is no stranger to being in this position, or at this podium. Over the last 10 years he has captured this award six times in the last 10 years. Give a warm reception to a very hard working individual from the Department of California, Post 888, Chilelli Memorial Post 888 in California, Mr. Joe Chilelli.

I have a story that I have to tell on myself, and it’s a little bit embarrassing, but it’s something that I want to do. I saw Joe the other day standing outside this building talking about sports or something like that.

MR. CHILELLI: It was girls.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: Well, I had managed to get a new member out of the hotel. I walked up to him in a very boastful manner, and I said, “Charlie, guess what I did over in the hotel?” And he looked at me and he said, “What?” And I said, “Guess what I did over in the hotel.” I was so excited about bragging to him I forgot his name. But he stood there and smiled and then he says, “What’s my name?” And I said, “Joe.” He said, “Oh, okay.” Then he says, “Only one? I went to a wedding reception the other day and I got 28 people.” That’s the kind of service that we want.

National Recruiter of the Decade. Chilelli Memorial Post 888. We have made you the National Recruiter of the Decade. Let’s give him a round of applause.

Mr. Chilelli, Department of California, Post 888, Chilelli Memorial Post 888. We have made you the National Recruiter of the Decade. Let’s give him a round of applause.

Joe, the National Membership Recruiter of the Year for 1999. I know this is nothing new to you, but I know the kind of Legionnaire you are. You are going to hang this up there just as high as the other ones you have got in your home. To Joseph Chilelli, Department of California, in recognition of appreciation of more than exemplary achievement by recruiting 499 new members for our great organization, The American Legion, for the year 1998-1999 membership year. In witness hereof, I have signed this; the National Adjutant has signed this. Joe, I can’t tell you how much it means to me for your service, and the fact that you keep doing it year after year, I wish that we could bottle up that fire you have got inside of you and sell it somehow. But I know it’s just that Chilelli thing that you have got inside of you.

MR. CHILELLI: You got to know that I’m getting old though.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: No, you’re not. No, you’re not.

MR. CHILELLI: You want me to say something? Unaccustomed to public speaking as I am, I would like to say that it gives me great, great honor to be up here today to receive this. And I like being the Recruiter of the Decade, but I ruined a good program by doing this. So what I’m doing on my own, I will work membership but I will never again be Recruiter of the Year. So you guys go out there and get it and work, please, but I will never be recruiter again.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: Well, while Joe is out there recruiting on those cold California evenings, we’ve got a jacket here for you to wear. I know you are going to need a briefcase to carry all those applications in, so there’s a briefcase. And Joe, you may...
not be Recruiter of the Year ever again, but I’ll tell you what, you are the Recruiter of the Decade, and that’s a big job, partner. There’s a lot of guys out there that can learn what you know. Teach us well; would you?

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: The Chair now recognizes Ken Sercerchi of Maine, Chairman of the National Convention Committee on Membership and Post Activities, for the purpose of making a report.

Oral Report: Section on Membership
(Section III of Convention Committee on Credentials and Internal Affairs)
Ken Sercerchi, Maine, Chairman

KEN SERCERCHI: As of Friday, September 3rd, 1999, membership for the 1999 year stood at 2,760,705. Unfortunately, which is 40,000 down from the same time last year. The DMS for 1999, however, exceeded our 95,000 projected goal, with a total of 97,767 new members thus far. The 2000 membership is off to a relatively good start with 1,183,045, as of September 3rd, and the DMS for 2000 stands at 37,564, also at this same time. Next Wednesday, September the 15th, will be the 45 percent target date for the year 2000. Fifteen departments have already reached this target.

Our 1999 awards program consisted of recognition of those departments receiving target date goals. For the 75 percent target date, December 9, 1998, the Department of Arizona received a free training session for having the highest percent in gain of traditional membership by the target date. The training was provided by Charlie Tyrian during the department’s convention, and led to 65 individuals successfully completing the American Legion’s Extension Institute Course. The Departments of Arizona and Nevada attained All Time Highs in membership for 1999.

The National Commander’s Give Me Five Award Program provided a much needed boost in membership. 1,117 individuals became the recipients of several awards offered with the program. The awards included a Give Me Five tie; National Commander Miller ink pen, and the Legion mouse pad. Each recipient of the award had to have recruited five new members in order to become eligible. Because of the efforts, a total of 5,585 new members were acquired and needed.

During the 1999 National Membership Workshop, a drawing was held from among the 1999 members of The Gold Brigadiers. These five winners received a $1,000 gift certificate. The five winners are: James Durham, Post 214, Department of Georgia; Paul Fitzgerald, Post 364, Department of Virginia; Vam Chaluva (phonetics), Post 381, Department of California; William J. Duffy, Post 328, Department of New Jersey, and A.C. Byrd, Post 23, Department of Kansas.

It was regularly moved, seconded and carried that the Committee Chairman and Secretary be authorized to sign the Committee reports on behalf of the Committee.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:50 a.m.

Written Report: Section on Membership
(Section III of Convention Committee on Credentials and Internal Affairs)
Ken Sercerchi, Maine, Chairman

47 members of the Committee on Credentials and Other Internal Matters, Section III (Membership), was called to order by Liaison Representative, Billy R. Johnson (AR). Forty-
seven members of the Committee met on Sunday, September 5, 1999, at 9:00 a.m., in the Santa Monica Room #17 of the Anaheim Hilton & Towers, Anaheim, California.

Kenneth A. Sercerchi of Maine was elected Chairman [nomination by Lloyd Ricker (MN) second by Ken Trainham (TX); Steve Bartos (NE) moved nominations for Chairman be closed, second by J. T. Gore (AL), and so moved].

Chairman Sercerchi approached the podium, at which time, Gerald Goetzinger of South Dakota was elected Secretary [nomination by Steve Bartos (NE) second by Roselynn Utech (OK); Charles Aucoin (LA) moved nominations be closed, second by Dale Punch (NC) and so moved].

Staff reports were presented to the Committee by National Headquarters staff on current activities and future strategies on the following topics: The 1999 Membership Year, Post Development Participation, M&PA Recommendations Update, and Direct Marketing Programs.

Four resolutions were received and reviewed by the Committee. The actions taken are as follows:

Rejected

Resolution No. 22 (VT) 1999 NC: Congressional Change In Eligibility Dates For Membership In The American Legion
Resolution No. 38 (LA) 1999 NC: Membership Of Department Holding Post
Resolution No. 105 (MN) 1999 NC: Change In Eligibility Dates For Membership In The American Legion
Resolution No. 138 (MN) 1999 NC: Change In Eligibility Dates For Membership In The American Legion

As a duly elected and registered delegate for the Department of Maine, I move for the adoption of this report.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: Was that a second I heard?

…The motion was seconded.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: Any discussion? Hearing none, those in favor signify in the usual manner. Opposed nay? Ayes have it. The report of the Crendentials and Internal Affairs Membership is adopted.

Presentation: Department Membership Awards

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: We have come to that portion of the program in the agenda that every National Commander looks forward to, with no exception. And that is a time to recognize and present those individual awards to those individuals that worked so very hard for our organization during the last year. I know that you have worked hard because I was out there with you and I have seen some outstanding efforts, things that I just, well, they caught my eye and they really made me understand what this organization is really about. And in watching those efforts of those individuals, I think that’s really what made me understand the honor that you have bestowed upon me to be your National Commander for the last year.

Membership continues to be critical to The American Legion, now, more than ever. Without an active growing membership our programs will lose strength, as will our
organization and our voice with those have politicians that we have listened to today and yesterday, will be weakened. Our commitment of service to veterans and their families and communities will suffer. America loves, America learns, and America lives through the continued efforts of 2.8 million American Legion members. I adopted that slogan at the beginning of my year, not simply because it kind of rolled off your tongue. I adopted it because it was the truth, and it is today, and it will be as long as there are our American Legion members doing things in our community, state and nation.

During the past year two departments took their membership efforts to a higher level by posting All-Time-Highs. I would like to ask John Burch, Past Department Commander of Nevada, and John Maklary, Past Department Commander of Arizona, to join me at the lectern. Thank you both so very much for your hard work. John and Julius, the efforts of the men and women you represent in your department is to be commended. Through your determination, hard work and commitment to the membership program, your departments grew to higher levels than ever before. It is with sincere gratitude that I have presented you with these rings. I certainly hope that you go back to your departments and provide the fine mentoring that you so justly, and have the right, to perpetuate upon the department, because you have been there and you have done that.

I have another set of membership awards to present. Would Karl Caswell, Past Department Commander, Alaska and John Bursh, Past Department Commander, Nevada join me at the podium?

I have a plaque here: “Presented to The American Legion Department of Alaska for outstanding membership performance in 1998 and 1999 through the attainment of 100 percent of the department membership goal by May 12, 1999. In witness whereof, this testimony of personal gratitude is given under the hand of the National Commander, presented this 8th day of September, 1999 in Anaheim, California.” Thank you. As you can see, he gets a handful of other stuff. Give him a round of applause.

Again, I have another handful of goodies and a plaque. The plaque is the very same, except this one is The American Legion Department of Nevada. John, thank you. And since the book was prepared, we also added one more, Commander Grissom from Kentucky.

There are currently seven departments who have met or exceeded 100 percent of their membership goal for 1999. Only two, Alaska and Nevada accomplished this feat by May 12th, the 100 percent target date, along with Kentucky I might add. It is with great pleasure I present to you and your membership chairman a plaque, along with a jacket and a bag which you saw me do. Thank your departments for their hard work and for a job well done. With any luck and continued hard work, we’ll see you on stage next year at the next National Convention. I know this is only the beginning for those departments, they’ve got a good thing going and I know they will keep it going.

The remaining 100 percent departments are not forgotten. Your efforts are to be commended as well. It may have taken each of you a little longer but you kept trying, and that’s the big thing. Nobody quit this year on membership.

Will the following Department Commanders please join me at the lectern: Clarence McGee, South Carolina; Donald Raven, Hawaii; Roger Clevinger, Virginia; Robert “Butch”, number two, Woodruff, Georgia, and George Grissom from Kentucky.

The Chair now recognizes Chester Stellar of Ohio, Chairman of the National Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation, for the purpose of a report.
Report: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation
Chester Stellar, Ohio, Chairman

Eighty-six members of your Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation met at 9:00 a.m. on September 5, 1999 in the Anaheim Hilton California Ballroom, Section C, and agreed on the following report which is respectfully submitted for your consideration.

The Committee was called to order by Carroll Williams (MD), Liaison Representative appointed by the National Adjutant to act as temporary chairman. Philip Wilkerson (MD), Deputy Director, VA&R Commission, acted as temporary secretary and called the roll. A quorum being present, nominations were received for permanent chairman. Chester F. Stellar (OH), Chairman of the Standing National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission, was unanimously elected Chairman of the Convention Committee.

With unanimous consent, the Chairman appointed Thomas Cadmus (MI), as Committee Secretary, and Allen K. Buttke (NM), Secretary of the Medical and Hospital Subcommittee and Tracy Taylor (FL), Chairman; and Teddy Duckworth (WI), Secretary of the Claims and Rating Subcommittee and Theodore S. Coleman (NY), Chairman.

Subcommittee liaison assignments were as follows: Carroll Williams, Director, to Medical and Hospital; and Philip Wilkerson, Deputy Director, to Claims and Ratings.

As has been the custom for the 55 previous National Conventions, a Special Department Service Officers Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Resolutions, in a three day preconvention meeting, screened and grouped the resolutions. A report of their analysis, with recommendations, was presented to the Convention Committee for consideration.

The Screening Committee conserved the time of the Convention Committee substantially. The Screening Committee was composed of the following Department Service Officers:

REGION 8—Ruddy Reilly (MT)
REGION 1—Milton Willis (VT), Chairman
REGION 2—Lance Sweigart (MD)
REGION 3—Tim Ivers (FL), Secretary

The Convention Committee recommended that such a Committee be appointed for this purpose to serve the Eighty-Second National Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation.

The 42 Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation resolutions presented for the consideration of this Convention were referred by the Resolutions Assignment Committee.

The following action on the resolutions was taken by the Convention Committee:

Approved or Approved as Amended 18
Consolidated with Resolutions Approved 4
Referred to the Standing Commission 7
Received and Recorded 11
Rejected 2

A report of action taken on the 7 resolutions referred to the Standing National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission will be made to the National Executive Committee.
and to the Adjutant of the Department concerned, and, in addition, will be contained in the National Adjutant’s report to the Eighty-Second Annual National Convention.

**Recommended Action on Resolutions**

**Approved**

**Resolution No. 6: Special Pension for World War I Veterans**

**Origin:** DC  
**Submitted By:** Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The median age of the surviving veterans of World War I is approximately 100 years of age; and

WHEREAS, Their numbers have declined rapidly over the past eight years from 63,000 in 1990 to less than 4,800 today; and

WHEREAS, Over this same period, the number of living female veterans of World War I has also declined sharply from 2,800 in 1990 to less than 460 today; and

WHEREAS, When these veterans returned home more than eighty years ago, there were no government programs to assist in their readjustment to civilian life; and

WHEREAS, Through the years, the veterans of World War I worked tirelessly to develop and support the comprehensive programs of veterans benefits and services for subsequent generations of American war veterans; and

WHEREAS, Now, they are ill or infirm and no longer able to work; and

WHEREAS, In many instances, they are subsisting in financial hardship; and

WHEREAS, The Government of the United States and the American people have a moral obligation to insure that all veterans of World War I are not forgotten in their later years; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion, since its founding in 1919 by veterans of World War I, has maintained its special concern for the needs and welfare of these war veterans; and

WHEREAS, The veterans of World War I are deserving of a special measure of recognition and attention, because of their efforts and sacrifices; and

WHEREAS, The most direct and tangible way for the nation to fulfill its obligation to those remaining veterans of World War I is to provide them a modest measure of monthly financial support; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Anaheim, California, September 7, 8, 9, 1999, That The American Legion seek legislation to amend Title 38, United States Code, so as to provide that:

a. The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall pay to each veteran of World War I, who meets the service requirements set forth in 38 USC 1521(j), a special pension in the amount of $150 per month;

b. Such special pension shall be paid without regard to (1) any income of any kind payable to the veteran’s spouse, and (2) the corpus of the veteran’s estate; and

c. Any eligible veteran in receipt of pension under 38 USC 1512 may also receive such special pension.
Resolution No. 29: VA Provide Appropriate Care For Gulf War Related Illnesses
Origin: MA
Submitted By: Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, Many Armed Forces personnel who served in the Gulf War contracted diseases endemic to that region such as dysentery, schistosomiasis, malaria, leishmaniasis, Congo-Crimean hemorrhagic fever, chronic fatigue, multi-chemical sensitivity, PTSD, and others; and

WHEREAS, Some diseases, due to their nature, have presented diagnostic difficulties and some have proven resistant to standard antibiotic therapy; and

WHEREAS, Certain endemic diseases may, because of varying incubation periods and other factors, take months and even years to become manifest; and

WHEREAS, In addition to endemic diseases, many members of the Armed Forces may have incurred respiratory disorders, in some cases with long-term effects, as a result of inhalation of carboniferous gas caused by oil fires set by Iraqi troops; and

WHEREAS, Those individuals who contracted disease or potential disease causing agents, while performing duty in the Gulf War, deserve proper medical care from a "grateful nation"; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Anaheim, California, September 7, 8, 9, 1999, That the Department of Veterans Affairs continue to provide, on a presumptive basis, appropriate medical examinations and treatment, including follow-up treatment, to all veterans of the Gulf War who report signs or symptoms that may be associated with diseases endemic to that war region and other conditions related to the experience; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the Department of Veterans Affairs continue to expand the registry of Gulf veterans who seek such treatment to be used in case service-connected presumptions are later established.

Resolution No. 58: Protect Disability Rating after Ten Years
Origin: ND
Submitted By: Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, Section 110 of Title 38 USC now provides for the protection of all disability compensation evaluations that have been continuously in effect for 20 or more years; and

WHEREAS, Permanence should be conceded for disability compensation ratings which have been in effect for 10 years without change in evaluation with no further examination scheduled; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Anaheim, California, September 7, 8, 9, 1999, That The American Legion recommend that Section 110 of Title 38 USC be amended to provide that disability evaluations continuously in effect at that same evaluation rate be protected after a period of ten years.

Resolution No. 62: Urge Congress to Provide Adequate Current and Future Financial Assistance for Veterans Health Care and Oppose Further Reductions in VA Health Care Personnel
Origin: ND
Submitted By: Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
Consolidated with No. 15 (SD) and No. 142 (MN)
WHEREAS, The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) continues to improve its efficiency and serve greater numbers of eligible veterans; and

WHEREAS, VHA has been required to improve its cost efficiency due to various internal and external conditions and has responded by implementing a comprehensive primary care program; and

WHEREAS, In the process of implementing primary care, VHA has taken unprecedented steps to consolidate various medical center programs and administrative functions to generate efficiency savings; and

WHEREAS, In this process, VHA has significantly reduced its available operating beds and its employee levels; and

WHEREAS, There are repeated reports of increasing clinic waiting times and long waits for hospital admission due to the continued downsizing of various VHA medical programs; and

WHEREAS, VHA has been frozen at its Fiscal Year 1997 funding level for the past three years as a result of the Balanced Budget Act of 1997; and

WHEREAS, In order to continue operating within the budget caps imposed by the Balanced Budget Act of 1997, VHA will continue to reduce staff, hospital beds and increase the waiting times of its veteran constituents; and

WHEREAS, VHA “belt tightening” is having an adverse effect on the morale of medical care providers; and

WHEREAS, Adequate funding must be provided to maintain and improve VA medical care to all eligible veterans to ensure that the services provided are of high quality and are provided in a timely manner; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Anaheim, California, September 7, 8, 9, 1999, That The American Legion urge Congress to provide adequate appropriations for funding VA health care and vigorously oppose any further reductions in VA health care personnel; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the Congress of the United States be urged to place the highest priority on developing permanent long-term solutions to increase the total financial assistance available on an annual basis to the Veterans Health Administration.

Resolution No. 87: Support Increase in Claims Personnel for VA
Origin: MD
Submitted By: Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, Due to persistent personnel cuts in recent years, regional office staffing levels are increasingly unable to handle the growing backlog of pending claims and appeals in a proper and timely manner; and

WHEREAS, The precedent decisions of the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims continue to add to the overall claims adjudication and appeals workload; and

WHEREAS, Frequent errors and processing delays have resulted in poor quality customer service and customer dissatisfaction which contributes to the sustained heavy volume of appellate activity in the regional offices and at the Board of Veterans Appeals; and

WHEREAS, The delay in the processing of claims and appeals by the regional offices is excessive and imposes a great hardship on many veterans and other claimants, including severe stress, additional medical and psychiatric problems, actual or attempted suicides, and many die while their appeals are pending; now, therefore, be it
RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Anaheim, California, September 7, 8, 9, 1999, That The American Legion support an increase in regional office staffing sufficient to provide timely adjudication of benefit claims and appeals.

Resolution No. 88: Eliminate All Time Limitations for Filing Applications for Correction of Military Records
Origin: MD
Submitted By: Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The Servicemen’s Readjustment Act of 1944 provided for the recognition of representatives of The American Legion, and other organizations, to serve as counsel before the discharge and retirement boards of the Armed Forces, and this recognition was extended to cover the Boards for Correction of Military Records (BCMRs) when they were created under the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion was actively involved in the legislative process that established the Correction Boards under Section 1552 of Title 10 USC; and

WHEREAS, Although under provision of Title 10 USC 1552, a three year statute of limitations was created which begins as of the date of discovery of an error or injustice on the military records of a former serviceperson, the Boards are also authorized, under statute, to excuse filings beyond the three year period if it is in the interest of justice to do so; and

WHEREAS, For many years, the Boards routinely waived the three year statute of limitation so as to provide veterans the opportunity to correct any error or injustice in their records; and

WHEREAS, In the past, the BCMRs have considered that the effective date of commencement of the three year limit was effective the date of the final separation from service; and

WHEREAS, The Congress is investigating the fairness and independence of the BCMRs and the effective date for the commencement of the correction of records by active service members; and

WHEREAS, Section 205 of The Soldiers’ and Sailors’ Civil Relief Act of 1940 provides for the waiver of periods of limitation for persons in military service with respect to civil proceedings; and

WHEREAS, The U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia ruling in the case of Detweiler v. Pena, held that the three year rule does not apply to active duty personnel; and

WHEREAS, The Senate and DoD are supporting enactment of Section 538 of the Defense Appropriations Act of 1996 to overturn the Court’s decision that this Act applied to military proceedings; and

WHEREAS, Such an enactment would effectively change the time of commencement of the limitation from the date of discovery to the date of occurrence; and

WHEREAS, The Discharge Review Board, considered to be a lower review agency has a 15 year statute of limitation; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Anaheim, California, September 7, 8, 9, 1999, That The American Legion seek legislation to amend Title 10 USC, so as to eliminate all time limitations.
Resolution No. 89: The American Legion Policy on VA Compensation

Origin: MD
Submitted By: Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
Consolidated with No. 61 (ND)

WHEREAS, The current disability compensation program has proven to be a fair and equitable manner in which to indemnify veterans suffering disabilities that are incurred or aggravated in line of duty in the military, naval, or air service; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion is totally supportive of every benefit that is currently provided to veterans for their past contributions to their country and its welfare; and

WHEREAS, Disability compensation is a monthly payment made by the Department of Veterans Affairs based on a schedule of ratings of reduction in earning capacity from specific injuries as set forth in title 38, Code of Federal Regulations; and

WHEREAS, It is the opinion of The American Legion that there is no way to adequately compensate a veteran for loss of ability to be a working, productive member of society, and that the current monthly rates do not adequately compensate these disabled veterans for the loss due to reduced earning capacity; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion believes Congress should periodically review the amount of disability compensation veterans are receiving and provide a cost-of-living adjustment to assure they have sufficient economic support; and

WHEREAS, Periodically, proposals are made to tax VA disability compensation benefits; and

WHEREAS, Taxation of these benefits would amount to nothing more than a permanent, enduring reduction in benefits and would demean the sacrifice and service of our nation’s service-connected disabled veteran population; and

WHEREAS, Veterans in receipt of VA disability pension benefits who have no dependents and are in Medicaid covered nursing homes are entitled to receive $90 monthly for personal needs and wants (Public Law 101-58), none of which can be used to reduce the amount of Medicaid paid a nursing home facility; and

WHEREAS, In contrast, veterans having no dependents in receipt of VA disability compensation benefits and who are in Medicaid covered nursing homes are required to utilize all funds received from VA towards the cost of their nursing home costs; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Anaheim, California, September 7, 8, 9, 1999, That The American Legion vigorously oppose any proposal that would subject VA disability compensation benefits to taxation; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion oppose any administrative or legislative proposal to dilute or eliminate any provision of the disability compensation program; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion support legislation to amend Title 38, United States Code, Section 1114, to provide a periodic COLA increase and to increase the monthly rates of disability compensation; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion oppose any legislative effort to automatically index such cost-of-living adjustments to Social Security recipients, nonservice-connected disability recipients and death pension beneficiaries; and, be it finally,
RESOLVED, That the American Legion seek legislation authorizing the payment of VA disability compensation to veterans having no dependents who are in Medicaid covered nursing homes of at least $90 per month, but also prohibiting any part of the compensation payment from being applied to reduce the amount of Medicaid paid a nursing home facility.

Resolution No. 90: Maintain Adequate VA Hospital Bed Capacity And Staffing Levels
Origin: IA
Submitted By: Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, Over the past four years, the Veterans Health Administration’s (VHA) number of hospital operating beds has been reduced from over 50,000 to approximately 25,000 beds; and

WHEREAS, The transition from hospital-based care to outpatient primary care is a significant factor in the reduction of hospital beds; and

WHEREAS, An additional and just as important a factor in the reduced number of hospital beds is the financial constraints imposed upon VHA; and

WHEREAS, All too often, veterans report long waiting times for primary and specialty clinic appointments and for certain hospital treatment and procedures, which is based in part on the low number of staffed VA hospital beds; and

WHEREAS, There is no currently logical basis for VHA to determine the appropriate number of hospital operating beds and contrarily, there is every appearance that the level of operating beds is set more by budgetary realities than by other rational measures; and

WHEREAS, One of the five missions of the Department of Veterans Affairs is to provide back-up contingency support to the Department of Defense in the event of a military emergency; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense does not have sufficient capacity to handle large numbers of combat casualties; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense would have to rely to a great extent on VA for medical support in the event of a national military emergency; and

WHEREAS, With there already being a shortage of VA hospital beds, it would be extremely difficult for VA to simultaneously support its veterans’ health care mission and its back-up contingency support mission; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Anaheim, California, September 7, 8, 9, 1999, That Congress consider the ramifications of a shortage of VA hospital beds should a major need for immediate beds occur as a result of a national military emergency; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That Congress evaluate the current available operating beds within the Department of Veterans Affairs for both eligible veterans and for VA to sustain its mission to provide back-up contingency support to the Department of Defense in the event of a national military emergency.

Resolution No. 95: The American Legion Policy on Agent Orange
Origin: VA
Submitted By: Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, Agent Orange was the most common herbicide used in Southeast Asia by the U.S. Armed Forces during the Vietnam Conflict from 1962-1971; and

WHEREAS, Agent Orange was contaminated by the carcinogen dioxin (2,3,7,8-tetrachlorodibenzo-p-dioxin [TCDD]); and
WHEREAS, Over 2 million veterans served in Vietnam during the Vietnam Era and are presumed to have been exposed to Agent Orange; and

WHEREAS, Scientific evidence has linked human exposure to dioxin and certain diseases; and

WHEREAS, A significant number of Vietnam veterans have developed various cancers, neurological disorders, liver dysfunction, and other severe diseases; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion supported PL 96-151 which mandated that VA fund a non-government scientific body to conduct a major epidemiology study of Vietnam veterans; and

WHEREAS, VA has still not funded the major epidemiology study mandated by public law; and

WHEREAS, In view of the current absence of alternative judicial recourse to remedy the injustice perpetuated on so many disabled Vietnam veterans, their families and survivors, The American Legion will continue to monitor other pending dioxin-related suits; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Anaheim, California, September 7, 8, 9, 1999, That The American Legion continue to urge the completion of the scientific study mandated by Public Law 96-151; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion vigorously support the liberalization of the rules relating to the evaluation of studies involving exposure to dioxin and the adjudication of claims based on Agent Orange exposure; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion continue to closely monitor the development of all ongoing research on the long-term effects of Agent Orange exposure and point out to the proper officials any perceived deficiencies or discrepancies in these projects; and to ensure that government committees charged with review of such research are composed of impartial members of the medical and scientific community; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That Vietnam veterans reporting to VA medical care facilities claiming exposure to Agent Orange be provided examinations and treatment which is thorough and appropriate, and that VA physicians demonstrate compassion in responding to the medical needs of these veterans.

Resolution No. 97: Extend Persian Gulf War Benefits to Those Who Served In Israel and Turkey

Origin: VA

Submitted By: Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, Priority health care has been approved for Gulf War veterans assigned in the past to Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Oman, etc.; and

WHEREAS, Veterans assigned to Israel or Turkey during the Gulf War have not received such recognition for priority health care; and

WHEREAS, These veterans were exposed to most of the same environmental hazards; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By the American Legion in National Convention assembled in Anaheim, California, September 7, 8, 9, 1999, That The American Legion support legislation to provide authority for the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to extend priority health care to veterans who served during the Persian Gulf War in Israel or Turkey.
Resolution No. 98: Gulf War Veterans Illnesses

Origin: VA

WHEREAS, Approximately 700,000 members of the United States Armed Forces were deployed to the Southwest Asia Theater of Operations during the Gulf War; and

WHEREAS, More than 40,000 women served in theater during the Gulf War; and

WHEREAS, Over 20 percent of new recruits in the Armed Forces today are women, and that percentage is likely to grow in the coming years; and

WHEREAS, The vast majority of Gulf War veterans are in good health, thousands of Gulf War veterans nevertheless suffer from unexplained physical symptoms known as “Gulf War veterans illnesses;” and

WHEREAS, Over 120 scientific studies are investigating these illnesses; and

WHEREAS, Few of the aforementioned studies are focused exclusively on the illnesses experienced by women Gulf War veterans; and

WHEREAS, Misleading information about Gulf War veterans illnesses has spread on the Internet and through the media, and this information has caused a great deal of misunderstanding regarding the severity and prevalence of Gulf War veterans illnesses; and

WHEREAS, The National Academy of Sciences Institute of Medicine has completed, and is currently preparing reports, that evaluate the nature, the likely causes, and the Federal Government’s response to Gulf War veterans illnesses; and

WHEREAS, Several independent expert scientific committees and organizations have stated that a number of suspected causes of Gulf War veterans illnesses are not likely associated with those illnesses, whereas others are more likely associated with those illnesses; and

WHEREAS, Pyridostigmine bromide was used by the United States and some coalition troops as a nerve agent pre-treatment during the Gulf War although the Food and Drug Administration had not approved the drug for that use, and some researchers contend that pyridostigmine bromide may be associated with Gulf War veterans illnesses; and

WHEREAS, Several medical studies have found that the unexplained physical symptoms reported by Gulf War veterans are similar to other medically unexplained symptom syndromes like chronic fatigue syndrome and fibromyalgia; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion’s contract with a medical consultant from the University of Connecticut proved invaluable in helping the organization strive towards its goal of serving Gulf War veterans; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Anaheim, California, September 7, 8, 9, 1999, That the American Legion encourage the Department of Veterans Affairs to devote the appropriate resources to finding effective medical treatments to alleviate the unexplained physical symptoms of Gulf War veterans; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the Department of Veterans Affairs fund more scientific studies that exclusively investigate the health of women Gulf War veterans; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion encourage the Department of Veterans Affairs to quickly implement any reasonable recommendations contained in Institute of Medicine reports regarding its Gulf War veterans programs and research; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion encourage the scientific community to focus its efforts on the most likely causes of Gulf War veterans illnesses, and to refrain from
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supporting or encouraging investigations of risk factors that are not likely related to Gulf War veterans illnesses; and, be it further,

RESOLVED, That The American Legion encourage the Department of Defense to not use investigational drugs on U.S. troops without their informed consent; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion encourage the Department of Veterans Affairs to consider offering healthcare and compensation to disabled Gulf War veterans who suffer from unexplained physical symptoms, or medically unexplained symptom syndromes similar to chronic fatigue syndrome or fibromyalgia; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion will continue to consult with medical experts from time to time in order to ensure the effectiveness of its advocacy.

Resolution No. 106: Urge VA To Make Organization-Specific Information Available To Veterans Service Organizations

Origin: IL
Submitted By: Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The American Legion is authorized access to the Department of Veterans Affairs computer system in individual cases in which The American Legion holds power of attorney; and

WHEREAS, Due to delays and problems with the Department of Veterans Affairs’ longterm computer modernization program and related initiatives, the current computer system still can only provide case-specific information to service officers; and

WHEREAS, Although the Department of Veterans Affairs has a number of data programs which develop a wide spectrum of information for the purpose of internal workload and management reports on individual regional office and system-wide operations, it does not separately identify the workload of the individual veterans service organizations; and

WHEREAS, The veterans service organizations do not receive regular distribution of these workload and management reports nor do they have electronic access to the VA system to obtain such reports directly; however, they can request hardcopy or E-mail copies of specific reports whenever this type of information is needed; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs continues to work on developing a comprehensive data management system composed of the Veterans Information System, Data Inventory or Repository, and Business Information System which intended to provide information to VA Central Office officials, Service Delivery Network (SDN) officials, regional office staff, veterans service organizations, and Congress; and

WHEREAS, The Freedom of Information Act, as amended, authorizes the Department of Veterans Affairs to release certain types of nonpersonal information in hardcopy or electronically from its records and data bases to the public upon request; and

WHEREAS, To effectively manage, direct, and budget for their respective service programs, the veterans service organizations need accurate, reliable data on their own workload; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs is currently seeking the support and cooperation of the veterans service organizations in a variety of service improvement initiatives, such as TRIP (Training, Responsibility, Involvement, and Preparation) and the Predischarge Physical Examination Program; and
WHEREAS, Without greater access to or the availability of organization-specific workload information, the veterans service organizations cannot effectively determine the resources needed to take on these additional responsibilities; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Anaheim, California, September 7, 8, 9, 1999, That The American Legion urge the Department of Veterans Affairs to make available a full spectrum of organization-specific information and reports through improved access to the VA computer system.

Resolution No. 118: The American Legion Policy on Entitlement to VA Headstones
Origin: NJ
Submitted By: Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
WHEREAS, The American Legion is an organization of wartime veterans who have dedicated themselves to the service of the community, state and nation; and
WHEREAS, A proud nation should be willing to identify and memorialize for posterity each of its veterans; and
WHEREAS, Each and every veteran should equally be remembered and identified in their final place of rest; and
WHEREAS, Current provisions discriminately provide a means of identifying and honoring only those veterans who do not already have any other form of monument; and
WHEREAS, Monuments provided by family many times do not identify a grave as that of a veteran when interred in a non-government cemetery; now, therefore, be it
RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Anaheim, California, September 7, 8, 9, 1999, That The American Legion support entitlement for all honorably discharged veterans to an appropriate grave marker provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs, without regard to whatever other private monument or headstone that may already be in place at the time of application.

Resolution No. 141: The GI Bill Of Health
Origin: IL
Submitted By: Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
Consolidated with No. 139 (MN)
WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health care system was created to provide medical treatment to veterans; and
WHEREAS, VA initially provided care to disabled veterans, indigent veterans, and other veterans based on a resource and space available basis; and
WHEREAS, Since its establishment, Congress has significantly expanded the health care responsibilities of the Department of Veterans Affairs; and
WHEREAS, Today, this is accomplished by VHA through the operation of 22 Veterans Integrated Service Networks (VISNs) that provide inpatient and outpatient care across a spectrum of treatment milieus, and is committed to four primary missions:
• To develop, maintain and operate an equitable veterans health care delivery system.
• To carry out a program of education and training of health care personnel.
• To carry out a program of medical care research.
• To furnish health care services to members of the Armed Forces during a war or national emergency; and to civilians during national emergencies; and
WHEREAS, In recent years, VHA has been progressively impeded by funding shortages and geographic constraints; and
WHEREAS, The impact of recent Congressional budget shortfalls places the system in serious jeopardy, and prevents VA from accomplishing its myriad of missions which would have a deleterious effect on veterans seeking care for service-connected and nonservice-connected conditions; and
WHEREAS, The American Legion believes the Federal Government must live up to its legal and moral obligations and expectations of veterans and the American people with regard to access to VA health care services; and
WHEREAS, This legislation will revolutionize the way VA delivers and pays for health care benefits to our nation’s veterans and their dependents; now, therefore, be it
RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Anaheim, California, September 7, 8, 9, 1999, That The American Legion accept as its policy on veterans health care, “The GI Bill of Health” (formerly known as “The American Legion Veterans Health Care Security Plan”), which will:
1. Reorganize the Veterans Health Administration to improve access, quality, and efficiency of the medical care provided to veterans;
2. Operate the veterans health care system based upon the principles of “coordinated care”;
3. Assure all veterans with service-connected illnesses and disabilities access to all services necessary for the treatment of their disabilities at no charge to the veteran;
4. Assure all veterans with a service-connected disability rating of 50 percent or greater, access to all VA health care services at no cost;
5. Assure all special category veterans, indigent veterans and service-connected veterans rated under 50 percent disabled, access to VA health care services at no charge or reduced charge;
6. Assure the long-term viability of VHA by encouraging veterans who presently are unable to receive VA care, self-employed veterans, and veterans’ dependents, to enroll in a Department of Veterans Affairs Health Care Plan;
7. Improve the long-term financial health of the veterans health care system by increasing other resources of the system to include other federal programs;
8. Federal appropriations for the VHA shall be based upon a capitated method using the calculation of fully-allocated costs of care to service-connected and other veterans receiving care at no charge; and
9. Require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to report to the Congress at designated intervals on the financial soundness of the system, the budget-neutrality of the system and the quality of care rendered.

Resolution No. 153: Request DVA Establish Policy Of Enrollment In DVA Health Care System At The Time Of Separation From Active Military Service
Origin: NY
Submitted By: Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
WHEREAS, Congress directed the Department of Veterans Affairs to establish a National Enrollment Policy for health care in the Veterans Health Care Administration by October 1, 1999; and
WHEREAS, The purpose of this enrollment policy was to standardize Veterans Health Administration guidelines, procedures and eligibility criteria for veterans who use Department of Veterans Affairs health care; and

WHEREAS, American Legion Posts and American Legion Accredited Service Officers have assisted eligible veterans to ensure they have the opportunity to take part in this enrollment policy; and

WHEREAS, No specific policy exists within the Department of Defense to enroll active duty personnel at the time of their discharge outprocessing; and

WHEREAS, Many active duty military personnel are without health insurance at discharge time and Department of Veterans Affairs health care could fill an immediate need as well as be helpful in claims with the Veterans Benefits Administration in the future; and

WHEREAS, Discharge outprocessing would be the appropriate time and place for enrollment before these personnel are home seeking jobs and establishing their civilian life; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Anaheim, California, September 7, 8, 9, 1999, That the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs be requested to establish a policy for enrollment in Department of Veterans Affairs health care at the time of separation from active duty for all personnel on active military duty.

Resolution No. 171: Support Improved Vocational Rehabilitation & Counseling Services

WHEREAS, Many thousands of veterans sustained injuries as a direct result of their military service; and

WHEREAS, In many cases, those injuries impacted on the veterans ability to readjust to civilian life because of a diminished capacity to care for themselves and an inability to obtain and maintain suitable employment; and

WHEREAS, The mission of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Vocational Rehabilitation & Counseling (VR&C) Service is to help qualified, service-disabled veterans achieve maximum independence in daily living and, to the maximum extent feasible, obtain and maintain suitable employment; and

WHEREAS, In the past, VR&C Service’s focus was on how many veterans were enrolled in training, rather than on how many veterans completed training and were successfully placed in jobs; and

WHEREAS, VR&C Service now recognizes that its past focus was not in the best interest of the veteran; and

WHEREAS, VR&C Service is involved in an ongoing reinvention process so that it can provide the quality, quantity and timely services that program participants deserve; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Anaheim, California, September 7, 8, 9, 1999, That The American Legion support any proposal that will allow VA’s Vocational Rehabilitation and Counseling Service to expand and improve its services to qualified, service-disabled veterans.
Resolution No. 179: Support the Consolidation of VA Home Loan Guaranty Program for the Southwest Region in California

Origin: CA
Submitted by: Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, In September of 1995, a Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) task group issued a report to consolidate regional offices throughout the United States; and

WHEREAS, In October 1999, the House Veterans Affairs Committee sent a letter to then Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Jesse Brown, indicating that both Senate and House Committees were dissatisfied with VA’s attempt to explain the feasibility of that reorganization plan; and

WHEREAS, In December of 1995, VA began to implement its reorganization in some of the larger regional offices: New York, Los Angeles, Oakland and Washington, D.C.; the attempt was to move Compensation and Pension to Regional Service Centers, which was considered totally unfeasible by the Congress and the veteran community; the plan was, for the most part, scrapped; and

WHEREAS, VA has not completely abandoned its idea to regionalize services to veterans; and

WHEREAS, The main driving force is a report issued by the Principi Commission, which talks about contracting consolidation; and

WHEREAS, Now, VA is regionalizing its Loan Guaranty Program; and

WHEREAS, Eligibility-processing will stay in one of two centers, but ultimately will wind up on the Internet; and

WHEREAS, The management VA properties are being considered under A76, a study for VA to contract the private sector, for the purpose of managing the properties; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Anaheim, California, September 7, 8, 9, 1999, That it finds unconscionable that the loan processing function of VA’s Loan Guaranty Program is being totally suspended in California, a state that is home to roughly 10% of the nation’s veterans, and relocated to Phoenix, Arizona; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the Home Loan Guaranty Program for veterans of California, Nevada and Arizona remain somewhere in the State of California, to provide loan processing and servicing functions to the veterans of this region.

Resolution No. 181: Indirect Cost Reimbursement to VA by Non-VA and Collaborative Studies Research

Origin: CA
Submitted By: Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, Reimbursement for infrastructure costs supporting non-VA and collaborative research that is conducted in VA has taken on greater importance due to the flat line budget and decreased buying power; and

WHEREAS, The National Institutes of Health is prohibited from providing reimbursement of indirect costs on research grants made to other government agencies; and

WHEREAS, There are several locations where the National Institutes of Health has granted an add on to university affiliates; they in turn, pass along to VA; and

WHEREAS, Although the general rule of thumb is that VA does not receive any financial support to offset indirect costs or research; and
WHEREAS, Many affiliate universities have not negotiated the add on to the rate the Institutes of Health attaches per its grant to affiliates; and

WHEREAS, The National Association of Veterans Research and Education Foundation reported that Health and Human Services and the National Institutes of Health have indicated support for the concept of a 15% VA add on to offset direct costs; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Anaheim, California, September 7, 8, 9, 1999, That all VA institutions be afforded this add on from both university and corporate research collaboratives; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That all research administered by VA’s Independent Review Board and uses VA physical and material assets should include reimbursement to VA for these indirect costs, at a rate of 15% from the National Institutes of Health sponsored research; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That local health services research and development programs should negotiate for a similar rate from private funders of research.

Referred to the Standing Commission on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

Resolution No. 4 (WY) 1999 NC: The Training, Responsibility, Involvement and Preparation of Claims (TRIP) Program
Resolution No. 39 (CT) 1999 NC: The Training, Responsibility, Involvement and Preparation of Claims (TRIP) Program
Resolution No. 104 (IL) 1999 NC: Unused Hospital Space for Veterans Homes
Resolution No. 147 (NE) 1999 NC: The Training, Responsibility, Involvement and Preparation of Claims (TRIP) Program
Resolution No. 150 (NY) 1999 NC: Establish a National Cemetery in Richmond County, New York
Resolution No. 161 (WA) 1999 NC: Advocate to Congress that VA make Special Treatment Category for Military Retirees
Resolution No. 180 (CA) 1999 NC: The Training, Responsibility, Involvement and Preparation of Claims (TRIP) Program

Received and Recorded

Resolution No. 23 (MA) 1999 NC: The American Legion Policy on the State Veterans Home Program
Resolution No. 31 (MA) 1999 NC: Burial and Plot Allowance
Resolution No. 59 (ND) 1999 NC: The American Legion Policy on DVA-NSLI Insurance
Resolution No. 64 (ND) 1999 NC: Centralization of Veterans Claims Processing Centers
Resolution No. 65 (ND) 1999 NC: Burial and Plot Allowance
Resolution No. 110 (PI) 1999 NC: Improvement of Compensation, Pension and Health Care Benefits for Filipino World War II Veterans
Resolution No. 111 (PI) 1999 NC: Nonservice-Connected Pension and Health Care for Filipino WWII Veterans
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Resolution No. 112 (PI) 1999 NC: Filipino WWII Veterans as Active Military in U.S. Armed Forces w/Full Benefits for Service and Appropriate Sufficient Additional Funding

Resolution No. 143 (MN) 1999 NC: Increase State Veterans Homes Per Diem Payment

Resolution No. 164 (WA) 1999 NC: Better Funding for VA Long-Term Care

Resolution No. 165 (WA) 1999 NC: Support Full Federal Funding for the Construction of State Veterans Homes

Rejected

Resolution No. 100 (ID) 1999 NC: American Legion Provide Pro-Bono Representation at the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims

Resolution No. 113 (PI) 1999 NC: Naturalized Former Filipino WWII Veterans Bring SSI with them upon Returning to Philippines

That completes the report and as a duly elected delegate from the Department of Ohio, I move the adoption of this report.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: Do I hear a second?

...The motion was seconded.


Presentation: William F. Lenker National Service Trophy

Butch L. Miller, Virginia, National Commander

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: With the adoption of the VA&R report, it is appropriate to announce the winner of the William F. Lenker National Service Trophy. This trophy is awarded annually to the department which best supports and implements programs to benefit veterans, their families and their survivors. For the 1998-1999 program year, this trophy is awarded to the Department of Minnesota.

Simply reading the responsibilities associated with our next guest really fails to completely give a clue to the political and public tightrope this gentleman walks. He is the Secretary of the American Battle Monuments Commission, a position he has held since 1995. He is also a retired U.S. Army Major General. He served two tours in Vietnam during his 35 years of service. A member of American Legion Post 19 in the Department of the District of Columbia, please welcome to the podium, Major General, retired, John Herrling.

Address: MG John P. Herrling, USA (Ret.), Secretary
American Battle Monuments Commission

I had the pleasure of attending the last three summer conventions at Salt Lake City, Orlando, and in New Orleans, and I’m very pleased to be back here again with you at Anaheim. It’s always refreshing to get away from Washington for a while, particularly after a long hot summer. For those of us who live and work in Washington, you tend to think that it’s the center of the universe and that it’s important to everything else. But when you get away from the hype and the politics, you’re faced with a different reality, the reality that
there are great organizations like The American Legion and the American Legion Auxiliary that are having a major impact on America. In towns and villages across the country you are helping in innumerable ways to strengthen the country and keep it on a straight course. What you do in so many small ways adds up to a better America. So I am very proud to be here with you this afternoon.

In the next few minutes I will report on the progress of establishing the National World War II Memorial in Washington, D.C., a project that The American Legion has contributed to in many ways. Before I do, allow me to share the spotlight for a few moments with a great actor and a great American, Mr. Hanks.

...At this time the Delegates viewed a video.

Those public service ads have been appearing on television across the country since April, along with the series of radio and print ads. Tom Hanks has donated his time and many talents to help us make this memorial a reality. His endorsements have had a dramatic impact on the nationwide awareness of the World War II Memorial, and our fund-raising campaign. Since January of this year we have received more than 140,000 calls on our 1-800 number. You could not ask for a more credible or powerful national spokesperson. Tom Hanks is not only a very talented Oscar-winning actor, he’s also a very patriotic and dedicated American.

Tom Hanks’ message to America is simple: “it’s time to say thank you.” But I don’t have to tell you that. The American Legion and the American Legion Auxiliary are in the forefront of this campaign, and have been from the beginning. Testifying publicly at design approval hearings in Washington; writing letters to the editor; promoting the campaign through membership publications; and spearheading a major fund-raising effort. You are leading the veterans support, and the American Battle Monument Commission is very grateful for that leadership role.

Now to our progress. You may recall that before we can break ground for this memorial, we must have final design approval and all the construction funds in hand. Getting the memorial design approved in Washington is a long and sometimes contentious process. During one public hearing, Friedrich St. Florian, our design architect, said the approval process alone is proof that democracy is alive and well in our country. But that’s as it should be. When you are building a memorial on our National Mall, a memorial that will stand the test of time, you had better get it right. And this memorial will be one for the ages. Located on the last great site on the National Mall between the Washington Monument and the Lincoln Memorial, it will stand on the centerline of American history.

The memorial design must be approved at three different phases by three different commissions. All three approved our design concept in the summer of 1998; all three approved our preliminary design this summer; and we hope to have final approval for the memorial early next year. The preliminary design continues to feature a lower plaza surrounded by the Rainbow Pool, the central unifying design element. Two granite arches over four stories high provide monumental character in the north and south entrances to the memorial. Within the arches, bronze American eagles hold laurel wreaths memorializing the victory won by the World War II generation. On the sides, 56 stone pillars have been added to the design, flanking the arches and embracing the plaza. The 17 foot pillars have a powerful visual presence. Individually, the pillars represent the 48 states and the eight territories that comprised the United States during World War II, and collectively they symbolize the unity and the strength of the nation.
At the western side of the plaza, next to the Reflecting Pool, four primary elements combine to create the memorial’s sacred area. A marker with the sculpted wreath symbolizes the 406,000 Americans who gave their lives. There are two other sculpted laurel wreaths, one commemorating the sacrifice of America’s allies, and the other commemorating the suffering of all of humankind. On the western wall, a light of freedom rising out of a dark, broken crater, will symbolize the triumph of life over darkness. The dark broken crater symbolizes the global upheaval created by World War II. An inscription, yet to be selected, will be placed on that wall that we hope will stir visitors’ emotions. The ceremonial entrance from 17th Street has been widened to 171 feet. This will provide a wide central vista from the Washington Monument to the Lincoln Memorial, and will allow the entrance to serve as an amphitheater for ceremonies. It will also provide a grand entrance into the memorial. We are pleased with the progress of the design and the support we continue to receive from the Federal approving agencies.

On the financial side, I can report that the fund-raising campaign continues to pick up steam. We’re nearing 70 million dollars in our 100 million dollar campaign. That money comes from veterans groups like yours; corporations; foundations; civic and fraternal organizations; states; and individual Americans. Veterans have contributed more than four million dollars, led by the 1.5 million netted thus far by The American Legion. And the American Legion Auxiliary has raised $167,000 and provided an additional $109,000 in kind. Corporations have contributed almost 30 million dollars. We received two million dollars gifts from Federal Express and Southwest Bell. An additional eight, one million dollar gifts; 85 gifts of $100,000 or more. Nearly seven million dollars have been given by foundations, including a two million dollar grant from the Lilly Foundation, and a million dollar grants from the Steele and Starr Foundation. Additionally, we ask each state to contribute one dollar for resident who served in uniform during World War II. With your help and the help of the Veterans Administration, 21 states that passed legislation committing six million dollars; nine states have legislation pending; and 18 states will introduce legislation next year. Civic and fraternal organizations have contributed almost two million dollars, led by a .1 million dollar pledge from the Benevolent Paternal Order of Elks. We also have cause-related marketing initiatives, and promotions have been completed with Blockbuster and Major League Baseball. Many of your posts were involved in each of those programs. Lastly, 330,000 thousand Americans have contributed more than 20 million dollars. Grassroots organizations are sprouting up in communities throughout the country, and they are doing very well within your own departments.

This has truly become America’s campaign, and the momentum grows with each passing month. A little more than two years ago, our pledges totaled 5.5 million dollars. In May of last year they were 21 million dollars; today, nearly 70 million. The issue is not if the World War II Memorial will be built, but when. The urgency is amplified by a statistic all too familiar with this audience, we lose 1,000 World War II veterans every day. We are committed to continuing to accelerate our fund-raising efforts to complete this memorial before this great generation we honor passes into history. We hope to break ground sometime next fall. To do this, a lot of things must come together. But with your continued support, and the support of the American people, the National World War II Memorial will one day in the not too distant future assume its rightful place among our other cherished memorials on the National Mall. Thank you for all you have done for America, and what you are doing to help us build this national memorial.
NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: General, please stay up here at the podium with me. As a further indication of The American Legion’s support of the Second World War Memorial, we have a number of people here from the various departments that have stepped forth and would like to make presentations to you. If they would, as they come forward, please announce the department and the amount of money that you are denoting. Al Ford from Michigan can start this parade.

NECman FORD (MI): I am proud to present today our Chairman of our delegation, Gerald Dennis and our Department Commander, Norb Schollett, who have checks for the foundation.

DEPARTMENT COMMANDER SCHOLLETT: I am very proud to present to you today a check for $1,050 from some of the posts of the Department of Michigan.

NECman FORD (MI): Before I left office to turn it over to Norb, the finance committee and the Department of Michigan voted to present a check for $25,000 to this worthy cause.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: Next is George Derrick from Florida.

NECman DERRICK (FL): This morning, the 18 states that comprise the Southern block held a breakfast presided over by our Chairman, Mr. E. Roy Stone. He persuaded those people to donate $5,614 to the NEF. I don’t have a check. The money has already been turned into the finance department.

NECman RUSK (IA): From the Department of Iowa, $2,108.51.

NECman KIRKHAM (LA): From the Department of Louisiana, we wish to present to you a check for $3,650 to supplement other funds.

NECman RAWERS (IL): Commander, the Department of Illinois would like to donate this check from our department for $10,000.

NECman PELLEGRINI (MT): I am pleased to announce that the Montana legislature appropriated $66,000 to be presented in October. To add to that, I have a check for $1,320 I picked up during district meetings.

NECman DALKE (ND): I have a check here for $500 from the Langton Post plus another $1,125 from the foundation of North Dakota, American Legion.

NECman BRYANT (VA): It’s with great honor that the Department of Virginia presents a check today for $30,000. One of our top legislative priorities for the year 2000 would be a dollar per veteran for another $150,000.

NECman GALAZEN (MN): General, as a proud member of Post 294, the greatest little post in southern Minnesota, I would like to present $1,000 to the foundation for the World War II Memorial Foundation. We are a post that, in 1942, every member but one of the graduating class went into the war.

NECman MASON (SD): From the state with the faces on the mountain and the birthplace of American Legion baseball, we give $1,000.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER COMER (MA): John Mulkmnk, who is our state chairman, is home ill. He has instructed me along with our department treasurer, Joe Tomato, and the commander of record last year, Jimmy Flatters, the new alternate NEC, to inform you that the Commonwealth of Massachusetts has finally passed through the legislature, the mechanics of getting the money is on its way, to the tune of $550,000. I would like to present on behalf of the Legionnaires of Massachusetts the first check, the money is still coming in, for $73,460.62.

NECman POORE (DE): General, the Department of Delaware, the first state, would like to give you this check for $1,000.
ALISON HEWITT (VT): General, on behalf of the Department of Vermont, as the coordinator for the fund raiser for the World War II Memorial that is well overdue, I have the great honor and privilege of presenting two checks, one for $400 that was raised during our recent state convention in the fund raising that I did for department, plus a very special check from a small post in which this young lady is the commander of, and that is Pierce Lawton Post No. 37, Bellows Falls, Vermont. They presented to me at convention a check for $5,000 for the World War II Memorial in honor of 32 deceased World War II members as well as 154 members of World War II still alive and present in their post. So that totals $5,400 from Vermont not including the $3,400 that our Sons of The American Legion of Vermont donated this week to the World War II Memorial. And there’s more coming.

NECman BORDERS (GA): The Department of Georgia wishes to make a donation today. We have already donated $16,000. We have $4,600 more to give us a total of $20,620.

NECman WEST (NH): General, the legislature in the State of New Hampshire has passed $60,000; and the Department of New Hampshire is proud to present a check for $3,766.

NECman ZUKOWSKI (WI): The Department of Wisconsin gratefully hands over a check here. The department alone gives $7,005.50. Along with me is John who has a blockbuster check for $10,000 for a total of $17,005.05.

NECman GALAZEN (MN): I am standing up, but I am real happy. From this great Department of Minnesota, $1,000 check from Cass Lake, Minnesota; $1,000 from Dawson, Minnesota, Post 177; $1,000 check from the post at South Rapids, Minnesota; a $200 check from Elk River, Minnesota; from Long Prairie, Minnesota, another check, $300. Another check from Zimmerman, Minnesota for $300. One more check from Hills City, $25.

NECman ANDERSON (CT): Along with the initial $5,000 that we sent a year ago, we are proud on behalf of our World War II Chairman, Frank Angelo, and the Legionnaires from the Department of Connecticut to present to you this check for $1,245.

NECman BARNEY (OH): Mr. General, as a representative of the 158,000 members of the Department of Ohio, we would like to give you a check for $25,000.

NECman CONLEY (PA): General, we would like to inform you that the commonwealth legislature’s first processing legislature from the point of $1.7 million, another piece of legislation in the amount of $2 million, to be donated to the World War II Memorial. Along with that, the legislative have been guaranteed by a private donor that they will match whatever bill is passed. As for the Department of Pennsylvania, our American Legion, all of our war era veterans got together in honor of our World War II veterans. We would like to present this check to you in the amount of $18,205.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: Noted that if all that legislation goes through from Pennsylvania, that state will donate more than $4 million to this memorial..

NECman PULAWA (HI): General, the Department of Hawaii presents it’s first check for $500. I’m also a charter member and give my own personal donation every year.

NECman CHRISTOFFERSEN (UT): The Department of Utah was one of first in the nation to jump on board with this. Our legislature approved $79,000. We are proud of that. We are going to pledge another $1,000. We are hoping our finance committee will go along with that. If they don’t, Bill and I will have to be paying that ourselves.

NECman ROY (OK): General, it is my privilege and honor to have received a check at our state convention from one of our outstanding posts in Oklahoma. This post wished to recognize their World War II veterans and those in their city. I’m accompanied today with
a past commander, Mr. Donald T. Younger, of American Legion Post Mohawk 308 of Tulsa, Oklahoma. This post is contributing $50,000 to the World War II Memorial.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: General, join me in presenting that post an award for their donation. It says, if I might read it, “Let it be known to all present that those men and women listed below were, during the global conflict in World War II, actively engaged in the defense of freedom either in the Armed Forces of the United States or on the American home front and are hereby recognized as having participated in and are responsible for victory in that conflict. May they always be honored and respected. Mohawk Post 308.”

NECman ROY (OK): In addition to this, Mr. Commander, we have, from our Past Commanders Club in Oklahoma, $100, and from Post 129 another $340.

NECman WARD (NY): General, the Department of New York this year had a two-prong effort to raise funds for our World War II heroes. First, we went to our state legislature and, through the efforts of our legislative chairman, John DePersis, and our state adjutant, Dick Pedro, and their lobbying efforts, we were able to secure $1.7 million, representing one dollar per veteran who went off to war during World War II. In addition, I asked the Legionnaires of New York to contribute to this most important project. They’ve sent so far into the department, into National Headquarters, $160,000. In addition, through the Department of New York, we have already transmitted over $26,000. It is my pleasure right now to present a check to you, General, in the amount of $106,000 for our World War II project. So far this amounts to almost $2 million. We already know of a post in a couple of weeks that is going to present a check for $10,000 and an anonymous donor for $50,000. Next year’s commander, Richard Keiser, has promised to carry on this important project. So a lot more money will be on the way.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: I don’t want you to think that we have slighted Mohawk Post 308 for that fantastic single post donation of some $50,000. We asked the post commander if he would like to say a few words. He just said, “No, that’s okay. That’s what we’re here for.” Now that’s what The American Legion is right there.

MAJOR GENERAL HERRLING USA (Retired): The accountant behind me has just totaled up the gifts that we just heard presented for the World War II memorial. They total to $385,902.23. I would say that’s incredible.

I mentioned in my remarks that The American Legion was leading the way in this campaign with the veterans organizations. I stand by those words. I think this is proof positive that you are really 100 percent behind this great national program. From all of us on the American Battle Monuments Commission, I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: The Chair now recognizes Herm Harrington of New York, Chairman of the National Convention Committee on Credentials and Internal Affairs, for the purposes of making a report.

Report: Section on Credentials and Other Internal Matters
(Section II of Committee on Credentials and Internal Affairs)
Herman G. Harrington, New York, Chairman

General Herrling in his remarks indicated that the World War II Memorial was near $70 million. I think through the efforts of all you people here today it is at $70 million and may be a tad over.
Chaplain Sweeney, Mr. Commander, my fellow delegates and friends, forty-six members of the Credentials and Internal Affairs Committee, Section II, considered seventeen resolutions, sixteen of which originated with Departments of The American Legion and one which was created by the committee. Of these, two were approved, three were approved as amended, two were approved as consolidated and amended; seven were referred, and three were rejected.

Recommended Action on Resolutions
Approved

Resolution No. 151: Include Funeral Honors Activity in Consolidated Post Report
Origin: NY
Submitted By: Credentials and Other Internal Matters, Section II

WHEREAS, Public Law 105-261, The Strom Thurmond National Defense Act for Fiscal Year 1999 Section 567, directs the Department of Defense to provide an honor guard detail to provide military funeral honors for veterans in the form of a minimum of two DOD personnel; and
WHEREAS, Public Law 105-261 allows for the coordination with local veterans organizations to supplement the provision of military funeral honors; and
WHEREAS, American Legion posts across the world stand ready to give final honors to Legionnaires as well as other veterans at the time of their death; and
WHEREAS, This service is truly certainly part of our “devotion to mutual helpfulness and caring for those who have borne the burden;” and
WHEREAS, This activity is used as one of the criteria for awarding of the William F. Lenker National Service Trophy; and
WHEREAS, The current format of the Consolidated Post Report provides no place to report such activity; now, therefore, be it
RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Anaheim, California, September 7, 8, 9, 1999, That The American Legion make a change in the Consolidated Post Report to include Funeral Honors Activity provided by American Legion Posts.

Resolution No. 183: Appreciation to Host City
Origin: Credentials and Other Internal Matters, Section II
Submitted By: Credentials and Other Internal Matters, Section II

WHEREAS, The 81st National Convention has been held in Anaheim, California, September 7-9, 1999; and
WHEREAS, There has been a spirit of cooperation and friendship along with mutual helpfulness evidenced by the Legionnaires of Anaheim, California, the officers of the Convention Corporation, the Department, and by the officials and the people of Anaheim, California; now, therefore, be it
RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Anaheim, California, September 7, 8, 9, 1999, That we express our deep appreciation to the Department of California, Governor Gray Davis; Mayor Thomas Daley; the city officials of Anaheim, including the Fire Department, Police Department, California Highway Patrol, and other Public Safety Officials, and to the 1999 National Convention Corporation Officers, Bruce Thiesen, President; Joseph O. Early, General Chairman; and D. W. Woollett,
Treasurer. Around this nucleus has been built the moving force that provided for every necessity that made for a successful and enjoyable Convention.

Resolution No. 109: Postage Stamp Commemorating the Purple Heart Medal
Origin: FL
Submitted By: Credentials and Other Internal Matters, Section II
WHEREAS, The United States Postal Service has honored a variety of entities such as cartoon characters, etc., by placing their image on postage stamps; and
WHEREAS, Many of our veterans have been disabled in defense of this nation, both physically and mentally; and
WHEREAS, These veterans have been largely ignored publicly except by other veterans; now, therefore, be it
RESOLVED By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Anaheim, California, September 7, 8, 9, 1999, That The American Legion encourages the United States Postal Service Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee to honor combat wounded American Veterans by issuing a commemorative first class postage stamp displaying the purple heart medal.

Resolution No. 149: Support the National Veterans Hall Of Honors
Origin: NE
Submitted By: Credentials and Other Internal Matters, Section II
As amended
WHEREAS, The American Legion is dedicated to preserving the memories and incidents of our associations in the Great Wars; and
WHEREAS, Mike Dankert, in creating and furthering the National Veterans Hall of Honor, is working toward that same preservation of our memories; and
WHEREAS, The American Legion and the National Veterans Hall of Honor, Inc., a nonprofit Nebraska corporation, are working toward the identical desired achievement; now, therefore, be it
RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Anaheim, California, September 7, 8, 9, 1999, That Mike Dankert of Norfolk, Nebraska, and the National Veterans Hall of Honor shall be endorsed by The American Legion through supportive efforts to preserve our memories in the great wars, without financial obligation by The American Legion.

Resolution No. 158: United States Flag Postage Stamp
Origin: NY
Submitted By: Credentials and Other Internal Matters, Section II
As amended
WHEREAS, The flag of our Nation is a symbol known throughout the world as representing freedom, democracy, and our Nation itself, and identifies the United States to citizens of other countries; and
WHEREAS, It is in the interest of the United States to foster patriotism and pride in our United States Heritage and to meld our diverse cultures; and
WHEREAS, U.S. Government Agencies should support the national objective and national interest; and
WHEREAS, Showing the flag is in the business interests of all our corporations; and
WHEREAS, For many years the U.S. Postal Service printed stamps showing the full U.S. Flag as the main circulating stamp, issued in sheets and on rolls, however, in recent years, the U.S. Postal Service has gradually reduced the depiction of the flag on its stamp from a full view to a minor representation occupying a minor portion of a stylized skyscraper scene available only on rolls; and

WHEREAS, The current depiction of the flag is unrecognizable as the major symbol of our Nation; and

WHEREAS, The U.S. Postal Service now prints stamps portraying numerous cartoon, stage and real and imagined screen characters, magazine covers, games, and other commercial products thus advertising commercial activities that have no lasting patriotic or national value; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Anaheim, California, September 7, 8, 9, 1999, That The American Legion appeal to the United States Postal Service Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee to issue and use as its primary definitive first class postage stamp one which depicts the complete United States Flag, without artistic modification or curtailment.

Resolution No. 157: Audie Murphy Postal Stamp
Origin: NY
Submitted By: Credentials and Other Internal Matters, Section II
Consolidated with No. 67 (TX)

WHEREAS, The American Legion is a patriotic organization of wartime veterans who have dedicated themselves to the service of the community, state, and nation; and

WHEREAS, The United States Postal Service has previously issued postage stamps honoring individuals who made significant contributions to our nation in the areas of music, movies, entertainment, and stamps depicting flora and fauna; and

WHEREAS, Audie L. Murphy was the most decorated United States soldier in World War II, receiving 33 medals for valor including three purple hearts for wounds received in action and who also received our nation's highest award, the Medal of Honor; and

WHEREAS, Audie L. Murphy's example of valor, patriotism, and personal sacrifice is most worthy of recognition by our nation and will serve as an excellent example for today's society and ensure that his contribution to a grateful nation will not be forgotten; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Anaheim, California, September 7, 8, 9, 1999, That The American Legion recommend to the United States Postal Service Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee that a commemorative first class stamp be issued in honor of Audie L. Murphy for his heroic actions while in service to his nation; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the National Organization take appropriate and aggressive action to implement this resolution.

Referred to Standing Commission on Internal Affairs

Resolution no. 93 (VA) 1999 NC: Support Establishment of Freedom Museum, Inc. of Virginia
Resolution No. 96 (VA) 1999 NC: Support Establishment of National D-Day Memorial, Virginia
Resolution No. 125 (NJ) 1999 NC: Recollections of Veterans Program

Referred to the Standing Convention Commission

Resolution No. 37 (MA) 1999 NC: National Convention Badge Format
Resolution No. 119 (OH) 1999 NC: 2005 National Convention Site

Referred to the Standing Emblem Committee

Resolution No. 101 (ID) 1999 NC: Pricing Of Legion Caps For Women
Resolution No. 176 (PR) 1999 NC: Garita Del Diablo Symbol For Department Of Puerto Rico Cap

Rejected

Resolution No. 41 (MX) 1999 NC: Department Of Mexico Name Change
Resolution No. 46 (MX) 1999 NC: Information On The Certification Of Service Record
Resolution No. 178 (PR) 1999 NC: Department Of Puerto Rico Commander’s Cap

Also, I would report to you on significant training that will occur this fall. The National American Legion College will reopen its doors to our future leadership of The American Legion, representing 34 departments, for the first time in over 40 years on November 14, 1999. This is an exciting and historic event as the Legion College will serve as the catalyst for many of the initiatives outlined in the 21st Resolution. In fact, it is the vision of the 21st Century Committee that serves as the guidelines for designating the training module of this course. You have seen on the screens to my front, the names of the 33 candidates selected by the National Selection panel here in Anaheim. This is the first official publication of the names of those who will attend. I extend my congratulations to all the individuals selected to attend this unique training experience. Also, my thanks to the departments who have joined in this new joint partnership as we transfer into the 21st Century.

Finally, it was regularly moved, seconded and carried that the Committee Chairman and Secretary be authorized to sign the Committee report on behalf of the Committee.

Mr. Commander, it was also regularly moved, seconded and carried that the Committee Chairman and Secretary be authorized to make technical corrections to the resolutions reported out of this Committee to ensure proper wording and form without changing the substance or meaning of the resolution(s).

Mr. Commander, as a duly elected and registered delegate from the Department of New York, I move the adoption of this report.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: That was a second I heard?

...The motion was seconded.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: Any discussion? Those in favor of passage of the motion, please indicate in the usual manner. Those opposed nay? Ayes have it. The report of the Credentials and Internal Affairs Section II is adopted.

At this time, we would like to accept from anybody that would like to come to the podium, donations for the National Emergency Fund. It should be noted that the Southern Caucus was credited with donating $5,614 which was delivered by George Derrick, NECman of Florida. From the Department of Kentucky.
NECman WOODS (KY): On behalf of the Department of Kentucky, it's a great honor to present to you for the National Emergency Relief Fund these checks totalling $5,500.

NECman CONLEY (PA): Commander Miller, your visit to us at our post last year in August on your membership drive impressed us to the fact that we took it upon ourselves to collect a dollar from our members. I would like to present to you at this time a check for $2,000 from World War I Memorial Post 109 in Mechanicsburg representing our 1,983 members.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: Again, the Department of Pennsylvania.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER (PA): Commander, from the Department of Pennsylvania, we, too, would like to help you increase the balance of the NEF. This is one of several more donations to come. This is in the amount of $2,060.

NECman PELLEGRINI (MT): Each year the departments of Montana, Idaho, and Nevada have a Fun Days golf tournament. This year it was in Jack Pot, Nevada. It has about 40 Legionnaires and their spouses. During the golfing tournament we collected $565 for the National Emergency Fund.

NECman BINGHAM (AZ): Post 42, Grand Canyon, Arizona, $1,000 for the National Emergency Fund.

NECman ZUKOWSKI (WI): On the behalf of the Department of Wisconsin, I would like to give you a check here for the sum of $1,0550 for the National Emergency Fund.

NECman ALDRICH (VT): The Green Mountain State would like to present you with a check for $9,235. This along with what we have already donated should bring us over the 100 percent mark. We’re awfully proud to be able to do it.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: I should tell everybody that, if my figures are correct, I believe Vermont is the first state to hit that one dollar per member goal that I tried to set early in the year. And they are to be credited for that.

For those of you that haven’t heard the report, in the last year, not counting the money that we collected today, when I took office we had a little over $8,000 in the NEF. During the year, nearly $600,000 was donated by our Legion family. We handed out some grants during the year for those people that had some tragedies happen. At this time we are well over $400,000 in that fund, and it’s because of you that when we get those phone calls from our fellow members, those members in our family that are touched by disasters, it’s because of you we will be able to answer those phone calls.

And for those of you that kind of forgot to make your donations yet, I would like to remind you that the World War II Memorial and the NEF have a booth over in Hall A. You can stop by there and make your donations any time you would like.

I know that Herm has an announcement on some prizes that have already been determined for those that stopped by the NEF booth and signed up. But our total today collected up here for the NEF is $27,224.

CHAIRMAN HARRINGTON (NY): I think the generosity that you have expressed here today has truly been overwhelming, and it’s thanks to the efforts that Commander Butch Miller has breathed into the National Emergency Fund.

The three prize winners of the National Emergency Fund drawing are as follows: Second prize goes to Sandy Stevens of Chester Hill, Ohio, who will receive a Child Welfare Foundation Cross fountain pen. First prize is awarded to Marilyn Hogan of Argyle, Minnesota, who will be given a National Commander Butch Miller wooden clock. The grand prize has been awarded to Ray Waters of Austin, Minnesota, who wins a paid-up-for-life membership or a $200 equivalent if he already is a paid-up-for-life member.
The winners may claim their prizes in the Internal Affairs area of the National Headquarters area.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: Obviously the spirit of charity has overtaken a few departments. We now have the Department of Wisconsin that would like to make another donation to the Citizens Flag Alliance.

NECman ZUKOWSKI (WI): On behalf of the Department of Wisconsin, we have finally loosened the purse strings a little bit. We have another $200 for the Citizens Flag Alliance and for you, Commander, and a hard program that you have worked very hard at.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: Thank you to all of my Midwestern folks up there.

The Chair calls on the National Adjutant for the purposes of making an announcement.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: This is the final day to purchase convention photographs.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: The Chair now recognizes Elmer Fuhrhop of Ohio, Chairman of the National Convention Committee on Children & Youth, for the purposes of making a report.

Report: Convention Committee on Children & Youth
Elmer Fuhrhop, Ohio, Chairman

Distinguished guests and fellow delegates to this Convention, your Convention Committee on Children and Youth met at 9:00 a.m. on Sunday, September 5, 1999, in the Hilton Anaheim, San Simeon Room #5, Concourse Level, Anaheim, California. The meeting was organized by electing delegate Elmer Fuhrhop of Ohio as Chairman, delegate Herbert Petit, Jr. of Louisiana as Vice-Chairman and delegate Robert D. Scott of Oregon as Secretary. There were 52 members of the committee present.

There were three resolutions considered by the committee and referred to the Standing Children and Youth Commission.

Resolution No. 115 (OH) 1999 NC: Protect Children From The Unrestricted Media

Resolution No. 174 (MI) 1999 NC: Immunization Against Anthrax
Resolution No. 175 (MI) 1999 NC: Immunization Against Smallpox

Our partnership with Children's Miracle Network continues to grow and is a natural for the Legion family.

Hospitalized infants and children need unique medication and equipment engineered to work with their small statures. Skilled pediatric professionals armed with evolving treatments and expensive tools work to save more than 14 million children annually from life-threatening injuries, birth defects, cancer and numerous other ailments. To be able to treat kids, children's hospitals require funding. Children’s Miracle Network raises money to benefit hospitalized kids and to increase awareness of its 170 member hospitals. All CMN contributions directly benefit hospitals, helping to purchase up-to-date equipment, train staff, conduct life-saving research, implement outreach programs, and provide healthcare for children whose parents can't afford to pay. Last year, the Legion family raised $250,000 nationally for local children's hospitals. National President Hobbs and National Vice-Commander Goulart appeared on their annual broadcast in Orlando for the official on-air check presentation. Currently, the Legion family is focusing our attentions on Miracle Balloons, the “Miracle Miles for Kids” Walkathon and a project called Josh & Friends. We
are proud of our alliance with CMN, whose efforts have made it possible for millions of children to receive the best possible care regardless of their family’s ability to pay.

The American Legion maintains a good working relationship with the President’s Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities. Their disabled Youth Leadership Forums are designed to educate our next generation of disabled leaders. In 1999, there were twelve states participating – three due to direct Legion involvement. Next year, fifteen more states have pledged to conduct these forums. I urge those Posts within those Departments to encourage and sponsor disabled young people from their respective communities to participate. By doing so, these young people will enhance their natural leadership skills, learn that people with specific disabilities are engaged in careers that they would not have thought possible and learn to appreciate and understand other disabilities.

Our Areas for Concern for the 1999-2000 year deal with quality of life issues affecting America’s children. They are: Children’s Hospitals; Youth Violence in Schools; Teenage Suicide Prevention; Parental Responsibilities and Family Life Education. These are timely topics which impact the lives of all young people. Our Temporary Financial Assistance Program continues its fifty year tradition of service to veterans and their families. I urge each of you to make use of this landmark program to assist needy veteran’s children within your communities.

A motion was made and seconded to allow the Committee Chairman and Secretary to sign the report on behalf of the committee. A voice vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Commander, as a duly elected and registered delegate to this Convention from the Department of Ohio, I move the adoption of the report.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: Was that a second I heard?

...The motion was seconded.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: Any discussion? All in favor indicate in the usual manner. Those opposed nay? Ayes have it. The report of the Children & Youth is adopted.

Presentation: Garland E. Murphy, Jr. Award
Butch L. Miller, Virginia, National Commander

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: I now have the pleasure of presenting the Garland Murphy Award to the department that had the most participation in raising funds for the Child Welfare Foundation during the past program year. I am very proud to announce that the winner of that award is the Department of Florida.

Helping me present the award is Udie Grant, chairman of that committee. On behalf of The American Legion. The award reads, “The Garland E. Murphy Award presented by The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation to the Department of Florida for the program year of 1998-1999. In recognition of their designation as the number one department in total contributions received from their volunteers in support of our annual program designed to meet the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual needs of our nation’s children through productive and meaningful grants.” Signed by Udie Grant, the President of the Child Welfare Foundation, and by William Keys, the foundation’s Executive Secretary.

Accepting the award is Lawrence Strainge, Past Department Commander of the Department of Florida.
PAST DEPARTMENT COMMANDER STRAINGE: On behalf of the Department of Florida, we thank you for this honor.

MR. GRANT: I have an award here for the National Organization of The American Legion. The Child Foundation is growing. In this year, we are having more requests for funds from the foundation than we have ever had. This next October the board of directors is going to be meeting. We have 71 grants totaling over $2,250,000. You can see how the information and the publicity about the foundation is growing. We annually give to organizations who are doing research about children on an annual basis from about $350,000 to $400,000. So you can see that we are going to have to do a lot of screening.

Now, how do we finance this? It’s from contributions from you, from others, from foundations. And I would like to point out that the SAL with 200,000 members this past reporting year gave $181,000. That’s almost a dollar per member. The American Legion Auxiliary, with its 1 million members, contributed $89,000. The American Legion, with its almost 3 million, 2.8 million members, $84,000.

This is your foundation. I think we need to support it in a much more generous way. I think that we at least ought to reach that $100,000 mark each year. So I’m leaving it up to you. It goes for the good of the kids.

Now to make this presentation. "The Gold Award, recognized as a top supporter for the 1998-99 contribution year in service to the critical needs of America’s children, is made possible through your caring and your generosity from the board of directors of The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation and to The American Legion, the National Organization."

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: In keeping with the spirit this afternoon, Udie, we have somebody from the Department of Oklahoma that wishes to make a donation to the foundation.

NECman ROY (OK): Oklahoma would like to kick this thing off and join with our state commander for this year with a check for $2,525.67 from Oklahoma.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: Now the Chair now recognizes Charles Mills, Chairman, the National Convention Committee on Constitutional Amendments, for the purpose of making a report.

Report: Convention Committee on Constitutional Amendments
Charles Mills, New York, Chairman

The Committee on Constitutional Amendments met at 9:00 a.m., Sunday, September 5, 1999 at the Hilton Anaheim Hotel, Avila Room #6, Concourse Level. Committee Liaison Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr. (MD) called the roll and announced that forty-six (46) members of the Constitutional Amendments Committee were present. The following report was agreed upon by the members and submitted to this Convention.

The meeting was opened by Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr. (MD), who acted as temporary chairman. He stated a quorum was present and proceeded to the first order of business which was the election of a permanent chairman and secretary.

Charles G. Mills (NY) was elected Chairman and Cathy J. Gorst (WI) was duly elected Secretary, thereupon they assumed their respective places.

Copies of all the Resolutions, the Report of the Standing Committee, and copies of the National Constitution and By-Laws were made available to all members of the Committee.
A motion was made by Vincent M. Gaughan, and duly seconded that all members of the Standing Committee on Constitution and By-Laws who were present at the meeting be seated with voice but no vote. The motion was carried by the members.

The Chair called upon Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., National Judge Advocate, to give a summary background report on the resolutions to the Committee, which was done.

The Chair then stated, based upon the National Judge Advocate's report to the Committee with regards to the requirements for consideration of resolutions to amend, he would rule out of order those resolutions which did not meet those requirements.

The Chair announced that he was in agreement with the Report of the Standing Committee that Resolution No. 40 (PA), Resolution No. 66 (TX) and Resolution No. 103 (IL) were out of order and that these resolutions would not be considered by the Convention Committee.

The meeting then proceeded to consider Resolution No. 12 (SD). This resolution is in proper form for a constitutional amendment to the Constitution of The American Legion and seeks to change the eligibility for membership in The American Legion as follows: "...or December 7, 1941 to the date of cessation of hostilities as determined by the Government of the United States,...".

The Committee agreed with the Standing Committee in that this resolution is impossible to interpret and is factually incorrect. In addition, this resolution would permit members of the Armed Forces who served during incursions of peace-keeping actions and not wartime engagements as members of The American Legion. This resolution could change the character of The American Legion as an organization of veterans who served during wartime.

This resolution could result in The American Legion losing the deductibility of contributions to it and its Departments and Posts under federal income tax. This resolution would permit a two-class membership in The American Legion, those entitled to veterans benefits due to service during wartime and those not entitled to benefits due to service during peacetime. This change from a wartime veterans organization to one including peacetime servicemen would present a real problem in arguing before Congress for benefits for services during wartime.

Also, the Legion’s federal income tax position could be jeopardized. Money and materials contributed to the organization as a charitable contribution can presently be deducted from one’s individual tax liability. Gifts to Legion Posts can be treated as gift tax deductions on individual tax returns. This was reaffirmed by an IRS ruling and the ruling was almost exclusively based upon a “war veterans” identification. The ruling clarified these tax considerations by requiring at least 90% of the members of the group receiving the contribution/gift must be “war veterans.”

The change as requested in Resolution No. 12 could easily bring the membership in The American Legion below the 90% “war veterans” membership as required by the IRS for this tax privilege. The real solution to the problem would be to amend the tax code so that it would apply to veterans not just “war” veterans.

Finally, as worded, this resolution would wipe out all eligibility since the end of World War II.

William Weis (MO) a motion to reject Resolution No. 12 (SD). The motion was seconded by David King (KY) and unanimously adopted.

Resolution No. 124 (OH) was considered next. This resolution also is in proper form for a constitutional amendment to the Constitution of The American Legion. The resolution
seeks to admit men and women who served in the Armed Forces during the Vietnam Era with a beginning date of November 1, 1955 to May 7, 1975 for membership in The American Legion, retaining all other dates as presently exist for membership in The American Legion. This resolution, because it includes a period defined by International Law as “Peacetime”, would cause the same tax problems as Resolution No. 12.

A motion was made by Harry Rhizor (NM), seconded by John Michalski (IN) to reject Resolution No. 124 (OH). The motion was passed unanimously.

At this time, I’d like to ask the Secretary of the Committee, Cathy Gorst, to continue with the report.

CATHY GORST (WI) continues: Resolution No. 145 (NE) was next considered. This resolution also is in proper form and seeks to change the eligibility for membership in The American Legion as follows: “...at some time since April 6, 1917, or who, being a citizen of the United States at the time of their entry therein, served on active duty in the armed forces of any of the governments associated with the United States since April 6, 1917; provided, however, that such service shall have been terminated by honorable discharge or honorable separation, or is continued honorably; provided, further, that no person shall be entitled to membership who, being in such service since April 6, 1917, refused on conscientious, political or other grounds to subject himself to military discipline or unqualified service.”

This resolution also has a language problem because it doesn’t establish when the various governments were associated with the United States. The resolution has serious ambiguity and no guidance is given as to its intended meaning. For example, a government could associate with the United States in one war, not in the next one and then become associated with the United States in a third war. An example that readily comes to mind is the NATO countries which were not associated with the United States as combatants during the Vietnam war.

A motion was made by Roy L. Kirkham (LA), seconded by Raymond Jacquez (MD) to reject Resolution No. 145 (NE). The motion was passed unanimously.

CHARLES MILLS: The Chair then asked for a motion that the Chairman and Secretary be permitted to sign the Report to the Convention on behalf of the members of the Committee.

Dee Collins (ID) made the motion, and seconded by Doug Winter (CO). The motion carried.

Roy L. Kirkham (LA) made the motion that the Chairman and Secretary be permitted to make technical reference or typographical changes to resolutions without changing the meaning. The motion was seconded by Al Canele (MA) and carried.

William R. Bryant (VA) made a motion to recess, subject to the call of the Chairman. The motion was seconded by David King (KY). The Chairman then thanked the Committee for its cooperation and productive meeting. The meeting was then declared in recess pending a call from the Chairman of the Committee.

Mr. Commander, as a duly elected and registered delegate of the Department of Ohio, I move the adoption of the report.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: I’ll assume that was a second I heard?

...The motion was seconded.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: Any discussion? Hearing no discussion, those in favor of the motion please indicate in the normal manner. Those opposed nay? The adoption of the report is so moved.
I would now like to take a moment of personal privilege. All year long I have had the privilege of traveling this great nation in service to you, the veterans of this country of The American Legion. Almost every stop along the way I have had somebody with me that you all have gotten to know just about as much as I have. He has always been in the back of the room banging away on his computer or taking care of phone calls, whatever it is. It’s long overdue, but I would like to do what I could right now to kind of give him his moment in the sun, Bill Moriarity. Thanks, partner.

MR. MORIARITY: A year ago, Commander Miller told me that we were in for quite a ride. I would like to say thanks to him. It was the ride of a lifetime. Thank you to each and every department that we went to for the hospitality that they showed the Commander and myself. I am the luckiest Legionnaire that is here. I have the finest or one of the finest mentors that anybody could ever ask for. With all of these witnesses here, I would like to just tell him that I’m giving him my 24 hour notice now that I have this gift.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: Don’t you love him?

As we prepare to bring this day to an end, this second day of business, let me once again urge you to visit the booths over in the exhibit hall. There’s plenty of good information and ideas over there. I went over there yesterday and visited the booth that iBelong has over there. They tried to talk me into buying all that computer stuff, you know. I listened to them for about five minutes, and then I informed the young man that the quote that he has on the wall there, to tell everybody else to get into this, that’s my quote. So he was talking to the wrong guy. But it’s truly a very interesting booth. They have some great information there, and it is the future. I firmly believe that. I think that if you go over there and you look at it, you will agree. And there’s lot of other good things over there, too.

I would please like to ask you now to stand, if you would. Join me in saluting the Colors of our nation. One! Two!

The convention will stand in recess until 9:00 tomorrow morning.

...At 3:00 p.m. The Convention recessed to convene the following day, Thursday, September 9, 1999, at 9:00 a.m.
PROCEEDINGS
THIRD DAY
Thursday, September 9, 1999

... At 8:30 a.m., the delegates were entertained by Mr. Peter Ole.
... At 9:00 a.m., the Delegates assembled for the third day of the 81st Annual National Convention and the following proceedings were had:

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: The 81st Convention of The American Legion will come to order. Delegates, stand and join with me in a right-hand salute to the colors.
I ask Father Sweeney, the National Chaplain, to give us the invocation.

Invocation
Rev. Robert J. Sweeney, New York, National Chaplain

Heavenly Father, we give You thanks for this day. May we pattern our lives after Your own. Grant us physical and moral strength to be valiant and to be truly wise. Give us wisdom to know and discern the truth and courage to stand by Your truth. May we never forget veterans in the VA Hospitals and the nursing facilities. May we work the members of our posts to further the cause of The American Legion for God and country. Blessed be God forever. Amen.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: Remain uncovered and join me in the Pledge of Allegiance of our flag.
... The Delegates stood and recited the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.
NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: I now declare this session of our Convention in order.
Repeat after me. I want to hear it loud and clear today. “Morale is high.”
... The Delegates responded with a chorus of “Morale is high.”
NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: Our guest plays a key role in implementing tactical defense strategy. He's a young man, having spent nearly thirty years in the United States Marine Corps. His leadership and professional achievements fill several pages. He's been near the top in everything he has done in the Corps, including the top Marine Aviator in 1982. Today, he is Commanding General of the First Marine Expeditionary Force at Camp Pendleton, California. I welcome Lt. General Bruce Knutson, Jr.

Address: Lt. General Bruce Knutson, Jr.
United States Marine Corps

When the Commandant out of the Marine Corps, General Jones, our new Commandant who’s just been in office for two months, called and asked me to represent him, little did I know that I would be speaking to such a large and august body, representing the fifty states and the huge organization of The American Legion. Little did I know, also, that the list of guest speakers before me would include the likes of Vice President Gore, Senator Hatch, and Secretary West. It’s a little overwhelming. Clearly, I’m honored to be in front of you. But I’m not honored because of the guest speakers who went before me. I’m honored because of you, the delegates 3000 plus, representing the fifty states, five territories, over 3 million
Proceedings of Thursday, September 9, 1999

Legionnaires, doing great things for our country from supporting Boys and Girls State, youth marksmanship, too many scholarships to mention, teenage drug and suicide prevention programs and other civic action programs across all states and territories, doing what’s right about America, day in and day out in our communities and supporting strong national defense. That’s why I’m honored to be before you.

The other speakers, I’m sure, talked to you about the strength of the economy, foreign policy, social programs such as social security, Medicare, their support for National Defense, etc. But I’m going to talk just briefly about what your Marine Corps is doing to protect all that today, across the globe.

My wife, as always, gave me a little advice before I left home this morning to give this talk. She said, “Tell the story.” And I know exactly what she means because it’s her way of telling me to keep it short. The story is about this good friend of mine who’s a fellow Marine General on the East Coast. Now, it’s easy to tell stories about Marines on the other coast. He’s a Marine General, he’s a close friend of mine and he has a daughter who’s a college student. She recently returned to school and wrote a letter to her father. It goes like this:

Dear Dad, You know that red mustang you bought for me to go back to school this year? Well, last week I was in an accident and it was totaled. I wasn’t hurt badly, but all the orthodontic work, which was just completed, has to be redone. The good news is I met this swell guy in the ambulance. He’s been out of prison now for six months, he has two earrings, a goatee, a pony tail and if the tests come back positive, we’ll be getting married. Page two. None of that is true, Dad, but I did get an F in Biology and I wanted you to keep things in perspective.

The point of that story, my wife tells me to tell, is that I need to keep it in perspective. I love talking about the Marine Corps. I love talking about Marines and I can go on and on. You’re here at the Convention, your National Convention, winding up the last day of a very successful convention.

I will make a few remarks about your Marine Corps. We are out there today protecting all that’s right about America. Today, 62 Marines from my command at Camp Pendleton are in Nairobi, Kenya guarding with machine gun nests and check points and bunkered positions the temporary embassy that our State Department is now occupying after the American Embassy was blown up last year. They have been there for over 12 months, guarding that temporary embassy and they are led by a First Lieutenant. In the Persian Gulf, we have 2,200 Marines on three amphibious ships who are just winding up an exercise with the United Arab Emirates, teaching the Arab Emirates that we are their partners in the defense of that vital part of the world. They are out there 12 months a year, every day. We have numerous battalions and squadrons and support units in Okinawa, in mainland Japan, providing for the defense and stability of the Western Pacific. I, myself, returned just eight days ago from Korea. My staff and I went there to do what we call a command post exercise, which is to exercise the war plan for the defense of Korea and that remains a very troubled peninsula with vital National Security interests to America. In the Mediterranean, we have a main expeditionary unit afloat on the shore in Turkey helping the Turkish people deal with that horrendous earthquake that they suffered just last week. We have two F-18 squadrons aboard Navy carriers, four deployed providing defense across the seas.

Now, I could go on and tell you about the status of the Corps, how we form up battalions, how we’re trying to buy new equipment, how we’re experimenting with new tactics and procedures, and how we’re trying to harness this thing called technology. But rather, I’ll talk a few minutes about the real strength of our Corps and that’s the Marine, the
individual Marine. We have a bumper sticker in the Marine Corps with the following: “We equip the man, we don’t man the equipment.”

Now, there’s a lot in that little saying and it really has the underlying philosophy of the Marine Corps. The Marine Corps is made up of individual Marines, that is our core, that is what we build on, that is what we build the team on. It’s an important foundation because from the very beginning we’ve built combat capability, we’ve built defense based on the individual and if you think about it, that springs from what our country is founded on. Our country is a country of individuals where every single individual is equal and just as important as every other individual and that is the same idea as what we build our corps on.

We start at the recruiting process. If you notice in the advertisements on Sunday afternoon as you’re watching the football game, we don’t advertise about benefits and schooling and post service tuition. All we advertise in our recruiting advertisements is “in their face,” giving them a challenge. Are you good enough to be a Marine? Can you hack the challenge? Can you stand up for what’s right? Can you make it morally, physically and mentally? That’s our advertising slogan and I’d ask you to pay attention to the advertising we do. And you know, in today’s youth, it works. For fifty straight months we made our recruiting goals. No other service can come close to that in today’s society. I do ask your help though. It’s a very tough recruiting environment. That’s why all the other services are having difficulty in not making their goals and quite frankly, we’re struggling and just making it. Today’s economy is extremely vibrant, provides much opportunity and a propensity for the youth to sign up in the services, not just the Marine Corps, is at an all time low. I don’t think it’s just the economy. I think also because we’ve had a rather long period of relative peace and a dwindling military. So at the Thanksgiving Day dinners, go ahead and talk about your service experience. In the teenage years and the young people around the Thanksgiving Day dinner should hear the stories and experiences of those of us that have served.

Most families in America today don’t have the grandfather or grandmother who served in World War II, Korea, or even Vietnam. And so the propensity and the exposure of our youth today to the military and the benefits and rewards of service aren’t as well known. Many of the ones whom we do recruit will tell us that they never thought about it. No one ever talked to them about the service. So, we have a big challenge ahead to recruit the excellence we have in our young people and I ask you for that.

We continue that challenge theme in the individuals as we send them though basic training. Our basic training at officer and enlisted level is the toughest of all the services. It’s longer, it’s tougher, we challenge them morally, physically and mentally. We make it hard. Recently, we instituted a thing called the Crucible. General Charles C. Krulak, our former Commandant, put it in as a test of unbelievable proportions, where for 54 straight hours, the young recruits are deprived of much sleep. I think they get 4-6 hours sleep in a 54 hour period, they’re marched and put through a series of tactical problems as they’re pushed farther than they ever thought possible, both physically and mentally. And then they have obstacles and problems to solve that are unsolvable by themselves individually. They have to bond together as a team to get through it. They have to join as fire teams and squad leaders to get across a make-believe stream or a gap and at the end of it they are physically exhausted.

But at the successful end, their drill sergeants hand them the “eagle, globe and anchor” and they are then called Marines. If you could see that early morning ceremony where the
youth of our country are standing there rubbing their globe and anchor with tears running down their eyes, you would see firsthand the making of a Marine.

In the follow-on training, we emphasize the aspect that every individual is part of the team. It goes in everything we do. We call ourselves the MAGTF. That's one of the tens of thousands of acronyms that we use in the service. We've had an explosion of acronyms and this one is the Marine Air Ground Task Force. It is a trinity of a ground combat element, normally the division, infantry division, the ACE, which is the Air Combat Element, and the CSS, the Combat Service Support of a logistics element. And every part of that team, air, ground and logistic support is what makes the United States Marine Corps, based on the individual, such a potent and world renowned fighting force.

I spend a lot of time going around Camp Pendleton and my other bases, visiting Marines—kicking boxes we call it—listening to their problems, their heartaches, their aspirations, and 'shooting the bull.' I look many of them in the eye and say, "You're job is just as important as my job. I'm a three-star general. If I don’t do my job, we fail. If you don’t do your job changing that hydraulic pump or siting in that rifle, we fail. Every individual on this team called the Marine Corps is as important as every other individual." I'm here to tell you the youth of America respond to that.

I'll mention one other thing and that is our commitment to values. We are a value based organization. We are founded on the very values that America is founded on and we work very hard to uphold them. We are teaching them at boot camp and upholding them at boot camp and we never let up. It's not easy, it's not always black and white and a lot of our Marines make mistakes. We try to forgive them as long as they’ve learned and as long as it’s not repeated over and over again. But we stand and hope we uphold the values of America.

I'll tell you one more quick story that sums up kind of the way we feel about it in your United States Marine Corps. Clearly a man of the 20th Century, Winston Churchill was one of the greatest heroes of this century. But it seems that after World War II when he was still Prime Minister he was holding a consul, a meeting of his government. His ministers and he were conducting business at the conference table and wham! bam! the door slams open and his secretary runs in. He says, "Mr. Prime Minister, terrible news from Brazil. Your mother-in-law has died. What are your instructions?" He responded with "Embalm, cremate, bury at sea: take no chances."

We take no chances with your Marines Corps. We take the youth of America. We treat them. We challenge them. We make them hard. We uphold the values. We mold them together. We do our very best to mold together a fighting force that protects our great country. Sometimes we don’t change as quickly as we should but we can’t take the risk. We take no chances because our mission that the American people have given us is way too important. General Krulak, the 31st Commandant who just retired, had a saying: "What the Marine Corps is about is making Marines and winning battles." So, if you think about how we provide for defense, all the other services of our country out there, away from our shores defending America, and you think about how the Marine Corps does it and our foundation on individual Marines as part of the team, then you think about making Marines. That is so important and winning battles becomes a by-product. We can do that every single time, if we make the Marines right.

I congratulate you on a great convention and thank you for inviting me and the Commandant for asking me to represent him. I ask you for your continued support and wish you well in all that you do across our country.
Presentation: The American Legion Fourth Estate Award  
Butch L. Miller, Virginia, National Commander

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: The 1998 Fourth Estate Award recognizes outstanding journalism creating a positive impact on a community or state. It is difficult to tell the story of the work that this year's winner has done. It is not simply a special project that our winning reporter accomplished. It is an on-going example of true investigative reporting. Jerry Mitchell of The Clarion-Ledger of Jackson, Mississippi, accomplished much during 1998. Among the results of his reporting are: a Klan killer brought to justice; a re-examination by authorities of the 1964 deaths of three young civil rights workers; making public the secrets of the now open Mississippi Sovereignty Commission files; and, most importantly, hastening the healing in Mississippi. I present to this Convention the 1998 Fourth Estate Award winner, Mr. Jerry Mitchell. Accepting the award with Jerry is Rick Santos from Maryland, PR Chairman. On the award reads the following:


JERRY MITCHELL: I can't tell you what an honor it is to be here today. My father was a Navy pilot, stationed just down the road here at Miramar for a number of years, in fact, many of his fellow pilots didn't return from Vietnam. I just can't tell you what an honor it is to have this come from you. I really feel like this honor doesn't belong to me. It really belongs to God, I think, Who's really carried the burden of what's gone on rather than me. I feel like He's really done the work and, therefore, He's the one that deserves the glory. I think of those men who have given their lives, like those in my dad's squadron and so many of your friends. The good book says, "Greater love has no man than to lay down his life for his friends." I think that's a spirit that we all need to have, a spirit of surrender to self. And I think The American Legion emulates that. I just hope and pray that for us as a nation, we can emulate that spirit as well, to learn to surrender. Thank you so much for this award. It means so much to me.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: The Chair now recognizes Bill Bishop from Alaska for the purpose of a report.

Report: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations  
William M. Bishop, Alaska, Chairman

At 8:30 a.m., Sunday, September 5, 1999, 47 Delegates and Alternates assigned to the Convention Committee on Foreign Relations met in the California Ballroom, Section B, Ballroom Level of The Anaheim Hilton & Towers, Anaheim, California. Mr. William M. Bishop (AK) was elected Chairman and Mr. Melvin M. 'Doc' Simon (VT) was appointed Secretary. Motions were also adopted authorizing the Chairman and Secretary to sign the report on behalf of the delegates as well as to make administrative and technical changes.

Following this initial meeting, two Ad Hoc Administrative Convention Subcommittees met in separate locations to consider the resolutions that had been assigned to them. The following were appointed Chairmen:

General Foreign Policy: Chairman A.J. Forestiere, Arkansas
Far Eastern Affairs: Chairman John Mullen, North Dakota
At 11:30 a.m., Sunday, September 5, 1999, the Delegates met in the California Ballroom for a final meeting of the Convention Committee on Foreign Relations. Reports of the two Convention Ad Hoc Administrative Subcommittees were read and their recommended actions on resolutions considered. A total of 12 resolutions were assigned to the Convention Committee on Foreign Relations and no resolutions were originated by the Committee.

The following Ad Hoc Subcommittee reports contain resolutions which will, in conjunction with resolutions previously adopted, provide an effective and viable foreign relations program for The American Legion. That program will fully support a strong and dynamic U.S. foreign policy to promote democracy around the world and discharge America’s responsibility as leader of the free world in the continuing struggle to defend and promote liberty.

Ad Hoc Subcommittee on
General Foreign Policy
A.J. Forestiere, Arkansas, Chairman

Recommended Action on Resolutions
Approved

Resolution No. 76: America’s Future
Origin: MD
Submitted By: Foreign Relations Committee

WHEREAS, The major international goals long sought by The American Legion—democracy and deterrence of general war—are closer to realization than ever before; and

WHEREAS, Far-reaching worldwide changes now occurring are altering Americans’ perception of the threats to their security and making it imperative for the United States to adjust its grand strategy in light of new realities and future challenges as we prepare for the new millennium; and

WHEREAS, Ideas of democracy and market economics are gaining increasing acceptance around the world, thereby creating new hopes of peace and prosperity for mankind; and

WHEREAS, Nuclear and regional military threats still confront the Free World and transnational issues such as terrorism and drugs still confront civilization; and

WHEREAS, The collapse of the Soviet-style command economies, demands for democracy in Eastern Europe, ethnic warfare, economic difficulties in Asia, movement toward European unity, and growing international interdependence jointly create a new political and economic situation in the world; and

WHEREAS, As Americans search for a new definition of America’s world role, they must forge a bipartisan consensus providing focus, continuity, and wise use of limited national resources for national security-foreign policy purposes; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Anaheim, California, September 7, 8, 9, 1999, That The American Legion, as a grassroots organization reaching throughout the land, recognizes the unprecedented changes throughout the world and urges the U.S. government to adopt a bipartisan national security-foreign policy of “Democratic Activism” promoting democratic values, maintaining adequate military
strength to deter or defeat aggression, cooperating with allies, encouraging free and fair trade, and assisting developing nations.

Resolution No. 77: Principles of U.S. Foreign Policy

Origin: MD
Submitted By: Foreign Relations Committee

WHEREAS, Members of The American Legion, as veterans of wartime service in the defense of liberty, have a special concern for maintaining peace with freedom and recognize that a strong U.S. foreign policy is vital in that regard; and

WHEREAS, The official concern of The American Legion stems from that part of the Preamble to the Constitution of The American Legion which states: "We associate ourselves together...to make right the master of might; to promote peace and goodwill on earth; to safeguard and transmit to posterity the principles of justice, freedom and democracy..."; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Anaheim, California, September 7, 8, 9, 1999, That The American Legion believes that the objectives of U.S. foreign policy must be to maintain peace with freedom while preserving and promoting democracy; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That U.S. foreign policy should embody the following principles:

1. Recognition of U.S. responsibilities as leader of the Free World and of our heritage and traditions.
2. Dedication to achievement of world peace with freedom, secured by a peace through strength posture.
3. Active promotion of democracy.
4. Support for human rights in other countries when such is consistent with U.S. national interests and national power.
5. Participation in essential collective security alliances, provided our allies contribute their fair share.
6. Use of national resources in critical world regions to achieve U.S. national interests.
7. Negotiation of equitable, verifiable arms control agreements, which improve U.S. national security.
8. Opposition to the spread of nuclear, chemical or biological weapons or long-range ballistic missiles to terrorist, communist or aggressor nations.
9. Determined opposition to international terrorism and drug trafficking.
10. Support for responsible international organizations that are consistent with U.S. sovereignty and serve U.S. national interests.
11. Participation in an increasingly interdependent Free World trading system based on fair and equitable trading practices.
12. Recognition that the world basically operates on a national basis; consequently, U.S. sovereignty must not be abridged unless required by important U.S. national security interests.
13. Recognition that the President must be the chief architect of U.S. foreign policy as envisioned in the U.S. Constitution, while Congress performs important functions of advice, oversight and funding.
14. Support for the appropriate resources to promote and protect U.S. vital national interests world-wide.
Resolution No. 154: Support for U.S. Steel Industry  
Origin: NY  
Submitted By: Foreign Relations Committee  
As amended  
WHEREAS, Many members of The American Legion are steelworkers and are clearly concerned about the crisis in the steel industry; and  
WHEREAS, As Americans from all walks of life, we are deeply concerned about the crisis facing the American steel industry in that world-wide economic problems, particularly in Asia and Russia, are bringing a flood of unfairly traded foreign steel into America which threatens to devastate the industry, its hard-working employees, and their communities; and  
WHEREAS, Over the last 15 years, the American industry, its workers, and their unions have made tremendous sacrifices while working together to create the most efficient and productive steel industry in the world; and  
WHEREAS, While we understand the need to aid foreign nations that are experiencing financial and social crises, we will not do so by sacrificing our steel industries, steel workers, their communities, and their union. Foreign governments and companies that illegally or unfairly dump their steel into our market must be dealt with swiftly and effectively by all necessary means; now, therefore, be it  
RESOLVED, That The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Anaheim, California, September 7, 8, 9, 1999, That The American Legion support any and all actions necessary to immediately stop the flood of unfairly traded steel.

Resolution No. 159: House Select Committee on POW/MIA Affairs  
Origin: NY  
Submitted By: Foreign Relations Committee  
As amended  
WHEREAS, The American Legion is an organization of war veterans who have dedicated themselves to the service of the community, state, and nation; and  
WHEREAS, The American Legion has supported, endorsed, and lobbied for all legislation pertinent to the accounting of our POW/MIA’s; and  
WHEREAS, Congressman Peter King has, in the past, introduced legislation for the purpose of establishing a Select Committee on POW/MIA Affairs; now, therefore, be it  
RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Anaheim, California, September 7, 8, 9, 1999, That The American Legion strongly urges legislation to be introduced in The House of Representatives to create a Select Committee on POW/MIA Affairs.

Referred to the Standing Commission on Foreign Relations

Resolution No. 45 (MX) 1999 NC: War Powers Act  
Resolution No. 170 (MI) 1999 NC: Support for Michigan POW/MIA Legislation  
Rejected

Resolution No. 36 (MA) 1999 NC: International Light for Peace
Resolution No. 152 (NY) 1999 NC: Mayaguez Incident MIA's

Far Eastern Affairs
John Mullen, North Dakota, Chairman

Recommended Action on Resolutions
Approved

Resolution No. 2: Policy on Support to The Republic of Korea
Origin: AK
Submitted by: Foreign Relations Committee

WHEREAS, The security of the Korean Peninsula is vital to the stability of the Asia-Pacific region as well as to the security of the United States, and the Republic of Korea (ROK)-United States security alliance based on the ROK-U.S. Mutual Defense Treaty has made, and continues to make, significant contributions to the deterrence of war on the Korean Peninsula and to the peace and stability of Northeast Asia; and

WHEREAS, The government of the Republic of Korea embraces a forward-looking engagement policy toward North Korea based on three principles: (1) deterrence of any armed provocation, (2) denial of unification by absorption, and (3) promotion and reconciliation and cooperation. In so doing, the ROK government is pursuing the peaceful coexistence of South and North Korea as well as the dismantlement of the Cold War structure on the Korean Peninsula; and

WHEREAS, Despite serious food shortage and economic failures, it is indicative that North Korea continues to build up its military capabilities, particularly long-range ballistic missiles and weapons of mass destruction including nuclear, chemical and biological weapons which weapons of mass destruction pose a grave threat to the peace and stability of Northeast Asia as well as to the security of the United States; and

WHEREAS, North Korea and the United States are currently negotiating to resolve the nuclear issue, such as access to the suspect underground facility in North Korea and the implementation of the KEDO light-water reactor project pursuant to the 1994 U.S.-DPRK (Democratic Peoples Republic of Korea) Agreed Framework, and to resolve the issue of North Korea's development, production, deployment and export of missiles, and in addition, Four Party Talks, involving the two Koreas, China and the United States, are being pursued in an attempt to reduce tensions and build confidence on the Korean Peninsula, and to eventually replace the current Armistice Agreement with a lasting peace arrangement; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Anaheim, California, September 7, 8, 9, 1999, That the government of the United States render prompt and effective assistance to the Republic of Korea to repel any external armed attack against the Republic of Korea in accordance with the ROK-U.S. Mutual Defense Treaty, and to maintain solid ROK-U.S. combined defense readiness, and make efforts toward the long-term development of the ROK-U.S. security alliance; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the government of the United States increase its efforts to reduce the North Korean threat of weapons of mass destruction and reach an agreement with North Korea on the control of its development, production, deployment and export of ballistic missiles and to encourage North Korea to participate in international non-proliferation programs including the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and that the U.S.
government take determined steps toward North Korea’s missile threats with close consultations with the ROK government; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the government of the United States continue its efforts for the further progress of the Four Party Talks with the thought that positive progress in the Four Party Talks is important to the reduction of tensions and establishment of a peace regime on the Korean Peninsula, and maintain the current Armistice Agreement as well as United Nations edicts until the Armistice Agreement is superseded by a durable peace arrangement.

Resolution No. 3: China and Taiwan
Origin: AK
Submitted By: Foreign Relations Committee
As amended

WHEREAS, Under the provisions of the Taiwan Relations Act (Public Law 96-8), the United States has an obligation to provide defense equipment and defense services, in such quantities that the government of the Republic of China may maintain a sufficient self-defense capability; and

WHEREAS, The Chinese Communist regime is a major threat to the nations of the Far East and the United States; and

WHEREAS, Recent revelations indicate that the Chinese Communists have not only purchased dual-use high-tech systems and information from the United States (including long-range missile technology and secure fiber optics telecommunications equipment), but have also conducted extensive espionage activities against U.S. nuclear research labs and possibly other military installations; and

WHEREAS, The Chinese Communists have used such technology and information, whether purchased or obtained by espionage, to build formidable military systems and has exported locally-developed and the U.S.-based military technology and weapon systems to countries, such as Iraq, which oppose the United States; and

WHEREAS, Taiwan is strategically located and is extremely important to the peace, prosperity, and stability of the Pacific Rim; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Anaheim, California, September 7, 8, 9, 1999, That The American Legion supports and encourages extensive Congressional investigations of both espionage activities conducted by the Chinese Communists and the transfer of dual-use technology to the Chinese Communists by U.S. corporations, with full disclosure by the Congress of the United States, to the American public of the nature of such espionage and transfers and their efforts on U.S. national security; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion opposes the export of any U.S. dual-use high technology information and/or equipment to the Chinese Communists and insists that the approval authority for all technology exports be returned to the proper agencies of the U.S. Department of Defense and U.S. Department of State, where it was originally, before such authority was granted to the Department of Commerce; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion supports and encourages the continued sales of sophisticated American weapon systems to the Republic of China, so that it can maintain a sufficient self-defense capability.

Resolution No. 21: Trade with The People’s Republic of China
Origin: CO
WHEREAS, The trade regulations overseen by the U.S. Department of Commerce has been relaxed by the present administration, causing high tech missile and computer technology to be made available to China by U.S. corporations; and
WHEREAS, China has refused to comply with our wishes to curtail their nuclear missile program and have sold their weapons systems to other countries not favored by the United States; and
WHEREAS, China has been implicated in the espionage of the U.S. nuclear weapons program; and
WHEREAS, China has been dumping their foreign products on U.S. soil, taking away many manufacturing jobs which U.S. veterans could have come home to; and
WHEREAS, China has not done a reasonable job in protecting human rights in their country; now, therefore, be it
RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Anaheim, California, September 7, 8, 9, 1999, That The American Legion urge the House of Representatives and U.S. Senate to return the U.S. Department of Commerce restrictions of trade with China to the former standard held before this administration took office; and, be it finally
RESOLVED, That the United States drop China from the normal trade relations trade status they presently enjoy.

Resolution No. 78: Chinese Espionage in the United States
Origin: MD
Submitted By: Foreign Relations Committee
As amended
WHEREAS, The U.S. House Select Committee Report (The Cox Report), a bi-partisan inquiry, has found that "The People's Republic of China has stolen design information on the United States' most advanced thermonuclear weapons;" and
WHEREAS, These thefts of nuclear secrets from our national weapons laboratories enabled the People's Republic of China to design, develop and successfully test modern strategic nuclear weapons sooner than would otherwise have been possible; and
WHEREAS, The theft of U.S. nuclear secrets gives the People's Republic of China design information on thermonuclear weapons on a par with our own; and
WHEREAS, It has also come to light that the People's Republic of China contributed funds to 1996 Presidential campaigns in order to influence U.S. foreign policy; now, therefore, be it
RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Anaheim, California, September 7, 8, 9, 1999, That The American Legion calls for the U.S. government to take appropriate corrective action to prevent further damage caused to our national security by the theft of these technologies by the People's Republic of China; and, be it further
RESOLVED, That the U.S. government should take steps to ensure that this type of activity, by any entity, that has caused damage to our national security will not happen again in the future.
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CHAIRMAN BISHOP: As a duly elected delegate from the Department of Alaska, I move for the adoption of the report of the Convention Committee on Foreign Relations. The motion was seconded.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: Any discussion? Hearing none, those in favor of the motion, signify in the usual manner. Those opposed? Ayes have it. The report on Foreign Relations is adopted.

The Chair recognizes Alan Titus of Indiana, Chairman of the National Convention Committee on National Security for the purposes of a report.

Report: Convention Committee on National Security Committee

Allen L. Titus, Indiana, Chairman

At 9:00 a.m., Sunday, September 5, 1999, 246 delegates and alternates assigned to the Convention Committee on Security met initially in Anaheim Hilton & Towers, California Ballroom, Section A, Ballroom Level. At this meeting, motions were approved authorizing the Committee Chairman and his Secretary to make technical corrections to the resolutions reported out of the Committee to ensure proper wording and form without changing the substance or meaning of the resolutions and to sign the report on behalf of the delegates. Mr. Allen L. Titus (Indiana) was elected Chairman and Mr. George E. Harvey (Michigan) was appointed Secretary.

The six authorized Convention Committees (Aerospace, Defense Civil Preparedness, Law and Order, Merchant Marine, Military Affairs, and Naval Affairs) met in separate meeting rooms. An additional Ad Hoc committee was appointed for General Security resolutions which required special attention. In compliance with NEC Resolution 18, a subcommittee on Conservation of Natural Resources was appointed. The following were elected Chairmen and Secretaries of the Convention Security Committees:

Aerospace
   Robert C. Gabrielson, South Dakota, Chairman
   Allen J. Bero, New York, Secretary

Defense Civil Preparedness
   Paul J. Andrejewski, Minnesota, Chairman
   John Shurrer, Wisconsin, Secretary

Law and Order
   Daniel Darcy, Illinois, Chairman
   George W. Wehrli, Florida, Secretary

Merchant Marine
   Charles Moreland, Florida, Chairman
   Charles P. Powell, Jr., Virginia, Secretary

Military Affairs
   Norman C. Schlemmer, Indiana, Chairman
   Stanley D. Nelson, Alaska, Secretary

Naval Affairs
   Gerard W. Cheffer, Illinois, Chairman
   Daniel Burkhardt, Maryland, Secretary

General Security Ad Hoc
   Franklin R. Sickle, Jr., New Jersey, Chairman
Alexander Maclnnes, New York, Secretary
Conservation of Natural Resources
Donald T. Clarke, South Dakota, Chairman
Richard Jepsen, Kansas, Secretary

On Sunday at 11:30 a.m., September 5, 1999, the delegates again assembled in the same room for a final meeting of the Convention Committee on National Security. Reports of all Convention Committees were read and their recommended actions on resolutions considered. A total of 34 resolutions were assigned to the Convention Committee on Security or prepared by the Committee to meet problems which were held to be of concern to The American Legion and germane to its principles and objectives.

General Security Ad Hoc Committee
Franklin R. Sickle, New Jersey, Chairman

Recommended Action on Resolutions
Approved

Resolution No. 17: Nuclear Security
Origin: CO
Submitted By: National Security Committee
WHEREAS, Our nation's nuclear weapons programs have been damaged by security breaches and espionage due to inadequate security measures at our nuclear laboratories; and
WHEREAS, China has been implicated as playing a major role in obtaining this technology and transferring this technology to enemies of our nation; and
WHEREAS, The condition of the security of these systems needs to be upgraded and maintained to the highest level of national security protection; now, therefore, be it
RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Anaheim, California, September 7, 8, 9, 1999, That The American Legion urges the United States Congress to return the United States nuclear weapons programs and defense systems to the highest level of security and to support these programs with adequate funding.

Resolution No. 42: Status of Forces Agreements and Military Retiree Use of Overseas Military Facilities
Origin: MX
Submitted By: National Security Committee
WHEREAS, A portion of the compensated benefits of military retirees is considered to be the use of military facilities such as Post Exchanges, Commissaries, recreational facilities, and other U.S. military facilities worldwide; and
WHEREAS, As a direct result of the Status of Forces agreements negotiated between the U.S. Government and host countries, many, if not all, of these benefits are usually denied to retired military members and their families/dependents residing or visiting U.S. military facilities located outside the United States; now, therefore, be it
RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Anaheim, California, September 7, 8, 9, 1999, That The American Legion urges that all future Status of Forces Agreements which are negotiated, renegotiated, or revised with host countries
should allow for the unimpeded use of all United States military facilities by retired U.S. military members and their dependents.

Resolution No. 68: Military Funeral Honors for Veterans
Origin: MD
Submitted By: National Security Committee
WHEREAS, Providing military honors at veterans funerals represents the final tribute to special Americans who served their Country in uniform during periods of war and peace, and rendering these final tributes will warrant a rededication of effort and manpower to adequately accomplish; and
WHEREAS, Previous Department of Defense policy (DoD Directive 1300.15) called for the Military Services to render appropriate military honors to eligible veterans and others within the constraints of available resources. The Military Services provided funeral honors in accordance with these regulatory, not statutory, directives which became outdated by a variety of factors to include manpower and budgetary downsizing over the years; and
WHEREAS, Active duty and reserve component (National Guard and Reserves) manpower strengths have been reduced by 35 percent down to 1.4 million in the active component and 886,000 in the reserve components and, coupled with worldwide military deployments, has further strained the availability of manpower resources for veterans funerals; and
WHEREAS, Although the cumulative demand for military burial honors is currently unknown, as are the numbers of accommodated and unaccommodated requests for honors, the military services provided honors for 30,600 funerals in 1997 and nearly 35 percent of these military honors rendered consisted of single representatives. The number of ceremonies rendered is expected to rise over 250,000 per year as veterans’ mortality rates continue to increase; and
WHEREAS, According to recent American Legion Consolidated Post Reports, many American Legion honor guard and firing party details have been formed, and The American Legion, as well as other veterans service organizations, have played a significant role in rendering military-like honors at veterans funerals although the precise degree of participation within the total effort is unknown. Just as the military continues to downsize, the membership of veterans service organizations has also been declining due to the passing of its own veterans. Since 1989, the number of deaths per year has climbed 18 percent as the active force has been reduced by over 33 percent; and
WHEREAS, The Strom Thurmond National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1999 directed the Department of Defense and Veterans Affairs to address the growing national concern over the availability and delivery of military funeral honors for America’s veterans; and
WHEREAS, The DoD responded by acknowledging the national obligation to demonstrate the Nation’s gratitude to veterans who defended our Nation during times of war and peace, and the Military Services would be required upon request of the next of kin to provide funeral honors at veterans burials. DoD is committed to providing increased military funeral honors by January 1, 2000; and
WHEREAS, The actual extent of military participation will depend on local resources and distances from supporting military installations. Minimum military funeral honors would consist of a team which would conduct the flag-folding ceremony and present the flag
to the family. At least two members of the team would be uniformed members of the veterans' parent service. A live or recorded rendering of "Taps" would be presented; and

WHEREAS, The Defense Department has recommended to Congress several changes to enhance reserve component participation to include allowing reservists to receive additional pay and retirement points above the annual 75-point cap and to be authorized to remain on active duty status beyond the 180-day limit. Additionally, toll-free numbers for the military services and other providers would be provided on a regional basis to funeral directors; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Anaheim, California, September 7, 8, 9, 1999, That The American Legion urges the Congress to mandate and appropriately fund the Department of Defense and the Military Services, to include the Reserve Components, to provide military honors upon request at veterans funerals in coordination with veterans service organizations such as The American Legion at local levels; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the Department of Defense and Military Services be encouraged to participate in military funeral honors to a greater degree than any minimum specified by law; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That performance of funeral honors functions by the National Guard be designated as an official mission requirement, and that the Department of Defense and Congress authorize the requisite positions and funding to support veterans funerals in all the states; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That Congressional funding approved for the rendering of military honors should be used explicitly for this purpose and not for other readiness requirements.

Resolution No. 69: Proposals to Ensure A Strong National Defense

Origin: MD
Submitted By: National Security Committee
Consolidated with No. 14 (SD)

WHEREAS, With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, the United States on the eve of the 21st century faces a myriad of worldwide diverse and difficult threats and challenges to include serious regional threats to European instability in the Balkans as well as the continuing challenges to stability posed by North Korea, the People's Republic of China and by the vehemently defiant Iraq and Iran. Additionally, the United States must remain ever vigilant to the challenges of terrorism and the non-traditional threats of increasing nuclear proliferation and the potential usage of chemical and biological weapons by rogue nations; and

WHEREAS, The three major strategy reviews conducted by the Department of Defense, namely, the 1991 Base Force Strategy, 1993 Bottom-up Review and the 1997 Quadrennial Defense Review all shared the common belief that the United States can remain a global power (the "sole universal power" (at substantially lower defense budget levels than during the Cold War; and

WHEREAS, As the world's "sole universal power," the United States would increasingly respond to worldwide regional and ethnic disputes, while reducing its military forces and defense budgets and reprogramming budgetary resources for domestic programs; and
WHEREAS, The Chiefs of the Military Services have acknowledged that defense budgetary reductions and depressed quality of life features have contributed to alarming low recruitment and retention levels and threatening the Nation's military readiness; and

WHEREAS, Despite the administration's claim to have significantly increased the Fiscal Year 2000 defense budget and the six-year budget plan, the Joint Chiefs of Staff disclosed in September 1998 that the military services faced a $160 billion shortfall over the FY 2000-2005 period; and

WHEREAS, Defense economists have also pointed out that without larger defense procurement budgets, the military services would have no choice but to further reduce force structure and manpower levels and to accept higher military risks; and

WHEREAS, Twenty-five years ago Americans opted for an all-volunteer force to provide for our national security. Inherent in that commitment was a willingness to invest the needed resources to bring into existence a competent, professional, and well-equipped military. Now is not the time to dismantle, through the consequences of under-resourcing national defense, what has been achieved in creating the all-volunteer force; and

WHEREAS, In light of these developments, The American Legion convened a meeting of its Policy Coordination and Action Group (PCAG) and heard from Defense Department and Congressional officials as well as Non-Governmental Organizations such as defense industrial and military association representatives on issues pertaining to declining military readiness and quality of life features as well as the impact of increased operating tempos and under-resourced defense budgets on recruiting, retention and readiness; and

WHEREAS, At the PCAG meeting, it was subsequently directed that the staff prepare a White Paper containing their recommendations with respect to these issues which are cited below; and

WHEREAS, This resolution was adopted by the National Executive Committee; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Anaheim, California, September 7, 8, 9, 1999, That The American Legion urges that the Congress implement the following recommendations, as a minimum, with regard to current and future defense budgets:

- Passage of enhanced military quality of life features, beginning with the Fiscal Year 2000 defense budget and continuing in subsequent budgets which call for closing the pay gap with the private sector, an enhanced military retirement system, improved benefits under the Montgomery G.I. Bill and other quality of life features.

- Defense spending as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product needs to be increased from the current 2.9 percent to between 3 and 4 percent annually. At least an additional $160 billion should be authorized and appropriated over the next six years to address those readiness concerns voiced by the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

- The Quadrennial Defense Review, the national military strategy, should be directed to provide the forces and the defense budgets necessary to fight two nearly simultaneously major regional conflicts. Most importantly, the mismatch between resources and ever-increasing military peace enforcement missions needs to be eliminated.
- Finally, force modernization for the Services needs to be realistically funded and not further delayed or the United States is likely to unnecessarily risk American lives; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion calls upon the American people to express their gratitude to the men and women in uniform for their many sacrifices and to urge their elected representatives in Congress to support the requisite funding for a stronger national defense.

Referred to the Standing Commission on National Security

Resolution No. 43 (MX) 1999 NC: Use of Tricare Healthcare Outside the United States by Military Retirees
Resolution No. 117 (OH) 1999 NC: Investigate Theft of Missile Guidance Technology and Campaign Contributions

Received and Recorded

Resolution No. 71 (MD) 1999 NC: The American Legion Statement on Yugoslavia
Resolution No. 156 (NY) 1999 NC: ROTC on College Campuses

Rejected

Resolution No. 20 (CO) 1999 NC: Payment of Income Taxes for the Armed Forces

Aerospace Committee
Robert C. Gabrielson, South Dakota, Chairman

Recommended Action on Resolutions
Approved

Resolution No. 94: Support for Aeronautical Research
Origin: VA
Submitted By: National Security Committee

WHEREAS, In the pioneering days of aviation, this nation recognized the important values for aeronautics research. Therefore, Congress established the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics (NACA the predecessor to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration NASA), with follow on investment in national aeronautics research laboratories and wind tunnels, which amounts to billions of dollars since 1915. The result: every aircraft, worldwide, uses NASA technology; and

WHEREAS, The aeronautic advances we currently enjoy have provided this nation with leading technology, world leadership and air superiority in the civil and military arena, some of which has taken 10 to 20 years of extensive research. Now the Nation’s aeronautics research programs are in serious decline and NASA aeronautics research appropriations have declined over 37% since FY 1994. The FY 2000 budget further drops funding to a mere $640 million out of the agency’s $13.6 billion, terminates high-speed research, and terminates advanced subsonic research; and
WHEREAS, NASA's top priority, the International Space Station, threatens to consume even larger portions of the agency's budget. As a consequence NASA will not achieve the 10 national aviation-related outcome goals announced in 1997 under the "Three Pillars for Success," (Pillar One-Global Civil Aviation, Pillar Two-Revolutionary Technology Leaps, Pillar Three-Access to Space) which was the response to the 1996 Presidential Report on Aeronautics and Space and pronounced all three pillars as critical to this Nation's continued leadership; and

WHEREAS, In civil air, less than 10 years ago Boeing and McDonnell Douglas had more than 70% of the world market. Europe's AirBus now has more than 50% and is aiming for 60-70%. This Nation needs to awaken to the fact that competitive nations have recognized the importance of aeronautics for economic and technology reasons and have built new wind tunnels and expanded research, and Boeing and Lockheed Martin are doing a significant portion of their wind tunnel testing abroad because the tunnels are newer and accessible. Also of significant concern and according to Company officials, plans call for the Joint Strike Fighter aircraft to be tested abroad. This trend presents an industrial and military security threat. Furthermore, overseas testing provides a competitive edge and availability of our aero technology, testing techniques, research, aerodynamic development, test procedure, data acquisition and analysis to overseas competitors in the military and civil aeronautic arena; and

WHEREAS, Critics who view aeronautics research as "corporate welfare" do not recognize the long-lead-time research and technology advances vs. market realities or the national stake (economy, jobs, trade balance, prestige) in this technology. NASA's aeronautics laboratories have the research facilities, including wind tunnels and technical expertise to conduct the cutting-edge scientific inquiry needed to advance the state-of-the-art military and civil aircraft. Fundamental research in aeronautics is not being supported anywhere else in this Nation; and

WHEREAS, Civil air traffic is expected to triple over the next decade. Also of concern is the aging vintage of our military aircraft. New concepts, designs, and technologies have to evolve if costs are to be contained and efficiency and safety increased and military air superiority is to be maintained. These objectives must be based on solid research available to all manufactures and supported by those who benefit the flying public. The responsibility appropriately belongs to the Federal Government, to NASA; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Anaheim, California, September 7, 8, 9, 1999, That The American Legion recognizes that aeronautical research programs are critical to our national security and the continued dominance of American aeronautics. Therefore, the Congress is strongly urged to restore full funding of the NASA budget and mandate an amount equal to ten percent of the NASA budget for aeronautical research programs; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That Congress direct NASA to achieve the 10 national aeronautics related outcome goals announced in 1997 under "Three Pillars for Success." Further, that Congress mandate that all military aircraft research, engineering, development and testing be performed within the boundaries of this Nation and also takes the initiative to upgrade the research facilities of this Nation and encourage civil aero-testing within these facilities; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That with the decline of the United States global commercial aircraft market of 90% to below 50%, as well as the aging of our military aircraft and the increased investment by other countries in aeronautics, that the NASA aeronautics budget should be
fully restored to 1990 funding levels to meet the challenges of the 21st Century in military and civil aeronautics; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion shall employ its efforts to make this Nation and the Congress rectify the serious decline in aeronautics research which is critical to this Nation's continued world leadership and military capabilities.

Received and Recorded

Resolution No. 72 (MD) 1999 NC: Support for the National Space Program

Conservation of Natural Resources
Donald T. Clarke, South Dakota, Chairman

No new resolutions were received. The Committee conducted a review of previously adopted resolutions and reaffirmed their relevance.

Defense Civil Preparedness Committee
Paul J. Andrejewski, Minnesota, Chairman

Recommended Action on Resolutions
Received and Recorded

Resolution No. 32 (MA) 1999 NC: American Legion Support for Blood Banks

Law and Order Committee
Daniel Darcy, Illinois, Chairman

No new resolutions were received. The Committee conducted a review of previously adopted resolutions and reaffirmed their relevance.

Merchant Marine Committee
Charles F. Moreland, Florida, Chairman

Recommended Action on Resolutions
Approved

Resolution No. 107: Support for the Jones Maritime Act and Related Cabotage Laws
Origin: FL
Submitted By: National Security Committee

WHEREAS, The American Legion has always stressed that maintaining a viable U.S.-Flag Merchant Marine and its supporting infrastructure is essential to the economic, national, and environmental security of this nation; and

WHEREAS, The maritime policy of the United States, as articulated in the 1936 Merchant Marine Act, states that "it is necessary for the national defense and development of its foreign and domestic commerce that the United States shall have a Merchant Marine:
- Sufficient to carry its domestic water-borne commerce and a substantial portion of the water export and import foreign commerce;
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- Capable of serving as a Naval and Military Auxiliary in time of war or national emergency;
- Owned and operated under the U.S. Flag by citizens of the United States
- Composed of the best equipped, fastest, and most suitable types of vessels, constructed in the United States and manned with trained and efficient citizen personnel; and
- Supplemented by efficient facilities for ship building and ship repair”; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion is concerned about the continued decline of the U.S.-Flag Merchant Marine and the shortage of trained American Mariners; and

WHEREAS, At the beginning of 1998, the privately owned ocean going U.S.-Flag fleet consisted of only 259 active ships. This number included 119 ships in domestic trade and 36 other engaged exclusively in U.S. government work. Thus, only 104 U.S.-Flag ships are operating in international trade in support of the nation’s economic and national security interests; and

WHEREAS, The United States is the world’s largest trading nation, but only three percent of United States imports and exports are carried in U.S.-Flag ships which is economically unwise and militarily imprudent; and

WHEREAS, The Jones Act which is critical to United States National Security and to America’s economic well being should be reaffirmed as should the continuation of the annual appropriations needed to fund the Maritime Security Act of 1996; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Anaheim, California, September 7, 8, 9, 1999, That The American Legion support the Jones Act and related Maritime cabotage laws critical to America’s maritime infrastructure and therefore to U.S. National Defense; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion would oppose legislation that has been introduced to alter those laws in ways that, according to the Joint Chiefs of Staff and other defense leaders, and to many members of Congress, would be harmful both to the U.S. Defense infrastructure and to America’s economic well being; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion support the Charter and Build program, now being considered by the Congress, that would provide commercially-financed and commercially-operated ships on long-term charter for the afloat logistic support of Naval forces; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion support proposals that would move truck traffic from coastal highway and train corridors to offshore ships as a way to reduce both traffic congestion and vehicle emissions, improve highway safety, and strengthen the U.S.-flagged Merchant Marine by increasing the number of ships in the contiguous coastal trades; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion support whatever additional budgetary and legislative measures are needed to maintain a robust U.S.-flagged Merchant Marine and its supporting infrastructure.

Military Affairs Committee
Norman C. Schlemmer, Indiana, Chairman

Recommended Action on Resolutions
Approved
Resolution No. 60: Using Military Personnel for Experimentation Purposes
Origin: ND
Submitted By: National Security Committee
WHEREAS, Those who serve in our Nation’s Armed Forces make numerous personal sacrifices to maintain our national security; and
WHEREAS, Members of the Armed Forces should be accorded our special respect and gratitude; and
WHEREAS, Although they sacrifice and relinquish many personal liberties, they should not have to surrender their own privacy and their right to personal dignity; and
WHEREAS, It is unethical to use service members for human experimentation without their knowledge and consent; and
WHEREAS, Our Government has in the past used military members as human guinea pigs to test the effects of harmful and injurious substances on the body; and
WHEREAS, The Food and Drug Administration plans to make final a temporary ruling allowing administration of experimental drugs to military members without their knowledge and informed consent; now, therefore, be it
RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Anaheim, California, September 7, 8, 9, 1999, That The American Legion oppose any rule or provision that would authorize the utilization of service members for human experimentation without their knowledge and informed consent.

Resolution No. 70: The Armed Forces Retirement Homes
Origin: MD
Submitted By: National Security Committee
Consolidated with Resolution No. 127 (UT)
WHEREAS, The United States Soldiers’ and Airmen’s Home (USSAH) and the United States Naval Home (USNH), jointly called the Armed Forces Retirement Home (AFRH), are continuing care facilities which were created more than 150 years ago to offer retirement homes for distinguished veterans who had served as soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines in our Nation’s conflicts; and
WHEREAS, The AFRH system, which is available to retiree veterans from all the Armed Services whose active duty was at least 50 percent enlisted or warrant officer, has been supported by a trust fund resourced by 50 cents a month withheld from active duty enlisted and warrant officer paychecks as well as from fines and forfeitures from disciplinary actions, resident fees and interest income; and
WHEREAS, The extensive downsizing of the Armed Forces has resulted in a 39 percent decrease in revenue and, coupled with rising nursing home care costs, the Homes have been operating at a $8-10 million annual deficit which would reportedly require both Homes to close their doors by the year 2004; and
WHEREAS, As the Armed Forces Retirement Homes have never sought nor received Congressionally-approved funding, the AFRH management has initiated numerous actions to reduce operating costs and increase revenues to include reducing the number of AFRH residents by more than 800 to a total of 1,600 residents, cutting staff by 24 percent and closing two dormitories. Additionally, dormitory resident fees are being increased to 40 percent of received federal annuities; and
WHEREAS, The Congress has authorized the Department of Defense to raise service members' assessments from 50 cents to $1.00 per month which has yet to be exercised; and such an increase could raise revenues by about $7.5 million annually; and

WHEREAS, Although the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1999 directs the sale of an excess 49 acre parcel of land from the USSAH to the Washington Archdiocese without competitive bids, the AFRH Board has subsequently proposed a long-term lease arrangement of this land to the Archdiocese; and

WHEREAS, Even if these potential sources of income reach fruition, they will not likely provide the permanent, long-term funding which is vital to assure the solvency and viability of the U.S. Soldiers' and Airmen's Home and the U.S. Naval Home; and

WHEREAS, Maintaining both Homes also represents retaining the promise to current active duty service members and veterans that "our Nation and our military will look after their own" after their military careers have been completed; and

WHEREAS, This resolution was adopted by the National Executive Committee; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Anaheim, California, September 7, 8, 9, 1999, That the American Legion urges the Congress to support and fund those measures, to include annual Congressional appropriations, which will provide for the long-term solvency and viability of the United States Soldiers' and Airmen's Home and the United States Naval Home.

Resolution No. 75: American Battle Monuments Commission Funding
Origin: MD
Submitted By: National Security Committee
Consolidated with Resolution No. 128 (UT)

WHEREAS, The American Legion is an organization of war veterans who have dedicated themselves to the service of the community, State and Nation; and

WHEREAS, The American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC), was established by law in 1923, as an independent agency of the Executive Branch of the United States Government; and

WHEREAS, The American Battle Monuments Commission was charged to erect suitable memorial shrines, for designing, constructing, operating and maintaining permanent United States Military Cemeteries and Memorials in foreign countries; and

WHEREAS, These United States Military Cemeteries have been established throughout the world; and,

WHEREAS, These cemeteries are hallowed grounds for America's war dead; and

WHEREAS, Funding reductions for the maintenance of the United States Military Cemeteries in foreign countries has created reductions in human resources, equipment and supplies; and

WHEREAS, United States Military Cemeteries exist in foreign countries today, which are in need of adequate funding for repair, maintenance, additional manpower and other functions necessary to preserve the integrity of all World War I and World War II cemeteries; and

WHEREAS, Visitation numbers are increasing annually at United States Military Cemeteries overseas; and

WHEREAS, This resolution had been approved by the National Executive Committee at the Spring 1998 meetings; now, therefore, be it
RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Anaheim, California, September 7, 8, 9, 1999, That The American Legion urge the United States Congress to appropriate adequate funding and human resources to the American Battle Monuments Commission in order to properly maintain and preserve the final resting place of America's war dead located on foreign soil.

Resolution No. 92: Reserve and National Guard Force Levels
Origin: IA
Submitted By: National Security Committee

WHEREAS, The Founders of The American Legion in convention in 1919 felt that the loss of many of their comrades was due to unpreparedness of the Nation and little training; and

WHEREAS, Although the American public demanded demobilization, The American Legion wanted a small regular military establishment and the creation of a citizens army composed of organized Reserves and National Guard units; and

WHEREAS, The size of the United Army, even after the Reserves were called to duty in 1940, was less than 500,000 men, and many units were forced to train with wooden sticks and paper tanks because of the lack of equipment caused by our Nation's leadership disarming our military in the 1920s and early 1930s; and

WHEREAS, If America had had a strong ready Reserve and National Guard with the latest military equipment at the beginning of World War II, early losses would have been mitigated and tens of thousands of men and women would not have been killed, wounded or disabled; and

WHEREAS, As of the Persian Gulf War, our reserve forces in 1990 totaled 1,898,000, however, by 1996 the total was 1,605,000, a loss of 293,000; Army Guard units went from 444,000 to 373,000, a loss of 71,000; Air Guard from 118,000 to 109,000, a loss of 9,000; Air Reserve from 286,000 to 261,000, a loss of 25,000; and the Army Reserve from 1,050,000 to 862,000, a loss of 188,000; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Anaheim, California, September 7, 8, 9, 1999, That The American Legion urge Congress to build up and maintain the readiness of the Reserves and National Guard units at the levels existing at the beginning of the Persian Gulf War, and to modernize them with state-of-the-art equipment to include aircraft, artillery, missiles, tanks, and ships.

Resolution No. 137: Military Preparedness
Origin: UT
Submitted By: National Security Committee

WHEREAS, The disarmament and downsizing of America's armed forces of recent years is not only alarming, it has created a "hollow defense" for America's military to fly planes that are no longer properly maintained, ground forces without the latest technology with updated equipment and a Navy that has ill-equipped ships when needed for deployment at a moment's notice anywhere in the world; and

WHEREAS, Our Armed Forces have been deprived of first-line equipment, training and education incentives resulting in the mass exodus of skilled individuals from the military to better paying civilian occupations; and
WHEREAS, the cannibalization of aircraft, vehicles and other military hardware for spare parts is continuing at alarming rates leaving mission-capable equipment far below required numbers and readiness standards for military engagement when needed; and

WHEREAS, it should be of major concern to all Americans that over 25,000 military personnel are eligible for food stamps; that pay for military duty is an embarrassing 14 percent or more below the civilian sector; that military retirement packages that used to be a lucrative incentive to encourage reenlistment have lost a large percentage of their lifetime value in recent years; that military medical programs for personnel and those who have families have deteriorated to an all-time low. The Air Force is currently retaining about 28 percent or less of its pilots after investing countless sums of money only to lose them to the civilian workforce; in addition, the overall strength of our armed forces have been cut by over 35 percent and, as a result, our military level of readiness has become questionable at best; and

WHEREAS, because of America’s success in the Cold War, it is a known fact that our defense needs have been reduced but such reduction does not justify cutting recommended defense spending far beyond the minimum to keep Americans safe. Military leaders have warned that America’s military advantage will be nullified if we fail to have Defense budgets that are not completely committed to defense readiness rather than allowing some of the needed funds going to promote other low priority so-called “pork barrel projects;” now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, by The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Anaheim, California, September 7, 8, 9, 1999, that The American Legion go on record as condemning the severe erosion of our military preparedness and urging the Congress to increase defense spending; and, be it further

RESOLVED, that The American Legion continue its intensive efforts to convince the Administration and Congress that under-funding of our front-line military preparedness cannot be tolerated and needs to be resolved now; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, that a concerted grass roots effort be made by The American Legion to educate The American Legion Family and the American people as to the grave seriousness of the present decline of our military preparedness to our National Security.

Resolution No. 185: Contingency Planning For Military Conscription
Origin: National Security Committee
Submitted By: National Security Committee

WHEREAS, despite the end of the Cold War, the United States has deployed its military forces on the order of 300-400 percent more over the past decade than previously; and

WHEREAS, military force structures, enstrengths and Defense budgets have been reduced by 35 percent since the late 1980’s yet the current National Military Strategy calls for military capabilities to fight two major regional conflicts nearly simultaneously while also conducting multiple worldwide enforcement peace operations in such environments as Haiti, the Sinai, Somalia, Bosnia and Kosovo and maintaining forces in the Persian Gulf, Europe and the Far East; and

WHEREAS, until recently, recruiting for the all-volunteer force has enjoyed unprecedented success as was demonstrated in the mobilization for and conduct of the Persian Gulf War; and
WHEREAS, The Army, Navy and even the Air Force have recently been missing recruiting goals, and the Army is considering reducing educational requirements and category levels in order to increase their accessions; and

WHEREAS, The decline in military recruiting is attributable to a number of factors which may include the robust economy, non-competitive military salaries, the declining manpower pool, the increased propensity for our youth not to enlist in the Armed Forces, and other factors; and

WHEREAS, From its very onset, The American Legion has given longstanding support to the principle of universal military training and for the maintenance of a Selective Service System registration system which serves as an unqualified and cost-effective insurance policy during these unstable times; and

WHEREAS, A fair and equitable Selective Service System with stringent controls over deferments places the concept of service to the Nation in its proper perspective with the direct involvement of all Americans to provide for the "common defense;" and

WHEREAS, Any implementation of a legislated draft system as a source of military manpower would require at least six months before the first conscripted recruit would emerge from the training pipeline; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Anaheim, California, September 7, 8, 9, 1999, That The American Legion urges the Congress and the Selective Service System to develop contingency plans for implementing a fair and equitable conscription system as a source of military manpower in the event the Military Services are unable to adequately recruit volunteers for the Armed Forces or in the event of mobilization emergencies.

Resolution No. 186: Support Expansion of Arlington National Cemetery
Origin: National Security Committee
Submitted By: National Security Committee

WHEREAS, Arlington National Cemetery is our Nation's most sacred shrine representing an embodiment of the sacrifices that were made to uphold our country's ideals and freedoms; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs estimates that World War II and Korean War veterans and military retirees are dying at a faster and steeply inclining rates which will range from approximately 572,000 in the year 2000 to over 620,000 in the year 2008 and decline down to about 578,000 in 2015; and

WHEREAS, Arlington National Cemetery is filling up according to the staff at the Cemetery, Arlington has about 260,000 people buried in 195,000 graves and officials project the remaining 60,000 grave sites will be occupied by 2025. The numbers of daily interments have ranged from 15 to 23 funerals a day and may reach 30 funerals per day by 2008. Waiting times for the conduct of full military honors have doubled or tripled from over what they were two years ago; and

WHEREAS, In order to accommodate these predicted, and unprecedented, high mortality rates of America's distinguished military veterans in the years ahead, Arlington National Cemetery will need to expand by the transfer of contiguous parcels of land from the National Park Service; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Anaheim, California, September 7, 8, 9, 1999, That The American Legion urges the Congress to adopt
legislation authorizing the expansion of Arlington National Cemetery and granting the transfer of contiguous land parcels for additional burial sites; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges the Congress to protect the solemnity and integrity of Arlington National Cemetery by continuing to recognize Arlington as the sacred resting place for America's distinguished military veterans.

Resolution No. 187: Anthrax Vaccination Implementation Program
Origin: National Security Committee
Submitted By: National Security Committee

WHEREAS, There are more than ten countries that have or are suspected of developing biological warfare agents; and

WHEREAS, The Food and Drug Administration has approved the anthrax vaccination in 1970 for use as a protectant from biological warfare exposure; and

WHEREAS, Anthrax is considered to be the primary biological warfare threat to U.S. Forces because it is lethal, easily produced and weaponized; and

WHEREAS, There are no other means of protection available, at this time, other than the anthrax vaccination from contacting the disease anthrax if encountered; and

WHEREAS, Over 300,000 Service members have received at least one anthrax vaccination shot and the Department of Defense's (DoD) Anthrax Vaccination Implementation Program (AVIP) seeks to vaccinate all 2.4 million active duty and reservists; and

WHEREAS, A human efficacy study has not been conducted on the licensed anthrax vaccine and long term health effects have not been reviewed; and

WHEREAS, The sole manufacturer, BioPort Corporation, has had numerous problems with financial insecurity, building violations, and lack of investigational testing of anthrax product; and

WHEREAS, Nearly 250 adverse reaction reports have been filed, and some service members are refusing to take the vaccine thus ending military careers and an unknown number have seriously questioned the implementation of this program; and

WHEREAS, The Center for Disease Control and Prevention and General Accounting Office have noted the passive surveillance reporting that the Department of Defense (DoD) has employed is flawed as a tracking device for reaction rates; and

WHEREAS, The DoD has failed to adequately follow-up on vaccine reaction rates and track pertinent data for entry into individual medical records; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Anaheim, California September 7, 8, 9, 1999, That The American Legion continue to closely monitor the progress of the Anthrax Vaccination Implementation Program (AVIP), urge comprehensive congressional oversight and conduct outreach to service members, veterans and their families; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges the Department of Defense to re-evaluate the Anthrax Vaccination Program as well as maintain individual medical records with the greatest of accuracy; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges both the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs to provide medical assistance and health care to those participants who experience vaccination reactions.

Referred to the Standing Commission on National Security
Resolution No. 114 (OH) 1999 NC: Disposal of Ordnance
Resolution No. 163 (WA) 1999 NC: The Medal of Honor for Vernon Hill

**Received and Recorded**

Resolution No. 44 (MX) 1999 NC: Concurrent Receipt of Military Retired Pay And VA Disability Compensation
Resolution No. 73 (MD) 1999 NC: Quality of Life Features
Resolution No. 74 (MD) 1999 NC: Department of Defense Health Care Reform for Military Beneficiaries
Resolution No. 140 (MN) 1999 NC: Quality of Life Benefits for the Reserve Components
Resolution No. 144 (MN) 1999 NC: Healthcare for Military Retirees

**Rejected**

Resolution No. 146 (NE) 1999 NC: Concurrent Receipt of Military Retirement Pay and Disability Compensation

**Naval Affairs Committee**

**Gerard W. Cheffer, Illinois, Chairman**

**Recommended Action on Resolutions**

**Rejected**

Resolution No. 177 (PR) 1999 NC: Cease Bombardment of Vieques Island

Mr. Commander, National Officers, and Fellow Delegates. I am particularly pleased to announce the winners of the National Blood Donor Awards for this past year.

Category I—Department(s) with 100,000 or more members:
Post Participation and Individual Participation—Department of Florida

Category II—Department(s) with 70,000 to 99,999 members:
Post and Individual Participation—Department of Massachusetts

Category III—Department(s) with 40,000 to 69,999 members:
Post and Individual Participation—Department of Nebraska

Category IV—Department(s) with 25,000 to 39,999 members:
Post and Individual Participation—Department of Tennessee

Category V—Department(s) with 10,000 to 24,999 members:
Post and Individual Participation—Department of Rhode Island
Category VI—Department(s) with less than 10,000 members:
Post and Individual Participation—Department of Hawaii

The results of the competition for the Paul H. Griffith ROTC Trophy are as follows:

Over fifty Departments participated in the ROTC Awards Program this year. A total of over 7,500 medals were awarded to deserving cadets in Senior ROTC and Junior ROTC Units. The winning Departments for 1998-1999 are the Departments of Alaska, Arkansas, Florida, Hawaii, Illinois, Maine, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Missouri, New York, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Vermont and Virginia which speaks well for these Departments and The American Legion in their recognition of the youth of America enrolled in ROTC programs.

CHAIRMAN TITUS: Mr. Commander, as a delegate to this Convention from the Department of Indiana, I move the adoption of this complete report.

... The motion was seconded.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: Any discussion? Hearing none, those in favor of the motion indicate in the usual manner? Opposed nays? Ayes have it. The report of the National Security is adopted.

Peter Ole, my friend, please join me up here. I have the privilege this morning of giving Peter something he has never seen before. I understand that he was quite interested in seeing it, since I understand that you have never seen yourself on video tape playing the organ.

PETER OLE: That's correct.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: Would you like to say a few words to these folks?

PETER OLE: It's really strange being up here because most of the time, I'm sitting down there watching everybody who's coming up here. Of course, it has been my extreme privilege for 25 years to be the National Organist. I owe an extreme debt of gratitude to my boss, Robert W. Spanogle and all of the National staff, who have done everything they possibly could to make me feel like a king and welcome here. Twenty-five years is a long time and it was just like I started yesterday. I look forward to coming back a lot more and I thank everybody for the wonderful response that you've had to my music. Commander, I appreciate this, too.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: About a year ago, I sat out there in the audience and watched a gentleman [National Commander Anthony G. Jordan] in this same spot, figuratively, trying to make it through the next couple of hours. I have to admit, right now, standing here at this moment, I am suddenly hit with an uncontrollable desire to get it over as quickly as I can. But I can't do that without first expressing my thanks. Behind me on the stage is probably the greatest group of supporters that anybody could ever have.

You already know about Billy, the only guy who has really grown this year. He started the year out as a rhinoceros and grew into being one heck of a good National Commander's aide. Anna Gear, Past National President from Virginia, was such a great help in the beginning and since that time. My good friend, Kathy, has allowed me to see The American Legion through different eyes. My mom and dad have allowed me to sneak into Wabasha and kind of hide for a couple of days now and then and understood why I didn't make those phone calls like I used to so often.

Then there is my son, a Marine Corps captain, who went to the Mediterranean for seven months and during that time moved his family—my four grandkids, April, Jasmine, Jessica,
Shawn—to Pensacola, Florida. He saw fit to e-mail me everywhere he went. As a matter of fact, when he was on the USS Nassau in the middle of the Kosovo situation, he had the audacity to e-mail me and ask how I was doing. During our March meetings, I happened to be talking to General Monday and remarked, “Up until recently, I had been e-mailing with my son almost every day. Now, all of a sudden, he’s fallen off the ‘net for the last few days.” The General asked: “Well, what MEU? [Military Expeditionary Unit] I said, “He’s with MEU 24.” He pulled me aside and said, “Well, let me be the first to tell you that they went inland.”

Now, maybe some of you know what that feels like to know that your son is in harm’s way at that moment, but I suddenly understood what my mom and dad felt a couple of times during my military career. But that’s all over now. He’s home and fine and I’m going to see him shortly.

Over the past few months, one of the most asked questions thrown at me was: “What are you going to do after the convention?” I have completely avoided that question because I didn’t have time to answer it. I was too busy doing what I thought I should be doing and that was being out there with you. I don’t know what I’m going to do. But sometime between today and January 1, 2000, I’m going to make up my mind. I’ve given myself that time because I didn’t think it was right to take the time before today away from you.

The other question is: “Has it been fun?” Let’s just say it’s been a tremendous experience. But I don’t know if it has really been fun. Let me tell you why. Getting up at 5:00 or 6:00 in the morning after being up until 10:30 or 11:00 the night before traveling is not fun. Traveling halfway across the country where your body tells you it’s 9:00 or 10:00 at night and you’re trying to be effervescent and happy and smiling when it’s really only 6:00 and you’re in the middle of a dinner, that is not fun. Traveling around this country, seeing Legion Posts busting their butts doing what Legion people and our family do and not getting one iota of attention or press or any kind of recognition, that is not fun. Traveling around this country, listening to people throw out ideas and then have them immediately squashed by discontent, jealousy, that is not fun. Seeing people anxious to do things, jump on the Internet, do this, do that, and then seeing other members of that same Post who might be in a little more influential position completely dismiss those ideas because it’s too visionary, or not their ideas, that is not fun. Seeing individuals who have been involved in The American Legion for years, who have done everything, who have been there, done that, who are knowledgeable and experienced, but who will not share that with new people in the post, or maybe not sharing with those other people that are interested in doing other things, that is not fun. It’s been very hard during the year to see those situations and not react.

I was very fortunate, probably one of the most fortunate individuals amongst many of you, because when I was a young boy, I was exposed to The American Legion in a way that no other person has ever had the luxury, if you want to call it that, of being exposed to the Legion. My father died at a very young age. When I was seven back in Wabasha, Minnesota, I could remember my grandfather, who was the Finance Officer of American Legion Post 50 in Wabasha, Minnesota. I used to see him walk down the street once in a while with that silly looking hat on his head. I’d say to my mom, “Where’s grandpa going?” “Oh, he’s going to the Legion meeting.” All I knew was that the Legion was a place that when I went there I got to have a bag of pretzels or peanuts and a soda. So, it was really a neat place for me.

As I grew up I became a little bit more aware of what they did. I also had the luxury of knowing another gentleman, Nick Kenitz. For lack of any other term, I’ll just call Nick a
kind of the leader in Post 50. Then there was an awful lot of activity in the Legion Post and it wasn’t until many years later that I understood exactly what was going on but my playmates up the street, the Foley boys, knew, too, what was going on. But we didn’t really care because we were trying to perfect a slider and a curve ball and we were trying to terrorize the Mississippi River as much as you can terrorize it with a 12 foot boat and a 5 horse engine on the back of it. But that’s when Mr. Foley, the Judge, as we all know him, served as National Commander of The American Legion. I saw that process.

Then I went into the military shortly after that. My mother, now married to Ken, started to see some new additions to the family. Ken was a member of The American Legion. Everything you did in Wabasha either started at, took place at, or ended at The American Legion. I could not imagine a world without The American Legion. It wasn’t until I went into the military that I found that I had grown up in a different area, a different background. And I missed it. So I went to Virginia and became involved in the Legion. We can all see where that ended up.

It’s been a great year. Personally, I can’t thank you enough. I am now 52, in a couple of days I’ll turn 53. The only thing I can do is promise that for whatever years the good Lord will grant me on this earth, for as long as I am physically able to do so, I promise that I will do everything that I can for you and will try to do for you what those Legionnaires of the past and present have done for me. I will try to be your Wilbur Walker, a guy from Virginia, who unfortunately most of you never had the honor of knowing. That’s the only way that I can repay you is to try to help you help your post, community, state and nation.

I started this year out by vowing that I would not fail you and I would not allow you to fail me and those whom we serve. It is with the knowledge that I did not fail you and you did not fail me that I can say to you right now: Morale is High!

I call on the Vice Commanders as a group and as a group they’re awesome.

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER TINGLER: Commander Miller, we have had a great ride. Thank you for your leadership and your guidance, but most of all, thank you for your friendship. There’s always a little bit of a letdown when we move on from an office, but we want your ride to continue just a little bit longer. We tried for months to get Richard Petty to make this presentation to you but were unable to do so. We were able to get his brother, Roger Petty.

ROGER PETTY: Commander, it’s been a great year. We’ve learned that you had so much fun driving the go-cart at the Arthritis Foundation in Indianapolis, that we thought we’d give you a ride in a real race car. We know that one of your favorite drivers is Rusty Wallace, but we don’t think Rusty Wallace has reached the plateau yet to be able to show other people how to drive a race car. So, I have talked personally to Richard Petty, “the King,” and he assures me that with your two sessions that we’re about to give you and your previous driving experience, that you will reach speeds up to 165 miles an hour, if you have the foot, and whatever else goes with it, to get there. So, on behalf of your National Vice Commanders, your Chaplain, your Historian, your Aide and your Sergeant-at-Arms, we want to give you one more ride for The American Legion. Good luck to you, Commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: I really get to drive this as fast as I want? And I don’t have to worry about anybody with a light on their car chasing me around? Fantastic! One of the things that my National Vice Commanders have done for me this year that I asked them to do was to travel around out there and speak against rumors. Rumors eat at our organizations. Well, I would now like to ask National Vice Commander John Mor-is from Texas to squelch one of those rumors by telling you what the truth is.
NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER MORRIS: For the last two or three days, I have been approached by many delegates, ladies and men, regarding the National Convention to be held in San Antonio, Texas in 2001. As Executive Vice President of the National Convention Corporation of Texas, the answer to the rumor question: “Is San Antonio pulling out of the race?”, the answer is “No”. The Department of Texas, the city of San Antonio anxiously awaits you delegates to the 83rd National Convention of The American Legion. So, with that, you can be assured that that’s where you’re going to be in 2001, God willing.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: I call on the National Adjutant, Mr. Spanogle.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: I’d like to have Dan Wheeler, the Executive Director of our Indianapolis office, John Sommer, the Executive Director of the Washington office, and Ron Brooks, the Executive Director of our Marketing Services group to join me at the platform, along with you, Mr. National Commander. We represent the staff of The American Legion and, of course, the appointed National Officers, our Judge Advocate, Phil Onderdonk and your National Treasurer, George Buskirk. We thank you for your leadership, your kindness, your inspiration and your steadfastness in bringing The American Legion into the 21st Century of the Millennium.

I kind of coined a term for the National Commander, an affectionate term, and referred to him as the CyberSpace Commander because of one thing. We have a magnificent website since we’re in the business of communication, to everyone in this room and all 2.8 million members of The American Legion and the million members of the Auxiliary and the Sons of The American Legion. Whether you’re at the Post, District, Department or National, it’s communications and this Commander has brought that up to the epitome of communications as we go to the 21st Century. Every Department now has e-mail capability. He has led the way to have every Department have a website, although not all do yet. And he encouraged us to go out with the requests for a proposal and find an Internet Service Provider so we could provide the service that AOL provides to many of you through your individual computers in your homes and to go onto e-commerce and Emblem Sales. It is quite an achievement, an achievement that has not been met, to my knowledge, by any other veterans organizations or any other service or membership organization throughout the United States. It is a giant step, not just not for young Legionnaires or potential young Legionnaires.

He’s kind of forced me, this 55 year old guy, to get a little bit better on the computer and all that sort of thing. But I’ve learned to enjoy it and those of us over 55—I understand the Commander hasn’t reached that point yet—are the biggest users of personal computers and e-commerce. So, with iBelong, we started the 21st Century early. We thought that as the appointed National Officers and the Directors of The American Legion, we would like to present you—and we paid for it—with a laptop computer for the CyberSpace Commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: These gentlemen standing with me here by this podium allowed a National Commander to do the things that he must do. It’s too bad that we can’t have the entire National staff, not only those in Washington, but those in Indianapolis, here because behind them is an army of dedicated individuals whom I have known very much through this last year. I can’t tell you what kind of fire burns in them that makes them want to do the things that they do everyday, but they do. When you get a chance, if you’re ever in Indianapolis or Washington, say thank you. Because they are the most unbelievable people. It doesn’t matter if it’s membership, Internal Affairs, if it’s Public Relation or Emblem Sales, they will bend over backwards. The thing that makes them continue to do that on a day to day basis is the representation and the leadership of those
gentlemen right behind me. They deserve more than our applause. But unfortunately, that's all that we can pay them right now. So, let's do it in a big way, all right?

We’re going to move on to the election of officers, but before that I promised myself that I wouldn’t leave the stage without delivering one threat. And that is to the people in Virginia who put me where I am and supported me so much: I’m coming home.

Presentation: Plaque and Colors to Outgoing National Commander
John H. Geiger, Illinois, Past National Commander
The Honorable Daniel F. Foley, Minnesota, Past National Commander

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: National Vice Commander Fred Goulart will take the gavel and preside over the next order of business. Obviously, Fred’s kind of nervous about this; he’s back stage practicing. Fred, if this is your way of making sure that I stay as National Commander, it’s not going to work. Ladies and gentlemen, I am honored to preside over the next order of business because Fred is not here. This is the time when we present me a plaque and Colors of my office. Now I call on my friend, Past National Commander John Geiger of Illinois to present the plaque.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER GEIGER: It’s come to that time in the Convention when we close the book on this particular year of The American Legion. I’m pleased that you’ve stayed with Butch Miller as we come to the point in this program. As this 1999 National Convention of The American Legion draws to a close, marking the end of your memorable year as our Commander and new friend, let me also call forward as witnesses Mr. E. Roy Stone of Greenville, South Carolina, the Honorable Daniel Foley of Wabasha, Minnesota, your proud dad, Ken Wiemann from Wabasha, Minnesota. I also call upon the loving spirit of the late Wilbur Walker of Virginia who brought this young man to our attention many years ago.

Butch, this beautiful bronze plaque that we have is presented to you by the order of this Convention and it represents the deep appreciation and gratitude of each member of The American Legion and our Auxiliary for the inspiration and positive leadership you have provided to us as our Commander. Let me read the permanent message which it leaves for you. “National Commander Harold L. ‘Butch’ Miller elected by the National Convention to serve the high office of National Commander of The American Legion for the year 1998 to 1999, in appreciation of his dedicated leadership in recognition to his devoted service to God and Country and in token of the high esteem our fellow Legionnaires have for him.” This citation is presented to him by authority of the National Executive Committee on the 9th day of September, 1999, which is a great computer day, Commander, 9/9/99, at the 81st National Convention in Anaheim, California.

Butch, I’m honored to present this plaque to you for display in your home or office as our proclamation of thanks and congratulation to you for the skills, energy and dedication given to our God and Country. Congratulations, Butch. God bless you and yours, with a warm welcome to the permanent ranks of the Past National Commanders of The American Legion.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: Thank you. I have very much looked forward to joining that very exclusive club of Past National Commanders. As a matter of fact, I’ve already adopted a new e-mail address, which you probably already saw, proudly proclaiming pncbutch@aol.com, Past National Commander Butch, as my new e-mail address. I hope to hear from all of you...
At this time, I’d like to call on a long time friend, Past National Commander Dan Foley of Minnesota to present the Colors.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER FOLEY: The Commander’s Colors will be presented by the National Champion Color Guard, Speedway Post, Speedway, Indiana. Color Guard will prepare to retrieve the Colors of the National Commander. Right hand salute. Two!

Commander Butch, once more you honor an old friendship by inviting me to make remarks on this occasion. Your year as National Commander comes to a close but in the words of a popular tune from another day, the memory lingers on and will continue to do so well into the 21st Century. The legacy of your service will be measured by the contribution you have made, your steadfast devotion to duty, your loyalty to those who have served this country and deserve a VA system providing the care and benefits promised by a grateful nation but too often compromised by an inadequate budget influenced by partisan politics. You will be remembered for your truthfulness, integrity, dependability and reliability and by the plainly demonstrated love of country in fighting to protect the flag of our nation from physical desecration. You will also be remembered for your common touch and easy manner. Your invisible contribution in the manner and way in which you have carried out the duties of your office reflect the highest ideals of The American Legion and by your public utterances which express the true meaning, indeed, and understanding of the very soul of The American Legion, its aims and purposes, its lofty goals. The greatness of your service will be felt for long years to come. You assumed your duties as Commander, filled with pride and confidence. You now leave office as we in The American Legion salute you with pride and gratitude for a job well done. Accept these Colors, Commander Butch, from The American Legion. They’re yours to possess and cherish, always serving as a reminder of your valiant effort to protect, as did the patriots of old, the symbol of our cherished freedom. You are a sterling patriot. And from the friendly shores of the upper Mississippi to the historic land of Virginia, Legionnaires across the country in one voice proclaim: “You served us well, Commander Butch, may God bless you always.”

Color Guard, retire the Colors of the Commander. Stand at hand salute. One. Two.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: Thank you, Dan. This year coming to an end is given special meaning by you two gentlemen and the presentations you have made and by Post 500 Color Guard. Over the last year or two, because of our association in the Legion and because I have a little interest in racing cars, those gentlemen and I have kind of struck up a special relationship.

Special Order of Business: Election of National Officers
National Commander

We now come to a special order of business, the election of National Officers. The National Judge Advocate, Phil Onderdonk of Maryland will read the rules of the Convention governing the nomination and election of officers. Judge.

NATIONAL JUDGE ADVOCATE PHILIP ONDERDONK: The rules for election of National Officers of The American Legion:

Rule 15: Final sentence: Election of National Officers shall be by roll call.

Rule 17: Prior to the election of National Officers, the National Commander shall appoint, subject to the approval of the convention, a judge of election and such number of tellers as he deems necessary, provided that the total tellers so appointed shall be an odd
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number. In a contested election each candidate going to the ballot shall be entitled to one
teller of his choice.

Rule 18: Nominations for National Officers shall be from the floor on roll call of the
departments alphabetically arranged. Each department may present as many candidates as
it chooses.

Rule 19: Nominating speeches for National Officers shall be limited to five minutes
each. Not more than two seconding speeches shall be made for any candidate, and said
speeches shall be limited to three minutes.

Rule 20: When more than two candidates are nominated for any office, balloting shall
continue until one candidate receives a majority of the votes of the convention, except in the
election of National Vice Commanders.

Rule 21: In a contested election for National Vice Commanders, balloting shall
continue until (a) majorities and (b) pluralities are established for one or more candidates
under the following provisions: if, on any ballot taken, less than five candidates receive the
necessary majority to elect, the candidate or candidates receiving a majority vote shall be
declared elected and a new ballot shall be taken for the remaining number of places to be
filled, the candidate receiving the lowest number of votes on the preceding ballot shall be
disqualified; except should two candidates remain to fill one place, a new ballot shall be
taken.

Rule 22: The convention will nominate and elect a National Commander, and five
National Vice Commanders, in this sequence.

Rule 23: At the conclusion of balloting on National Vice Commanders, each
Department Delegation Chairman shall deliver a written ballot to the tellers. Such ballots
shall be in the hands of the tellers before communication is made to the National
Commander for announcement of the results.

That completes the reading of the rules pertaining to election of National Officers.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: As Chairman of this convention, I now
appoint as Judge of the Elections, Cornelius “Connie” O’Neill of Virginia and as Tellers of
the election, H. Melvin Napper of Idaho, Roy L. Pressley of North Carolina, and Charles T.
Allemann of California. Will the Judge and Tellers of the election please come forward?

National Adjutant Robert Spanogle will now call the roll of the departments. The
purpose of the roll call is to receive nominations for National Commander of The American
Legion.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: Alabama.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN ODOM: Chairman Morgan Odom from the Department
of Alabama acknowledges Idaho for the purpose of a nomination.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: Department of Idaho.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN MASON: My name is Vernon Mason. For the Department
of Idaho I respectfully request you recognize Past Department Commander Marion P.
Johnson for the purpose of a nomination.

MARION P. JOHNSON: I’ve had the pleasure of knowing Al Lance for something
over 20 years. In that length of time, I have come to understand that he is one of the
outstanding young Americans that we have in this country today. Al and his wife, Sherry,
have three children: Alan Lance, Jr., Lisa and Luke. It looks like Lisa is going to follow in
Al’s footsteps because at the present time she’s a three-year law student at Willemette
University in Salem, Oregon. Luke is a Junior in Meridian High School and has a special
talent that is unique, I think, to somebody of his age because he handles his father’s
investments in the New York Stock Market. He doesn't just call a broker and say, "We want to buy or sell this." He does it on the Internet and he's involved in puts and calls, options, some of the parts of the stock market that I have no idea what's going on, but he does.

I think I'll come back to Al's wife just for a moment. I thought I needed her approval on what I was going to say about her. As somebody who's been married to a woman for 57 years, I just decided it was the wise thing to do. So, Sherry said, "All you have to do is tell them that I'm Al's wonderful wife." I think the only thing I can think of that makes her unique in another way is the fact that she is so humble. She's the one that said the words "wonderful wife" and that's the reason I am repeating it to you.

Al Lance is a rather unique individual also. I think you've all heard the expression "Jack of all trades and master of none". Al is kind of a jack of all trades and he's the master of them all. He's an inventor. He invented a target to be used with pellet guns. It's a fantastic thing that pops up at different times and folds up. He's now got it at a manufacturing company to see what they have to say about it. He's been involved in producing apple juice because they've got about 50 trees. He does it on a small scale with a little press that they turn by hand. He's made a success of that. A few years ago, he bought a farm over around Sand Hollow, 40 or 50 miles west of Boise. And guess what he is raising on that? Potatoes. He has 50 acres of potatoes, so sometime in the coming year, when you have the opportunity to have an Idaho potato, it might have come from Al Lance's farm.

He's done so much for The American Legion, not only in Idaho, but throughout the nation. A few years ago when we were all trying to get our individual states to pass Memorial Resolutions honoring the flag of our country, he was the spokesman for the Idaho Legion when we were trying to convince our Representatives and Senators to pass this resolution. Of course, whenever he spoke, we had a delegation of people in the gallery and I was one of them on many occasions. At these committee meetings, as a final little 'gimmick,' he took a dollar bill out of his pocket in one hand and his cigarette lighter in another and told the Senators on one occasion, "If I were to touch this flame to this dollar bill, I could be put in jail. But I could burn the flag of the United States of America and they wouldn't touch me." I think it was that demonstration and his ability to converse, that the resolution was passed that same day.

A couple of years ago, the Veterans Administration decided that they would take away the aid and attendance payments to the state veterans homes. Al Lance sued the VA and won. He has a plaque hanging in his office today from the National Association of Veterans Homes Directors complimenting him for the help that he gave them, not only in the state of Idaho, but all over the nation. When I think of some of the leaders that we have had in the past, Presidents Lincoln, Kennedy, Franklin Roosevelt, and General Eisenhower, in my mind, when you roll all those people together, you have Alan Lance. Mr. Commander, at this time, as a duly elected and registered delegate from Post 26 at Mountain Home, Idaho, it is my honor to place in nomination for the high office of National Commander of The American Legion for the year 1999-2000 the name of Alan G. Lance.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: The name of Alan G. Lance has been placed into nomination. The Adjutant will continue the roll.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: ... The National Adjutant continues the call for each Department in turn.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN CASWELL: As Delegate Chairman from the great state of Alaska, the land of the midnight sun, at this time I would like to yield to the Department of Maryland.
DELEGATION CHAIRMAN SCHMIDT: Albert Schmidt, Department Commander, state of Maryland and Chairman of the Delegation requests the Chair recognizes Richard Santos for the purpose of a second.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: Richard Santos is so recognized for the purpose of a nomination.

RICHARD SANTOS: Membership, dedication, commitment and service are the building blocks for success in life and in The American Legion. Al Lance has exhibited these qualities throughout his life, from his childhood years in McComb, Ohio which carried to his military obligation and through his service to The American Legion. He has shown the traits of tact and leadership by his active duty in the United States Army in the Judge Advocate General's Corps. His initial assignment was to the 172nd Infantry Brigade, Fort Richardson, Alaska from 1974 to 1977. He was subsequently transferred to the Corpus Christi Army Depot, Corpus Christie, Texas where he served as Command Judge Advocate from 1977 to 1978, rising to the rank of Captain. Al returned to civilian life in 1978.

Al is a dedicated husband to his wife Sherry and a caring father to their three children, Alan Jr., Lisa and Luke. He is educated for and dedicated to his lifelong profession as a practicing attorney at law. As shown by his election to the high office of attorney general to the state of Idaho, Al is skillful, trustworthy and truthful. He exhibited the qualities of planning and statesmanship as he expanded his horizons in the various levels of leadership in The American Legion. As the 20th Century comes to a close, Al Lance stands in the portal of the ultimate leadership position of the world's largest veterans organization. Through his membership, his dedication, his commitment and his service, he is ready to lead The American Legion into the new Millennium. As the 21st Century arrives and Al steps through that portal of our number one leadership position, he is ready with vision, verve, energy and commitment to assume and to execute the duties and responsibilities as National Commander of The American Legion. Commander Miller, as a duly elected and registered delegate from the Department of Maryland to the 81st National Convention, I second the nomination of Al Lance of the Department of Idaho for the position of National Commander of The American Legion for the year 1999-2000.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: The name of Alan G. Lance has been seconded.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN MAKLARY: The great state of Arizona, the home of the amazing Diamond Backs, yields to the great state of Texas.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN WHEALEN: I requests permission for Past Department Commander John Brieden to approach the podium for the purposes of a second.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: John Brieden is so recognized for the purpose of a second.

DELEGATE JOHN A. BREIDEN: It's an honor to second the nomination of Alan Lance from the Department of Idaho for National Commander. Sitting back here and listening to the speech of Marion for the nomination, I felt it deserved a comment particularly about the wonderful wife, Sherry. I want you to know that she's also the smart wife Sherry. She's the one that took the family finances and investments away from Al and gave them to Luke.

Now I want to specifically address Alan's public service. He was elected State Representative in 1991 and by 1993, and then selected by his peers as the House Majority Caucus Chairman. Then in 1995, Al was elected Attorney General for the state of Idaho, a
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position that he still holds today. How was he able to rise so far, so fast? I think it’s obvious that the citizens of Idaho recognize his ability and leadership.

In 1995, Alan and I were part of the effort to pass the Flag Amendment and were in Washington, DC. There were six or seven Senators whom we were assigned that we would visit together. I’ll not forget that we went to Senator Craig’s office without appointment, although there was a lobby full of people with appointments. His staff shuttled us through a back door and we visited with Senator Craig. Not only did he reinforce his commitment to the flag amendment, but discussed how he could talk with other Senators and use his influence to try help our cause. Alan Lance understands the Legislative process. Alan Lance understands politicians. Alan Lance is a rising star. We need to hitch ourselves and our great American Legion to this rising star and he will carry us to new heights of achievement.

It’s an honor and personal privilege for me to second the nomination of the Honorable Alan Lance for the position of National Commander of The American Legion.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: The name of Alan G. Lance has been placed into nomination and duly seconded.

...At this time a demonstration ensued in support of the nomination of Alan G. Lance as National Commander.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN CLAUDE CARPENTER, Arkansas: Arkansas, the former residence of the President and First Lady, but the future home of the Clinton Library. It is with great pride and honor that I second the nomination of Mr. Al Lance for National Commander. Arkansas will cast its 28 votes for the election of Al Lance.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN WILLY WILKIN, California: I cast 150 votes from the Department of California, the state that is the home of our National Vice Commander Leo Burke.

DELEGATE BJARNE RUNCHEL, Colorado: Bjarne Runchel, Commander the Department of Colorado, and the home of the Denver Broncos, we are going for a repeat this year, three-peat, as a duly authorized delegate to the National Convention, the 81st, casts 30 votes for Alan G. Lance for the high office of National Commander.


DELEGATE THOMAS BURNS, Delaware: As a delegate to this Convention, the Little State, the First State of Delaware casts 16 votes for Alan G. Lance.

DELEGATE RAYMOND POTOCKI, D.C.: Representing Department of D.C., I present our nine votes for Al Lance as National Commander.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN LAWRENCE STRAINGE, Florida: As Chairman Delegation Committee, Convention Committee, State of Florida, the Sunshine State, the other Sunshine State, we proudly cast a unanimous vote for the election of Al Lance.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN ARNIE MATANKY, France: As Delegation Chairman from the Department of France, the birth place of The American Legion, I proudly second the nomination of Al Lance for National Commander, votes unanimous.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN CHARLES WESSINGER, Georgia: The great State of Georgia, the 100 percent department, casts all of its 53 votes for Al Lance.
DELEGATION CHAIRMAN DONALD RAVEN, Hawaii: As Delegate Chairman, Junior Past Commander, we are proud to cast all of our nine delegate votes for Mr. Alan Lance for the future National Commander of The American Legion.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN VINCENT GAUGHAN, Illinois: As Chairman Delegation for the great State of Illinois, I second the nomination of Al Lance.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN DICK TONKEL, Indiana: The delegation from the State of Indiana casts its entire delegate vote for Al Lance.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN LOUIS KIRK, Iowa: Iowa proudly votes 79 votes for Al Lance for the new National Commander.

DELEGATE DICK NIELSEN, Kansas: From the State of Kansas, the land of windmills, the wheat, the corn, Bob Dole and NEC Udie Grant, it unanimously casts all of our votes for Al Lance.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN DICK NIELSEN, Kansas: From the State of Kansas, the land of windmills, the wheat, the corn, Bob Dole and NEC Udie Grant, it unanimously casts all of our votes for Al Lance.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN VINCENT GAUGHAN, Illinois: As Chairman Delegation for the great State of Illinois, I second the nomination of Al Lance.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN DICK TONKEL, Indiana: The delegation from the State of Indiana casts its entire delegate vote for Al Lance.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN LOUIS KIRK, Iowa: Iowa proudly votes 79 votes for Al Lance for the new National Commander.

DELEGATE RANDALL COFFMAN, Kentucky: National Executive Committeeman from the Department of Kentucky, home of the greatest two minutes in sports, first Saturday in May, the Kentucky Derby, proudly casts 39 votes for Al Lance for National Commander.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN KENT LYNN, Louisiana: As delegation Chairman of the Department of Louisiana, the Sportsman's Paradise, Louisiana proudly seconds the nomination of Al Lance.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN LAWRENCE DEARBORN, Maine: As Delegation Chairman from the Department of Maine, the state with the two living Past National Commanders, Bill Rogers and Tony Jordan, the state with the best potatoes, lobsters; blue berries and the sexiest moose you have ever seen in your life, cast 34 votes for our new National Commander, Al Lance.

DELEGATE MARK DAVIS, Massachusetts: As delegate to the 81st National Convention, from the great State of Massachusetts, home of Past National Commander John P.J. Comer who walked the walk and talked the talk for passage of the Flag Amendment, Massachusetts casts 73 votes for Al Lance.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN ED DELINSKI, Mexico: The Department of Mexico, including the countries of Costa Rica, Guatemala, Mexico and Panama, enthusiastically seconds the nomination of Al Lance of Idaho.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN GERARD DERNIS, Michigan: As Delegation Chairman of the great State of Michigan, which is unique as it consists of both the upper and lower peninsula, do give not only one Terry Niles, a member of Michigan to be Idaho's next Department Adjutant, but also their 100 votes for our next National Commander, Al lance.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN ROBERT SKALLERUD, Minnesota: As Delegation Chairman, seconds the motion for Al Lance.

DELEGATE JOHNNIE BRACY, Mississippi: As Secretary Delegation Chairman, I cast 26 votes for Al Lance.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN WILLIAM MILLER, Mississippi: The Department of Missouri, being the birthplace of the first Legionnaire President of the United States, Harry S. Truman, is very proud to second the motion for Al Lance.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN JOYCE BABCOCK, Montana: As Department Chairman, I proudly endorses Al Lance, our next door neighbor for National commander.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN MICHAEL LANDKAMER, Nebraska: As Delegation Chairman from the great State of Nebraska, home of the five-time National Champion Corn Huskers, I proudly endorse and second Al Lance for National Commander.
DELEGATION CHAIRMAN JOHN BURCH, Nevada: The Great Silver State casts all our votes for Alan Lance.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN DONALD SMALL, New Hampshire: As Delegation Chairman from the great State of New Hampshire, we proudly second the nomination for Al Lance for National Commander for the year 1999 and 2000.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN LEO McKERNAN, New Jersey: As Delegation Chairman for the great State of New Jersey, we proudly second the nomination for Al Lance.

DELEGATE HARRY RISER, New Mexico: As duly elected delegate to this National Convention from the great State of New Mexico, Land of Enchantment, we cast our 20 votes for Al Lance to lead The American Legion into this new millennium.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN ROBERT MRRILL, New York: As Chairman of the Delegation from New York, New York seconds the nomination.

DELEGATE GEORGE WILLIS, North Carolina: As Department Commander and duly authorized delegate for the 81st National Convention from the great Tar Heel State of North Carolina cast all 53 votes for our next National Commander, Alan Lance.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN JOE BOSCH, North Dakota: North Dakota, the only department with 50 percent of its eligible veterans enrolled in The American Legion, proudly seconds the nomination of Al Lance for National Commander.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN CARL SWISHER, Ohio: As Delegation Chairman from Ohio, birthplace of our next National Commander, has all their votes for our next National Commander, Alan Lance.

DELEGATED LARRY TIENSVOLD, Oklahoma: As duly elected representative, Oklahoma cast all 37 votes for Alan Lance.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN DONEY CHRISMER, Oregon: As Chairman, Oregon casts all 33 votes for Al Lance for our National Commander.

DELEGATE JOHN KELLY, Pennsylvania: As duly authorized delegate from the great Department of Pennsylvania, home of the cradle of liberty, steel and coal, we are pleased and proud to second the nomination of our next National Commander, Al Lance.

DELEGATE ANTONIO TY, Philippines: I am very proud to nominate Alan Lance as our National Commander.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE, Puerto Rico: From the beautiful island of Puerto Rico, and host of the National Wheelchair Games, Puerto Rico casts 15 votes in favor of Alan Lance for National Commander.

DELEGATE RICHARD VERRIER, Rhode Island: Alternate NECman from the Biggest Little State of the Union; the home of the Rhode Island Red; and the qua hog, I proudly second the nomination of Al Lance for National Commander.

DELEGATE FRANK WARD, South Carolina: As a registered delegate, I second the nomination for Al Lance.

DELEGATE D. R. MASON, South Dakota: The birthplace of American Legion Baseball is very proud to cast our entire delegation support for Alan Lance.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN ROLLEN BRADSHAW, Tennessee: As Chairman of the Delegation Department of Tennessee, home of Dolly Parton, Sergeant Alan C. York, and the legendary Jack Daniels, we cast 40 votes for Alan Lance.

DELEGATE TERRY SCHOW, Utah: Department Utah seconds the nomination for Alan Lance for National Commander.
DELEGATION CHAIRMAN ERNEST CYR, Vermont: Department of Vermont, the Green Mountain State proudly seconds the nomination of Al Lance for National Commander.

DELEGATE WILLIAM BRYANT, Virginia: NEC and duly elected delegate to this Convention, from the great Department of Virginia, proudly seconds the nomination of Al Lance for National Commander.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN JERRY HUFFMAN, Washington: As the Chairman for the Evergreen State of Washington, we are honored to cast 44 votes for Alan Lance.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN ART OGER, West Virginia: As Delegation Chairman, home of Past National Commander Miles Epling; also the home of Past Immediate National Vice Commander Robert Bass; and also Retired National Executive Committeeman Jack Gribben, proudly seconds the nomination for Al Lance.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN BOB ZUKOWSKI: Wisconsin, the land of milk and honey, and also the site of the 82nd National Convention, cast its 82 votes for Al Lance.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN JEAN BROWN, Wyoming: As Delegate Chairman of the Equality State of Wyoming, we proudly endorse and second the nomination of Alan Lance.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGL: Mr. Commander, that completes the roll call.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: Recognize microphone number 4. Vince Gaughan.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN GAUGHAN: As Chairman delegation from the state of Illinois, in view of the fact that there is but one candidate for National Commander, I move that we suspend the rules of this Convention, close the nominations and that the National Adjutant be authorized to cast one vote for the entire delegate strength of this National Convention and that Al Lance be elected National Commander by acclamation.

I will now make the first motion. Mr. Commander, I move that we suspend the rules of this Convention pertaining to the election of the National Commander and the nomination and election of the National Vice Commanders, which rules shall be automatically reinstated at the conclusion of the election for National Vice Commanders.

... The motion was seconded.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: There is a motion before us to suspend the rules of the Convention pertaining to the election of National Commander and the nomination and election of National Vice Commanders, which rules shall be automatically reinstated at the conclusion of the election for National Vice Commanders.

The motion is non-debatable and requires a two-thirds vote. Those in favor of the motion please signify in the usual manner of aye. Opposed nay? In the opinion of the Chair, the ayes have it. Microphone number 1.

DELEGATE FRANK SICKLE: As delegate from New Jersey, I recommend that the nominations for National Commander be closed.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: The motion has been made. Is there a second?

... The motion was seconded.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: The motion to close nominations is a non-debatable motion and requires a two-thirds vote. Again, those in favor of the motion, signify in the normal manner of aye. Those opposed nay. In the opinion of the Chair, the ayes have it. Microphone number two.

DELEGATE JULIE RUST: As a duly elected and registered delegate to this 81st Convention, I move that the National Adjutant be authorized to cast one vote representing
the entire delegate strength of this 81st Annual Convention and that Al Lance be elected National Commander by acclamation.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: Is there a second to the motion?

...The motion was seconded.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: Hearing your second, there is a motion before us that the National Adjutant be authorized to cast one vote representing the entire delegate strength of this Convention and that Alan G. Lance of Idaho be elected National Commander by acclamation. All those in favor of the motion, please signify in the usual manner of aye. Opposed nay. In the opinion of the Chair, the ayes have it.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: As National Adjutant, I cast one vote representing the entire delegation strength of this Convention for the election of Alan Lance as the National Commander of The American Legion.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: I, Butch Miller, National Commander, proudly and with a great deal of personal pride declare Alan G. Lance duly elected National Commander of The American Legion for Legion year 1999-2000. Will the Sergeant-at-Arms assist as the new Commander of The American Legion is escorted to the platform by Vern Mason?

Delegates to this Convention, it is with great pride that I introduce to you our National Commander for 1999-2000, Alan Lance.

The Chair recognizes Past National Commander ‘Sparky’ Gierke of North Dakota for the purpose of administering the Oath of Office to the new National Commander of The American Legion.

Administering the Oath of Office to the National Commander

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER GIERKE: Ten years ago, I had the privilege of serving as your National Commander and became the leader of a team called Three Million. I was privileged to have an outstanding young Commander from the Department of Idaho as part of that time, and today, I consider it a great honor and privilege to be able to administer to him the Oath of Office as our New National Commander. Alan, would you please step forward?

...National Commander-elect Alan Lance repeated the Oath of Office following the lead of Past National Commander Gierke.

NATIONAL COMMANDER-ELECT ALAN LANCE: I, Alan G. Lance, do solemnly pledge myself, to perform faithfully and impartially the duties of the office of National Commander of The American Legion. I further pledge that I will support and defend the Constitution of The United States of America and the National Constitution and By-laws of The American Legion. And I do not subscribe to the principles of any group opposed to our form of government. So help me God.

Acceptance Speech by Newly Elected National Commander Alan Lance

First of all, in terms of all the advertising for your respective states, I take issue with the state of Maine and its potato claim. And I thoroughly enjoyed the claims of the state of Tennessee with Dolly Parton and Jack Daniels™.
Thank you for this great honor and this wonderful opportunity to serve as this organization’s 81st National Commander and the first National Commander from my great department, the Department of Idaho.

Commander Butch Miller, National Officers, Delegates to the 81st National Convention, Auxiliary members, Sons of The American Legion, guests and friends all, first of all let me say some words to Commander Butch. On behalf of the Department of Idaho and myself, I thank you for the help and assistance you and the Department of Virginia have provided us during this campaign. And more importantly, on behalf of The American Legion family, I want to thank you for your leadership and the manner in which you have represented us over the past year. Thank you, Commander, and we wish you the very best.

And, Commander, what are you going to do now that you have all of this free time? He’s going to Disneyland.

I would like to thank Past National Commander Judge ‘Sparky’ Gierke for administering the oath of office, and my Commander at home, Sherry, for presenting me with my cap. Thank you not only for what you have done for me today but what you have done for The American Legion in years past. At this time, I take a great deal of pride in introducing to you our family members who are present here today.

When I was a member of the 172nd Infantry Brigade up in Alaska, the people of the United States, for $11.25, gave me my first child. Lisa has held offices within the Auxiliary Junior Organization to include Western Vice President. She is presently a third-year law student at Willamette University in Salem, Oregon. She has achieved many awards and honors in her short life, and yesterday she had her very own race to run as she was a candidate for the position of the president of her third-year law school class. I’m proud to present to you my daughter, Lisa, the president of Willamette University Law School, third-year class, Lisa.

I also present to you a kid who is my best fishing buddy, my best hunting buddy, my best golfing buddy, one of the poorest stockbrokers I’ve ever had. He’s a junior at Meridian High School and he is the National Executive Committeeman for The Sons of The American Legion, Detachment of Idaho, my son, Luke.

And I would like to present to you, because Idaho, like 12 other states, is a community property state, my business partner, whether she likes it or not, my wife of nine days, three months, and 30 years, my best friend, my best campaigner, the lady who has received honors from the Auxiliary as being the Member of the Year for the Department of Idaho, the lady who does the Girl’s State Program for American Legion Post 113 and the Auxiliary, and the lady without whom I wouldn’t have had a chance in this election nor any other election I have ever been involved with, my best friend, Sherry Lance.

I would like to thank Marion P. Johnson, Past National Executive Committeeman for the Department of Idaho, for the nominating speech, for his friendship, his support, and for serving as a co-chair of this election committee. I would also thank his lovely wife, Mardene, both of whom are great friends of ours and both of whom have contributed mightily to this campaign.

I would also like to thank my friend John Brieden, from Texas, and Rick Santos, from the Department of Maryland, for their seconding speeches in support of this nomination and, equally important, for their friendship and their support.

I would like to thank a number of individuals who have been so instrumental in this campaign and in our lives: Mel and Emily Napier, Chuck and Mary Price, John Dunlap,
Tom and Charlotte Moore, Commander Vern Mason and Beth, Commander Rich Hanni and Backy, NEC LeRoy Lebsack and Emma, Don Gunderson and Pat, Cash and Louise Arrasmith, Cleve Rice, Rickey Helsley, Alternate NEC Dee Collins, Frank and Carol Dalton, Paul Brown and Past National President of the American Legion Auxiliary and my friend, Norma Brown, as well as all members of the Department of Idaho. I would like the members of the delegation of the Department of Idaho to please rise and be recognized.

Not with us today is our son, Alan; my mother who is back in Ohio; four sisters in Ohio; Sherry’s mom and dad who are in Sioux Falls, South Dakota; and by virtue of distance, we hope they will join us in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, for the 82nd National Convention, which is only 360 days from today.

I would like to give a special appreciation and a word of thanks to Past National Commanders John Geiger, Roy Stone, Jim Wagonstaller, Dan Foley, and all of the other Past National Commanders who have given me the advice, the council, and the encouragement that I’ve needed to run for this high office.

I would like to acknowledge my staff of 178 dedicated individuals back in the Office of the Attorney General in the state of Idaho as they will keep the home fires burning in my absence.

To all of these persons, to you the Delegates, and to all members of the 55 respective departments, and to this organization, I say thank you.

As a young farm kid growing up in northwest Ohio, I was raised to believe that service to the community, state, and nation is a duty of every citizen and an obligation of citizenship. I was taught, and I do believe, that civilization, the state, and any nation can only give back what it receives from its citizens not just in taxes but in terms of a sense of duty, obligation, concern, and caring. I was taught, and I do believe, that it is essential to respect the efforts of churches, groups, and organizations who respect our citizens, our country, our Constitution, and our system of government even if I do not totally agree with them or share their views on every occasion. And I was taught never to shrink from, run away from, or attempt to hide from responsibilities and duties of being a citizen of any community, of any state, of any nation, or any organization to which I belong.

I grew up in an America that was, with justification, proud of itself, proud of its citizens, and where citizens were truly proud of each other. I grew up in an America where the people from different race, different political parties, and different occupations all came together for the good of their community at the fire hall, the city hall, or at The American Legion hall. In those times and at that place, both so now distant, I grew up believing, like Ronald Reagan, that America was that white shining city on the hill, a beacon of hope and faith to the rest of the world. I grew up in a family and in a community where the only days off were Sundays, Christmas, Memorial Day, and the 4th of July, times to worship, times to remember, and times to celebrate.

I knew instinctively then as a child, as many years later I would learn, that there was something noble in service to your fellow countrymen and something sacred in the reverence they displayed and something unique in the quality of character of those who remembered, those who wore the cap of The American Legion. And as a child, I followed those men on Memorial Day, those heroes, those ordinary farmers, those ordinary bankers, those ordinary plumbers, in silence to the cemetery to remember those who had made the supreme and ultimate sacrifice.

But things in Custer, Ohio, have changed, things in America have changed, and things in the world have changed. Suddenly there were those who were of the opinion that service
to the community, state, and nation is not essential and that honorable service is not necessary. Suddenly there were those who believed that the hard work of the laborer, the craftsman, the farmer, the small businessman was no longer the strength of our society, but that big government, big business, and the courts could provide for all of the needs of all of our citizens all of the time.

Unfortunately, it would appear that we are now paying a very high price for this misplaced trust in incorrect beliefs. In the United States of America, during the years of 1992 and 1993, more than 7,000 children were killed on the streets, in their homes, and in other places. During that same time frame, 70 children were killed while in school attempting to get an education and attempting to build their lives.

We now have a military which cannot meet its minimum recruiting goals to fill the shrinking ranks. We have about 1.37 million active duty forces committed in 133 countries around the world. The experts tell us that we need about 1.7 million; but as a result of the increased operations tempo and manpower shortages, we are losing our pilots, we are losing our middle management NCOs and our middle management officer corp, and we are unable to recruit replacements. In 1999 the Army will recruit 74,500 young persons, 7,000 short of its minimum goal and the worst recruiting failure since 1979.

In the last seven years, we have given up 709,000 active duty troops, 293 reserve slots, 2,000 combat aircraft, 121 ships and submarines. Shamefully, we spend only about 2.4 percent of our gross domestic product on defense when the experts advise us that we need to be spending 4 percent of our gross domestic product just to maintain our present state of readiness.

And shamefully, and what I will say to you and everyone else who will listen, in what I call a national disgrace, we have far too many military families on food stamps and public assistance; welfare to our young men and women who stand guard at the outposts of freedom in 133 countries. The sentinels of democracy, of America, of our way of life, are not being paid enough to feed their families. No wonder we have a recruiting and retention crisis.

The people in Washington, D.C. like to talk about a budget surplus; but the surplus, if any, cannot be calculated until all the debts are paid, the debt to our veterans in the form of promised but undelivered health care; deferred compensation for a job well done; the ongoing expense of maintaining a strong national defense; paying, equipping, and training our active duty reserve and national guard forces to fight the next war, not the last war.

According to the Washington Times in their August 30th, 1999 edition, the present global strategy recently drafted by the administration’s National Security Council staff provides for increased intervention in world troubled spots while facing a continuing downsizing of the active duty military forces while facing the greatest espionage threat in our nation’s history and while facing a growing probability of concentrated attacks against the United States and its citizens by use of nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons or cyber attacks on critical military infrastructure or informational systems.

Quoting from the Washington Times copyrighted article, the National Security Council’s document reads, “At the same time, easier access to sophisticated technology means that destructive power available to rogue nations and terrorists is greater than ever.” The document goes on to state, “We, the United States, must be prepared and willing to use all appropriate instruments of national power to influence the actions of other states and nonstate actors, to exert global leadership, and to remain the preferred security partner for the community of states that share our common interests.”
And there is a startling reversal of a long standing and time-tested policy of the present quadrennial defense review policy which provides for a two-fronted war capability based upon long accepted and applied principles which have concluded that without a two-front war capability, and I quote, “our standing as a global power, as a security power of choice, and as the leader of the international community would be called into question.”

These are some of the challenges that we face.

Giving up the true theater of war concept is a tremendous threat to our security. The national security document, draft document, all assume that aggressors don’t plan together, they don’t talk to each other and have to worry about the same Democratic processes that we do. I don’t think that is the case. And I believe that this new strategy is dangerous to our nation’s future and very dangerous through our inadequate numbers of poorly paid military personnel. Remember that veterans are a by-product of a failed foreign policy; and I fear that this policy may be very, very costly.

And what is it that our allies are doing, those most directly related and tied to our NATO and UN commitments, our security partners of choice? Well, according to a recent copyrighted story of The Associated Press, Germany’s defense minister said it will reduce its military force by another 8,000 next year to meet that government’s budget cut targets. They are downsizing to balance their budget; but the threats are too real, too large, and too wide.

According to the Congressional Cox Commission Report issued in May in Washington, D.C., foreign nations have acquired sensitive design information on virtually every weapon in the United States nuclear arsenal. So who is going to stand up for America? Who is going to stand up for the American fighting man and fighting woman on active duty, in the National Guard units, and in the reserve units? And who is going to speak out for the average concerned citizens of this great country? Who is going to be talking to a Congress which is made up of only 31 percent veterans, and to a United States Senate who has only 44 percent of its senators who have ever worn the uniform of their country?

While I am mindful of the broken promises concerning VA medical care to our aging veteran population, while I am aware of the gross and persistent inadequacies of the Tricare health system our active duty retirees and dependents rely upon, and while I am aware of the continuing problems of our nuclear, Agent Orange, and Gulf War Syndrome veterans, I’m scared to death about the future of our country and its defenses.

And so I must tell you that I am aware of only one organization bold enough, big enough, and committed enough to take on the three major threats which I have identified:
• inadequate military strength and defense spending and the threat of espionage;
• to implement Resolution 44, which was unanimously passed in May by our National Executive Committee, requiring commitment of forces only when it’s in the national interest and that interest has been identified, and with an exit strategy and with a broad based public support as well as political support;
• the perversion of our American political processes by foreign campaign contributions.

Consistent with our preamble, our resolutions, and our rich history, that organization is The American Legion, which was formed for God and country to implement those ten basic objectives and goals outlined in our preamble.

The American Legion is at its best when we pursue causes and objectives that are unequivocally in the national interest, are noble in origin, and are viewed by the American public as not being self-serving.
Remember that after the 25th National Convention in September of 1943, National Commander Warren Atherton, a World War I veteran, appointed a committee to study how to best help returning World War II veterans, keeping in mind that the majority of our members at that time were, in fact, World War I veterans themselves who had only received a train ticket home and $60 upon their completion of service. But in 1924 those veterans had received a promise from Congress of a bonus of $500 that was to be payable in 20 years, 1944; but in 1932, 20,000 veterans during the height of the Depression marched to Washington, D.C. in an effort to accelerate payment of that bonus during the Great Depression. The military was called out to quell the bonus marchers and anarchists, and they were led by General Douglas MacArthur, assisted by Major Dwight Eisenhower and Major George Patton. There was injury. There was death. And as a result of this action, and by some reports, America did not give a very good account of herself that day, putting active duty military forces and pitting them against the veterans.

The majority of our membership and leadership in 1943 were World War I vets. It would have been very easy for them to turn their backs on those serving in World War II. It would have been easy to say let’s give the returning GIs exactly what we were given in our day; that is to say, $60 and a train ticket home. It would have been easy to say that the ranking officers of World War II were the same officers who commanded the forces in 1932 that resulted in the death and misery to our World War I fellow veterans.

But The American Legion, its membership and its leadership, World War I veterans, did the right thing. They cast aside the temptation to be petty, to be jealous, to be vindictive, and took the high road, the noble way; and National Commander Atherton appointed a committee to make recommendations as to how to best help returning American GIs and veterans who had not yet joined The American Legion.

In December of 1943, in Room 507 of the Mayflower Hotel, in Washington, D.C., Past National Commander Harry Colmery, a World War I veteran, drafted on the back of hotel stationery what would later become the GI Bill of Rights and would later be referred to by James Michener, writer and historian, on January 11th, 1993, as one of the two or three finest laws ever passed by the United States Congress since our Constitution took effect.

Art Buckwald, the columnist, says, “I think the GI Bill was one of the greatest things that America ever did.” And it happened because the membership of The American Legion, veterans of a previous war and a previous period, were looking out for the active duty forces of the country at that time. It happened because National Commander Atherton, a California attorney, made it a priority of his administration. It happened because Past National Commander Harry Colmery and members of that committee made it a priority. It happened because The American Legion and its members made it a priority and then made it happen.

The nobility of this average American Legion World War I member, in helping the active duty GI of World War II without anything in it for himself, is one of this organization’s crowning achievements in the 20th Century and in our 81 year history. Many in this convention hall today, World War II veterans, benefitted from this act of generosity and nobility as this American Legion initiative was introduced in Congress on January 10th of 1944 and signed into law on June 22nd of that same year.

2.2 million went to college with it. 3.5 million went to business and trade schools with it. 1.4 million received on-the-job training. 690,000 received agricultural training with it. 15 million have received home loans and business loans with it. And it was The American Legion, once again, who stood up for the Korean War veterans to insure that they received the same benefits as their World War II compatriots under the GI Bill.
And it was The American Legion who, once again, listened to the Vietnam Agent Orange veterans who were being told by a VA system that they had no problem.

And a work in progress is the research that is being done on Gulf War Syndrome. Illnesses reported, illnesses which exist, illnesses which are debilitating some of our younger veterans, but it was The American Legion who, once again, stood up.

And I call upon you, the membership of The American Legion, and especially those of us who were recipients of those noble efforts, to return those noble gestures. Let us take the lead and be the voice for those young, patriotic, and brave men and women in uniform today who are undermanned, under appreciated, under paid, overextended, and overworked. Let us be their voice and the conscience of America. Let us be the caretakers and watchdog of our national defense. Let us be the guardians of our Democratic political processes and remove the taint and the appearance of foreign influence in our processes. Let us insist upon a 100 percent Americanism in our election processes. Together we will continue to do great things for The American Legion so that The American Legion can continue to do great things for America.

We have before us threats and problems which, quite frankly, scare me to death. But out west we have a saying that the United States Cavalry gave us, that courage is being scared to death but saddle up anyway. The American Legion and its members will saddle up once again for American, and we will lead America into the 21st Century.

Tonight when I retire, I will ask the Almighty to give me the strength, the wisdom, and the courage to do this job and to do it right for America. Tonight I ask, when you offer prayer, please offer the same prayer for me.

God bless you, God bless The American Legion, and God bless this Republic.

**Election of National Officers**

**NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER:** Microphone number 4, please.

**DELEGATE KEISER,** New York: I am a duly authorized delegate from the Department of New York. Since the rules of this Convention have been suspended, I move that nominations for the office of National Vice Commander be made from the floor of this Convention.

**NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER:** Is there a second to the motion?...
The motion was seconded.

**NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER:** Those in favor of the motion signify in the usual manner of aye. Those opposed nay. In the opinion of the Chair, the ayes have it. Microphone number 1.

**DELEGATION CHAIRMAN GORE:** I would like for the Chair to recognize our National Executive Committeeman from Alabama, Ray White.

**NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER:** The Chair so recognizes.

**DELEGATE RAY WHITE:** What an honor for me to stand on this platform where so many outstanding Legionnaires have been nominated and elected to fill the various offices of The American Legion. Our Legion organization is where it is today because of your foresight in electing outstanding leaders of this great organization. As the NEC and duly elected delegate to the 1999 81st National Convention, I wish to place the name of James L. 'Jim' Fraughnaugh in nomination for National Vice Commander.

Jim is a Legionnaire's Legionnaire. Jim has come up through The American Legion the way that I feel that it should be. Jim has served every office starting in his Post, Junior,
Senior, Vice, Post Commander, County Commander, District Commander, First Division Commander, Department Junior Vice, Department Senior Vice, Department Commander, National Alternate Executive Committeeman, and National Executive Committeeman. Jim has served on national appointments on the Americanism Council, National Security Civil Defense Preparedness Committee, National Security Commission, Liaison from the NEC to the Magazine, Liaison from the NEC to the Internal Affairs Commission, and presently serving as a member of the Foreign Relations Commission.

Jim is married to Liz, who is a good friend of mine. They have four children and eight grandchildren. Jim is a lifelong member of Post 171, Birmingham, Alabama and he has had 21 continuous years of membership, joining that Post July 4, 1979. Jim has served on the Department level and numerous Chairman Commission, the latest being the Chairman of Department Finance Commission, Chairman of Department Convention Commission, and member of the Department World War Memorial Commission. Jim, this year, is Chairman of a new Commission or Committee that’s been appointed in the Department of Alabama, that is the Tissue Organ Donation Program. Jim is going to help us get this off and we hope that this, the first that I know of in the nation, in any Department, will be a huge success. Because of Jim’s leadership, I know that it will.

Jim served in the United States Navy from 1957 through 1978, retired a Master Chief Petty Officer E-9. He served in Virginia’s National Guard 1954-1957 and his Navy assignments include assignments aboard the USS Charles S. Perry, USS Robert K. Huntington, USS Robert L. Wilson, USS Patterson, USS Miller. His job in the Navy was a boiler technician and has taught the boiler technicians school in Great Lakes, Illinois. Jim was previously employed by Commercial Insurance Union as a service consultant and now is retired and is a service consultant in a retired status.

It gives me one of the greatest honors in the world to be able to stand on this podium, where so many previous leaders have been elected and to nominate a great Legionnaire, Jim Fraughnaugh, for the high honor of National Vice Commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: James Fraughnaugh has been placed in the nomination for the office of National Vice Commander. Microphone number 4, please.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN JERRY DENNIS: As Delegation Chairman, I request permission for NEC Elton Ford to approach the podium for the purpose of a nomination.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: NECman Alton Ford, from Michigan is so recognized.

DELEGATE ALTON FORD: It’s a pleasure and privilege to be here today to present to you our candidate for National Vice Commander from the great state of Michigan. His name is Milton Lobstein. Milt gained his eligibility to belong to The American Legion by serving in the United States Navy from 1951 to 1955. He served his entire Navy career aboard ship reaching the rating of Machinist Third Class before being honorably discharged. He is a life member of the Police and Firefighters Post 161 with 32 years of dedicated service to The American Legion. He served all offices in his Post, including Commander for two years. He served his District as Committeeman for three years, Department Vice Commander one year and in 1983, Milt served as our Department Commander. Since that time, he has served on many Department Committees including Chairman of VA&R for four years and Chairman of the Law & Order Committee. He was the manager of his Post American Legion Baseball Team for eight years. On the National level, Milt served on the Law & Order Committee and is currently serving as Vice Chairman of the Counter Subversive Activities Committee.
In 1985, Milt retired from the Detroit police force with 30 years of service, then served the United States Government as a special agent, criminal investigator, retiring recently to devote full time to The American Legion. Milt has been married to his lovely wife Virginia for 24 years. They have three children and six grandchildren and Ginny is very supportive of his work in The American Legion. He is an active member of the Lutheran Church, serving as a catechism teacher and as a member of the choir and the men's club. He is a member of the Navy League, the Navy Institute and is a 32nd Degree Mason. He has the support of his Department of Michigan, the Great Lakes state. I am proud to present to you the name of Milton Lobstein for the high office of National Vice Commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: The name of Milton Lobstein has been placed into nomination. Microphone number 3, please.

DELEGATE CHAIRMAN DEL MARTIN: As a delegate from Minnesota, I ask the Chair to recognize Department Commander Dennis Sculthorp for purpose of nomination.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: Dennis is so recognized by the Chair for the purpose of a nomination.

DENNIS DENNIS SCULTHORP: The American Legion Department of Minnesota, as a result of an election in the Minnesota Department Convention held July 17 at Morehead, Minnesota proudly nominates Robert ‘Call me Buster’ Skallerud for the office of National Vice Commander for the year 1999-2000. Robert is a Korean conflict veteran. He served in the U.S. Army from 1951 to 1953. He has been a member of The American Legion for over 46 years. He was awarded life membership in his post in 1993. He has served most offices and chairmanship on the Post level including Commander. He has served as County Commander along with other offices and Chairmanships.

On the District level, he has served most offices including Commander in 1992-1993. And for the great state of Minnesota Department, Robert has served on many Committees and held many Chairmanships. He has also served as Department Vice Commander. I guess after today we can call him Junior Past Department Commander, which he is just completing. Robert has been invited to become a member of Anavicus at this Convention and he has since completed that task. Robert has been a delegate to more than 20 district conventions, 17 Department Conventions and 11 National Conventions where he has served on several committees. He has attended several regional workshops and leadership schools.

He has completed The American Legion Extension Institute course and the last I talked to him, he passed. Robert has attended several briefings, Spring Meetings, Fall Meetings at National Headquarters in Indianapolis. He has also represented The American Legion at the Legislative meetings in Minnesota and in Washington, DC. He actively promotes the awareness of the POW/MIA issue. He represented Minnesota American Legion on a trip with the Minnesota International Guard to Tyndell Airforce Base in Florida and to Panama to learn about our country’s war on drugs and our military positions with Panama and the Panama Canal. Robert is an active supporter of The American Legion Baseball Program. He has also received several meritorious awards from his local 4-H and Boy Scouts for his active participation and donation to their many projects.

Robert is a retired auctioneer and enjoys dedicating his time and energy to The American Legion. He is a knowledgeable, dedicated and experienced Legionnaire. He has the leadership qualities and the ability to identify with Legionnaires of every level and every walk of life. The Minnesota delegation is confident that he will be an excellent representative of the National Organization for The American Legion. In an honest, kind and sincere manner and as capable and ready to perform all duties as assigned to and expected
of him, therefore, we of Minnesota proudly enter the name of Robert ‘Buster’ Skallerud for
the nomination of National Vice Commander for the year 1999-2000.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: The name of Robert Skallerud has been
entered into nomination by the Department of Minnesota. Microphone number 4.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN ROBERT MORRILL: As a delegate Chairman from the
great state of New York. I request that you recognize Al Carpenter for the purposes of a
nomination for National Vice Commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: The Chair so recognizes the gentleman for the
purposes of a nomination.

DELEGATE AL CARPENTER: I have been afforded the privilege of placing a
nomination for the high office of National Vice Commander of The American Legion, a
friend and dedicated 30-plus year Legionnaire from the Department of New York, Robert
F. Neville. Bob is a Vietnam era veteran and family man. He and his wife are the proud
parents of the Reverend Father Robert L. Neville. Our nominee worked up through The
American Legion chair, been there, done that, has the shirt and hat to prove it, therefore, I
will not relate all of his accomplishments. However, Legionnaire Neville has been extremely
involved in our youth and has been a part of The American Legion Boys State Program for
some 25 years, serving as Post Chairman, City, County, State Counselor, Program Director
and Executive Director prior to his election as Department Commander in 1997. Since Bob’s
term as an outstanding Department Commander, he has continued to keep busy as consultant
to the Sons of The American Legion Detachment of New York and is a member of the
Financial Investment and Executive Committees of the Department.

On the National level, he’s a member of the Foreign Relations Commission and, of
course, an active participant in The American Legion Boys State National Meetings as well
as a delegate to many National Conventions. He’s found time throughout all of this to be
active in his fire department and serves on the advisory board for the Long Island State
Veterans Home at Stony Brook. As a duly elected delegate from the great empire state of
New York American Legion, I nominate Robert F. Neville for National Vice Commander
for the 1999-2000 American Legion year.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: The name of Robert F. Neville has been
placed into nomination. Microphone number 3.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN JERRY HUFFMAN: I am a duly elected and registered
delagate and Chairman of the evergreen state of Washington Delegation. I request you
recognize Past National Vice Commander Doris Gross for the purpose of placing a
nomination before this body.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: Past National Vice Commander Doris Gross
from Washington is so recognized for the purpose of placing into nomination an individual.

PAST NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER DORIS GROSS: As a delegate from the
state of Washington, it is my privilege and honor to nominate an active Legionnaire from
the state of Washington for the prestigious office of National Vice Commander, Harry
Easley. Born and raised in Hannibal, Missouri, he came to the state of Washington to
Missouri via Illinois and California. He immediately became active in The American
Legion. Harry, an Air Force veteran of the Korean conflict, has served The American Legion
as Chairman of several Post, District and state Committees. He was especially active as
Department Law & Order Chairman. He created meaningful programs for the presentation
of awards for those special firemen and policemen.
Harry Easley has been Post Commander, District Commander, Department Vice Commander and Department Commander. He has served nationally as Alternate National Executive Committeeman, as a member of the Defense Civil Preparedness Committee and also worked with the National Law & Order Committee. It is prophetic that before moving to the state of Washington, Harry was a policeman for 28 years here in Anaheim. He retired in 1986 as the Crime’s Property Bureau Commander in the Detective division with the rank of Lieutenant. In 1978, while here in Anaheim, Harry was named Policeman of the Year by Anaheim Post 72. Harry has the great support of his wife, Janice, who is very active in the Auxiliary. Harry Easley, leader, excellent speaker and dedicated Legionnaire, will proudly present The American Legion as a National Vice Commander for the year 1999-2000 and we, in the state of Washington, are so proud to have nominated him.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: Harry Easley's name has now been placed into nomination. The Chair will entertain a motion of seconding all five nominations. Hearing a second, those in favor signify in the usual manner of aye. Nays? Ayes have it.

The Chair would now like to call microphone number 1.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN ROBERT PROCTOR: As a duly elected delegate from the state of Florida, I move the nominations of National Vice Commander be closed.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: Motion's been made to close the nominations. Is there a second?

The motion was seconded.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: Hearing a second, it is non-debatable. Those in favor of the motion, signify in the usual manner of aye. Nays? In the opinion of the Chair, the ayes have it.

I recognize microphone number 2.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN RAY HENDRIX: As a registered delegate to this convention, I move that the National Adjutant be directed to cast one unanimous vote for the entire delegate strength of this convention for the following names of National Vice Commander and that they be elected by acclamation. They are as follows: James L. Fraughnaugh, Alabama; Milton W. Lobstein, Michigan; Robert D. Skallerud, Minnesota; Robert L. Neville, New York; and L. Harry Easley, Washington. I so move.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: Is there a second to the motion?

The motion was seconded.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: Hearing a second, those in favor of the motion signify in the usual manner of aye. Opposed nay. In the opinion of the Chair, the ayes have it.

I'd like to call on the National Adjutant, please.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: As National Adjutant of The American Legion, I cast one vote representing the entire delegate strength of the convention for James F. Fraughnaugh, Alabama; Milton W. Lobstein, Michigan; Robert D. Skallerud, Minnesota; Robert F. Neville, New York; and L. Harry Easley of Washington for the offices of National Vice Commander of The American Legion.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: I declare James Fraughnaugh, Alabama; Milton Lobstein, Michigan; Robert Skallerud, Minnesota; Robert Neville, New York; and L. Harry Easley, Washington as duly elected National Vice Commanders of The American Legion. Will the new National Vice Commanders please come to the platform?
Presentation of Colors to Newly Elected National Commander

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: I now call on Past National Commander Bob Turner of Georgia to present the Colors to our incoming National Commander.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER TURNER: Delegates to this Convention and distinguished guests, will you please rise for the presentation of the Colors to our new National Commander? Color Guard, would you please present the Colors of the new National Commander of The American Legion.

Commander Lance, would you please join me here at the podium?

Mr. Commander, you stand before this convention having received a unanimous vote of confidence in your ability to represent not only Legionnaires but all America's veterans. I know, and all the delegates here know, that you are the right man to carry us into the new Millennium. May the Colors that we present to you this morning be a source of inspiration and pride. And Alan, we pray God's blessings on you and your family as you travel for our organization during this next year.

Color Guard, please return the colors of the National Commander to the post. Right hand salute! Two!

Presentation of Newly Elected National President of the American Legion Auxiliary

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: This is a very special time in the business of this convention, the time when we meet the distinguished lady who will lead the nearly one million patriotic women of the Auxiliary over the next year.

Please welcome to our stage the newly elected National President of the American Legion Auxiliary, a member of Otis D. Green Unit 155 in Kings Mountain, North Carolina, a true lady, a true leader, and our good friend, Miss Lib Stewart.

PRESIDENT STEWART: Someone has said that for every opportunity we enjoy there is a challenge and for every challenge, there is an opportunity. And certainly, as our new National Commander has said, The American Legion family faces many new challenges in the new century. Personally and on behalf of the nearly one million members of the American Legion Auxiliary, I want to take this opportunity to thank The American Legion family for all that you do in your local communities for veterans and their families and for children and youth. And to our new Commander and to our outgoing Commander also, we continue to pledge our 100% support to all the programs of The American Legion family.

I would be remiss if I did not take this opportunity to thank Commander Miller for his outstanding leadership during the past year and to thank you all on behalf of the American Legion Auxiliary. I look forward to working with Commander Lance and all of you in the coming year. And I have with me this morning, the newly installed National Vice President Chris West of the Department of New Hampshire. We will celebrate America 2000 as the Auxiliary theme and we do have much to celebrate.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: It is with great pride, as a member of this organization and a Past National Commander of this organization, that I to present to you for the very first time, the leadership team for 1999-2000, our National Commander Alan Lance and our National President Lib Stewart.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: As you know, during this year, I've been tagged the Cyber Commander, and a number of other titles. You have been very gracious
in allowing me to interact with you on a somewhat electronic basis and I have to admit when I first began I didn’t know how well it would be accepted. But it has been accepted much better than I had anticipated. There was more than once that I spent a number of hours, until 1, 2, 3 o’clock in the morning sometimes, answering all the e-mail especially around the time when we passed Resolution 44 [The American Legion Statement on Yugoslavia].

I enjoyed it then and I will enjoy it in the future. The transition that you see on the screen is from Red Cap Mr. Miller to Blue Cap Mr. Miller. Don’t you just love electronics? I will also transition from the NatCmdr@aol.com address to my new pncbutch@aol.com. So, please, I’ll be out there. I would love to hear from you and I’m hoping that together we can get ourselves into the next century and be in the lead as our National Adjutant says, because we are the best and we need to stay there.

I now call on the Adjutant for the purpose of some announcements.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: The National Convention By-Laws of The American Legion require that the National Executive Committee meet within 24 hours following the adjournment of the Annual National Convention. I’m announcing a meeting of the National Executive Committee to be held immediately following the adjournment of this National Convention in Room A9 of the Anaheim Convention Center, first level.

Unfinished Business

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: Is there any further business to come before this convention? Hearing none, I call upon outgoing National Chaplain Father Sweeney of New York to offer the Benediction.

Benediction

Rev. Robert J. Sweeney, New York, National Chaplain

As we go our separate ways, and the work of the 81st Annual Convention of The American Legion is concluded, we pray for a safe journey homeward for the delegates, alternates, guests and spouses present at this Convention. When they arrive at their homes, may they bring the true message of The American Legion to their individual posts, a message of generosity of spirit and selfless service to God and Country. Continue to fill Past National Commander Butch Miller with Your spirit. Bless our new National Commander Al Lance, his Vice Commanders and their families as they begin their year of service across this great nation. And as we pray for safe journey for ourselves, let us continue to pray for the members of our Armed Forces that they may be returned home to their families and loved ones. This we ask in Your holy name. Amen.

Retirement of Colors

NATIONAL COMMANDER MILLER: The Speedway Post 500 Color Guard will retire the flag of the United States. The delegates will render a right hand salute. One! Two!

I now declare the 81st Annual National Convention of The American Legion adjourned, sine die.

...At 12:55 p.m., the 81st Annual National Convention of The American Legion adjourned.
ANNOUNCEMENT OF ANNUAL AWARDS

National American Legion Distinguished Service Medal Award: Awarded annually for outstanding service to the nation and to the programs of The American Legion.
RECIPIENT: Zachary Fisher

American Legion Baseball Graduate of The Year Award: Presented to the major league baseball player who played American Legion Baseball as a teenager and best exemplifies the principles and purposes of the program in sportsmanship, citizenship, general good conduct, integrity, and playing ability.
RECIPIENT: Tony Gwynn; San Diego Padres

Bob Feller Award: Awarded annually to that American Legion Baseball player recording the greatest number of strikeouts during the regional tournaments and World Series of American Legion Baseball.
RECIPIENT: Steve Grasley, Post 513, New Brighton, Minnesota

Commissioner of Baseball Trophy: Awarded annually at the Major League World Series to that baseball team which becomes the National Champion as a result of playing in The American Legion World Series.
RECIPIENT: Tri-City Post 513, New Brighton, Minnesota

Dr. Irvin L. ‘Click’ Cowger Memorial R.B.I. Award: Awarded annually to The American Legion Baseball player who is credited with the most runs batted in by the official score keepers of the respective regional tournaments and World Series of American Legion Baseball.
RECIPIENT: Brian Paone, Post 513, New Brighton, MN

Ford C. Frick Trophy: Awarded annually to that Department having within its jurisdiction the runner-up team in the National Finals of The American Legion Baseball program.
RECIPIENT: Washington (Post 34, Kennewick, WA)

The Frank N. Belgrano, Jr. Trophy: Awarded annually to that Department which has rendered the most outstanding service during the year to the program of the Boy Scouts of America.
RECIPIENT: Illinois

George W. Rulon Baseball Player of the Year: Plaque is presented to recipient by appropriate official upon conclusion of The American Legion Baseball World Series. Citation is presented to recipient at a special Hall of Fame ceremony at Cooperstown, NY, the following summer.
RECIPIENT: Jeremy S. Roberts, Post 83, Rison, Arkansas

The Howard P. Savage Trophy: Awarded annually to that Department having the baseball team which becomes the Champion as a result of playing in The American Legion World Series.
RECIPIENT: Minnesota (Post 513, New Brighton, MN)
Jack Williams Memorial Leadership Award: Awarded annually to the manager and coach of the national championship team, as representative of the adult leadership Jack Williams stressed during his lifetime.

RECIPIENT(s): Manager Jeff Larsen, Post 513, New Brighton, Minnesota  
Coach Mark Paone, Post 513, New Brighton, Minnesota  
Coach Mike Maslowski, Post 513, New Brighton, Minnesota

James F. Daniel, Jr. Memorial Sportsmanship Award: Awarded to The American Legion Baseball player participating in the World Series that represents the principle of good sportsmanship emphasized by the program.

RECIPIENT: Timothy Brusseau, Jr., Post 39, Wood River, Vermont

Louisville Slugger Trophy: Plaque is presented to recipient, or designated representative, by appropriate official upon the conclusion of The American Legion Baseball World Series.

RECIPIENT: Kenny Judd, Post 111, Edmond, Oklahoma

The Ralph T. O'Neil Education Trophy: Awarded annually to that Department within the continental limits in the United States showing the greatest Americanism activity in use of The American Legion School Medal Awards.

RECIPIENT: Wyoming

Rawlings 'Big Stick' award: Awarded annually to that American Legion Baseball player having the highest total number of bases as determined by the official score keepers of the respective regional tournaments and World Series of American Legion Baseball.

RECIPIENT: Brian Paone, Post 513, New Brighton, Minnesota

Spafford National Trophy: Awarded annually to that Department of The American Legion having within its jurisdiction the winner of the National High School Oratorical Contest.

RECIPIENT: Texas (Kevin Sladek, San Marcos, TX)

William Randolph Hearst Trophy: Awarded annually to that Department attaining the greatest number of percentage points compiled from information contained in the Consolidated Post Reports, and supporting Department narrative.

RECIPIENT: Ohio

Canadian Friendship Award: Awarded by the National Commander with the advice and consent of the National Executive Committee at such times and places as may be consistent and appropriate.

RECIPIENT(s): Allan Babcock (Ontario)  
Donald L. Gallant (Prince Edward Island)  
Roderick K. Johnston (New Brunswick)  
Roger Ouellette (New Brunswick)  
Ronald Rivard (Alberta)  
Thomas Arthur Snell (Ontario)  
Boyd Story (New Brunswick)
Department Award for 100% Post Children & Youth Reporting: Awarded annually to those Departments which achieve 100% of Posts indicating Children & Youth activity on Consolidated Post reports.

RECIPIENT(s): California, Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Massachusetts, New York, Oregon, and Pennsylvania

Employer of the Year Award for Hiring Veterans: Awarded to an employer in recognition of outstanding achievement in the employment and retraining of veterans.

RECIPIENT(s): Category I—Jacobs Construction, Lemont, Pennsylvania
              Category II—Computer Sciences Corporation, Clearfield, Utah
              Category III—Georgia-Pacific Plywood, Crossett, Arkansas

Employment Service Awards: Awarded in three categories: Local Veterans Employment Representative (LVER) of the Year; Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialist (DVOP) of the Year; Employment Service (ES) Office of the Year.

RECIPIENT(s): LVER of the Year: Max Niesar, Minot, North Dakota
              DVOP of the Year: Robert E. Loter, Des Moines, Iowa
              ES Office of the Year: Fayetteville JobLink Career Center, Fayetteville, NC

Awards To Enhance The Lives Of Disabled Persons: The program is a joint project between the National Organization & the JC Penney Co., to award those Posts that enhance the lives of disable persons by providing opportunities for their participation in community activities.

RECIPIENT(s): The judging for the 1998/1999 awards has not been completed.

National Department History Contest Awards: Awarded annually at the Fall Meeting of the National Executive Committee to those contestants entered in the National Department History Contest having submitted the One-Year History Narrative or Yearbook of the Department which best meets the standards established for that particular competition.

RECIPIENT(s): Vermont (One-Year Narrative History)
                South Dakota (One-Year Yearbook History)

National Post History Contest Awards: Awarded annually to those contestants entered in the National Post History Contest deemed by a duly authorized panel of judges to have submitted the One-Year History of the Post which best meets the standards established for the competitions.

RECIPIENT(s): Women's Post 118, Virginia Beach, Virginia
              (One-Year Narrative History)
              Santiam Post 51, Lebanon, Oregon
              (One-Year Yearbook History)

International Amity Award: Awarded by the National Commander with the advice and consent of the National Executive Committee at such times and places as may be consistent and appropriate.
RECIPIENT(s): Kap-Chong Chi (Korea)
Lee Cheng-Lin (Taiwan, Republic of China)
Bias F. Ople (Philippines)

The Arthur D. Houghton Sons of The American Legion Trophy: Awarded annually to that Detachment of Sons of The American Legion in each of three membership size categories (I - 1-999 members; II - 1,000-2,000 members; III - 3,000 members or more), each of said Detachments attaining the greatest percentage of increase over previous year's membership when compared with all Detachments in its category.

1998 RECIPIENT(s): (I)—Detachment of Iowa 132.1%
(II)—Detachment of North Carolina 116.9%
(III)—Detachment of Pennsylvania 112.3%

General Henri Gouraud Trophy: Awarded annually to that Department in each of six categories established by the National Membership and Post Activities Committee, each of said Department having been the first in its respective category to attain or exceed its nationally assigned membership quota (effective 1986).

RECIPIENT(s): Category I— No Departments Qualified in this Category
Category II— No Departments Qualified in this Category
Category III— Virginia
Category IV— Kentucky
Category V— South Carolina
Category VI— Alaska & Nevada (tie)

General John J. Pershing Honor Award: Awarded annually to that Department having the greatest percentage of its posts receiving the Honor Ribbon for having 100 percent or more, of the post's previous year's membership enrolled for the coming year by December 31, and having reported such achievement to National Headquarters by not later than January 31.

RECIPIENT: Vermont

The Henry D. Lindsley Trophy: Awarded annually to the Department attaining the highest percentage of membership over its preceding year's membership by March 31.

RECIPIENT: South Dakota

The North Carolina Trophy: Awarded annually to the Department, not included among the several state Departments or the Department of the District of Columbia, attaining the highest percentage of membership as of March 31, over its preceding year's membership.

RECIPIENT: Puerto Rico

The O. L. Bodenhamer Trophy: Awarded annually to that Department designated to lead the parade at the time of the ensuing National Convention.

RECIPIENT: South Dakota

The American Legion Air Force Academy Award: Awarded annually to that cadet of the graduating class at the Air Force Academy who demonstrates the highest proficiency in all academic subjects.
RECIPIENT: Cadet Jeffry D. Moffitt

The American Legion Coast Guard Academy Award: Awarded annually to that cadet of the graduating class of the United States Coast Guard Academy who is considered to have personally excelled in athletics.
RECIPIENT: Cadet Michael Sharp

The American Legion Merchant Marine Academy Award: Awarded annually to that graduating midshipman of the Merchant Marine Academy, enrolled in the Pre-Commissioning Seminar Course, and selected by the Academy Faculty, as achieving the highest grade pertaining to a 1,000 word composition dealing with the subject of National Security.
RECIPIENT: Midshipman George Lloyd Beck, Jr.

The American Legion Military Academy Award: Awarded annually to cadet of the graduating class at the United States Military Academy with the highest standing in Chemistry.
RECIPIENT: Cadet Jason A. Grassbaugh

The American Legion Naval Academy Award: Awarded annually to that graduating midshipman of the United States Naval Academy who stands highest in those English, History and Government courses taken to complete a Foreign Affairs major.
RECIPIENT: Midshipman Jeffrey Michael Monoghan

National Commander’s Blood Donor Awards: Presented to departments in different sized categories for participating in The American Legion’s Blood Donor Program.
RECIPIENT(s): Category I - Depts. with 100,000 or more members
Post & Individual Participation: Florida
Category II - Depts. with 70,000 to 99,999 mbrs.
Post & Individual Participation: Massachusetts
Category III - Depts. with 40,000 to 69,999 mbrs
Post & Individual Participation: Nebraska
Category IV - Depts. with 25,000 to 39,999 mbrs.
Post & Individual Participation: Tennessee
Category V - Depts. with 10,000 to 24,999 mbrs.
Post & Individual Participation: Rhode Island
Category VI - Depts. with less than 10,000 members
Post & Individual Participation: Hawaii

National Law Enforcement Officer Of The Year Award: To recognize an outstanding law enforcement officer as selected from Department law enforcement officer winners for distinguished on-and off-duty service. The accomplishments for which the award is presented shall have been in accordance with, or in furtherance of, established American Legion policies or programs and it shall have contributed to the preservation of law and order as well as the American way of life.
RECIPIENT: Police Officer Ronald Tookes, Miami-Dade, FL
Paul H. Griffith ROTC Trophy: Awarded annually to that Department giving the highest degree of support to the ROTC program within its jurisdiction, based on criteria drawn up by the National Security Commission.

RECIPIENT(s): Alaska, Arkansas, Florida, Hawaii, Illinois, Maine, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Missouri, New York, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Vermont, and Virginia

Fourth Estate Award: Awarded to press, radio, TV, or other communications media; to associations of same, to owners, executive heads or staff members; such award to be in recognition of outstanding service to community, state, or nation, which service shall have been in accordance with or the furtherance of established American Legion policies and programs.

RECIPIENT: Jerry Mitchell, Reporter, The Clarion-Ledger, Jackson, Mississippi

National Commander's Public Relations Award: Awarded to an outstanding individual and/or organization for distinguished public service in the field of communications.

RECIPIENT: Alan Keyes

The Arch M. Cantrall Trophy: Awarded annually to that American Legion Band winning first prize in competition with all other American Legion bands during the annual National Convention of The American Legion.

RECIPIENT: American Legion Band of the Tonawandas, Post 264, Tonawanda, NY

Emblem Sales Trophy: To be awarded annually to that Junior sponsored Color Guard winning first prize in competition with all other Junior sponsored Color Guards during the annual National Convention of The American Legion.

RECIPIENT: No Contest in 1999

The Four Chaplains Trophy: Awarded annually to the winner of The American Legion Firing Squad competition at the National Convention.

RECIPIENT: No Contest in 1999

The Glen R. Hillis Trophy: Awarded annually to that Color Guard winning first prize in competition with all other Color Guards during the annual National Convention of The American Legion.

RECIPIENT: Henderson-Smith-Edmonds Post 86, Rockville, MD

The Lemuel Boles Trophy: Awarded annually to that band winning first prize in competition with all other bands during the annual National Convention.

RECIPIENT: American Legion Band of the Tonawandas Post 264, Tonawanda, New York

National Adjutant's Trophy: Awarded annually to that American Legion Firing Squad winning first prize in competition with all other Firing Squads during the annual National Convention of The American Legion.

RECIPIENT: No Contest in 1999
William F. Lenker National Service Trophy: Awarded annually to that State Department of The American Legion excelling in welfare work for war veterans, providing the membership of that Department shall be no less than 80% of the membership of the preceding year. 
RECIPIENT: Minnesota
Independent Auditor's Report

Mr. Harold L. Miller, National Commander
and Members of the National Finance Commission
The American Legion National Headquarters
Indianapolis, Indiana

We have audited the accompanying consolidated statement of financial position of The American Legion National Headquarters and its wholly owned subsidiary (the Legion) as of December 31, 1998 and 1997, and the related consolidated statements of activities and cash flows for the years then ended. These consolidated financial statements are the responsibility of the Legion's management. Our responsibility is to express an opinion on these financial statements based on our audits.

We conducted our audits in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements are free of material misstatement. An audit includes examining, on a test basis, evidence supporting the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. An audit also includes assessing the accounting principles used and significant estimates made by management, as well as evaluating the overall financial statement presentation. We believe that our audits provide a reasonable basis for our opinion.

In our opinion, the consolidated financial statements referred to above present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of The American Legion National Headquarters and subsidiary as of December 31, 1998 and 1997, and the changes in their net assets and their cash flows for the years then ended, in conformity with generally accepted accounting principles.

Our audits were performed for the purpose of forming an opinion on the consolidated financial statements taken as a whole. The reconciliation of audited financial statements to internal financial statements is presented for purposes of additional analysis and is not a required part of the consolidated financial statements. Such information has been subjected to the auditing procedures applied in the audits of the consolidated financial statements and, in our opinion, is fairly stated in all material respects in relation to the consolidated financial statements taken as a whole.

Indianapolis, Indiana
April 2, 1999
# Consolidated Statement of Financial Position

**Assets**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>December 31, 1998</th>
<th>December 31, 1997</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cash and cash equivalents</strong></td>
<td>$1,067,360</td>
<td>$1,000,850</td>
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<tr>
<td>Restricted cash</td>
<td>58,118</td>
<td>54,472</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Due from The American Legion Endowment Fund Corporation (Special Account)</td>
<td>2,000,000</td>
<td>2,000,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Accounts receivable</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emblem Division</td>
<td>1,750,620</td>
<td>1,586,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Publications Division</td>
<td>1,734,259</td>
<td>1,540,955</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1,702,646</td>
<td>1,490,416</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prepaid expenses and deposits</td>
<td>672,146</td>
<td>559,181</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deferred membership expense</td>
<td>3,910,093</td>
<td>3,277,001</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Investments</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emblem Division</td>
<td>1,532,573</td>
<td>1,404,913</td>
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<tr>
<td>Publications Division</td>
<td>795,000</td>
<td>719,559</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investment in affiliates (CFA)</td>
<td>70,676</td>
<td>227,562</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prepaid pension expenses</td>
<td>11,990,193</td>
<td>9,879,064</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Property, plant, and equipment</strong></td>
<td>25,888,438</td>
<td>22,514,590</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Buildings and equipment</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Segregated for Designated Funds</td>
<td>15,783,040</td>
<td>14,716,361</td>
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<tr>
<td>Segregated for Washington, D.C. Building</td>
<td>1,268,600</td>
<td>1,118,911</td>
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<tr>
<td>Overseas Graves Decorative Fund</td>
<td>980,083</td>
<td>951,587</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paid-Up-For-Life Membership Fund</td>
<td>29,506,613</td>
<td>24,315,155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>28,873,670</td>
<td>22,526,151</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Property, plant, and equipment</strong></td>
<td>61,280,060</td>
<td>57,230,365</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land—Indemnity parking site (Washington, D.C.)</td>
<td>238,359</td>
<td>238,359</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Land</strong></td>
<td>80,000</td>
<td>80,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Building</strong></td>
<td>4,075,728</td>
<td>4,108,719</td>
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<tr>
<td>Furniture, Fixtures, and equipment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Headquarters, Indemnity, Inc. (Washington, D.C.)</td>
<td>8,337,104</td>
<td>9,295,108</td>
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<tr>
<td>Haynes and Partners Communications, Inc.</td>
<td>1,547,095</td>
<td>1,562,523</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Accomplished depreciation and amortization</strong></td>
<td>706,233</td>
<td>705,072</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total assets</strong></td>
<td>$211,132,912</td>
<td>$191,049,402</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Liabilities**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>December 31, 1998</th>
<th>December 31, 1997</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accounts payable</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deferred dues</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deferred advertising income</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deferred income—direct membership solicitation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deferred income—Indemnity insurance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deferred income—the American Legion Endowment Fund Corporation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deferred income—Paid-Up-For-Life memberships</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deferred paid-up-for-life membership</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deferred due income</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unrestricted—general</strong></td>
<td>11,428,000</td>
<td>9,872,187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unrestricted—designated</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Citizens Flag Alliance</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Convention reserve</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Convention stabilization</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Employee insurance stabilization</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Govermental contracts</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Paid-Up-For-Life Membership Fund</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Real estate reserve</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Reserve Fund</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Restricted Fund</strong></td>
<td>13,440,379</td>
<td>12,400,778</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Trust property (life insurance plans)</strong></td>
<td>2,404,343</td>
<td>4,472,746</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Veterans' rehabilitation/veteran agencies (Special Account)</strong></td>
<td>2,000,000</td>
<td>2,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Net assets</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Temporarily Restricted</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total liabilities and net assets</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

See notes to consolidated financial statements.
### The American Legion National Headquarters and Subsidiary

#### Consolidated Statement of Activities

**Year Ended December 31, 1998**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>General</th>
<th>Temporarily Restricted</th>
<th>Permanently Restricted</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Revenue, Gifts and Other Support</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National membership</td>
<td>$523,946,958</td>
<td>$1,429,411</td>
<td>$2,376,549</td>
<td>$2,376,549</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Other than membership&quot;</td>
<td>6,112,000</td>
<td>6,112,000</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sales—IDX</td>
<td>1,112,457</td>
<td>1,112,457</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertising</td>
<td>6,547,302</td>
<td>6,547,302</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct membership solicitation</td>
<td>1,906,017</td>
<td>1,906,017</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Legion Endowment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Contributions</strong></td>
<td>500,886</td>
<td>500,886</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Restricted Sales of Emblem Homes</strong></td>
<td>1,112,400</td>
<td>1,112,400</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Direct membership solicitation</strong></td>
<td>1,986,017</td>
<td>1,986,017</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fund Corporation support</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MINA financial program income</strong></td>
<td>508,884</td>
<td>743,326</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Label and printing fees</strong></td>
<td>1,720,137</td>
<td>1,720,137</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Member service fees income</strong></td>
<td>1,905,963</td>
<td>1,905,963</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Investment income, net of trustee fees</strong></td>
<td>742,393</td>
<td>816,936</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Net realized gains (losses)</strong></td>
<td>508,886</td>
<td>743,326</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total revenues, gifts and other support</strong></td>
<td>53,665,928</td>
<td>8,112,800</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Expenses</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Salaries</strong></td>
<td>18,034,967</td>
<td>18,034,967</td>
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<tr>
<td>Employee benefits</td>
<td>792,497</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cost of sales</td>
<td>6,499,340</td>
<td>6,499,340</td>
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<tr>
<td>Direct publication</td>
<td>12,477,667</td>
<td>12,477,667</td>
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<tr>
<td>Executive and staff travel</td>
<td>991,534</td>
<td>991,534</td>
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<tr>
<td>Counter and capacitits</td>
<td>1,302,619</td>
<td>1,302,619</td>
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<tr>
<td>Printing and proofing</td>
<td>3,927,315</td>
<td>3,927,315</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scholarships, grants and awards</td>
<td>1,412,996</td>
<td>1,412,996</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Office and other operating</td>
<td>8,724,688</td>
<td>8,724,688</td>
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<tr>
<td>Occupancy and usage</td>
<td>5,553,334</td>
<td>5,553,334</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special projects and programs</td>
<td>4,734,757</td>
<td>4,734,757</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total expenses</strong></td>
<td>52,708,806</td>
<td>52,708,806</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Change in Net Assets Before That Unrestricted Gifts</strong></td>
<td>5,357,137</td>
<td>51,682</td>
<td>4,616,165</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Net Unrestricted Gifts</strong></td>
<td>64,899</td>
<td>1,442,750</td>
<td>1,377,951</td>
<td>1,442,750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Change in Net Assets</strong></td>
<td>4,911,931</td>
<td>1,514,322</td>
<td>5,039,957</td>
<td>5,039,957</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Net Assets, Beginning of Year</strong></td>
<td>5,972,112</td>
<td>91,757,199</td>
<td>97,729,311</td>
<td>97,729,311</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Net Assets, End of Year</strong></td>
<td>8,172,112</td>
<td>109,424,777</td>
<td>117,617,689</td>
<td>117,617,689</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

See notes to consolidated financial statements.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year Ended December 31</th>
<th>1998</th>
<th>1997</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Operating Activities</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in net assets</td>
<td>$5,834,437</td>
<td>$6,527,101</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adjustments to reconcile change in net assets to net cash provided by operating activities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depreciation and amortization</td>
<td>1,062,017</td>
<td>1,492,407</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss on sale of investments</td>
<td>12,658</td>
<td>170,268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Gain) Loss on sale of fixed assets</td>
<td>(33,424)</td>
<td>130,932</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unrealized gains on investments</td>
<td>(1,473,172)</td>
<td>(3,474,315)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Changes in:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restricted cash</td>
<td>(1,646)</td>
<td>(26,420)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accounts receivable</td>
<td>(307,904)</td>
<td>(336,775)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepaid expenses and deposits</td>
<td>(102,385)</td>
<td>658,865</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deferred expenses</td>
<td>66,106</td>
<td>960,711</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investment in CFA</td>
<td>23,886</td>
<td>(46,200)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inventories</td>
<td>(504,995)</td>
<td>161,492</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepaid pension expense</td>
<td>(1,499,329)</td>
<td>(1,557,681)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accounts payable</td>
<td>(254,645)</td>
<td>462,601</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deferred income</td>
<td>4,286,228</td>
<td>2,206,308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accrued vacation</td>
<td>19,548</td>
<td>26,714</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other liabilities</td>
<td>197,502</td>
<td>393,470</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Net cash provided by operating activities</strong></td>
<td>$7,124,792</td>
<td>$7,771,878</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Investing Activities</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchase of property and equipment</td>
<td>(315,917)</td>
<td>(459,292)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proceeds from sale of property and equipment</td>
<td>20,537</td>
<td>24,212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchase of investments</td>
<td>(69,404,829)</td>
<td>(54,378,671)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales and maturities of investments</td>
<td>63,322,902</td>
<td>47,580,225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Net cash used by investing activities</strong></td>
<td>(6,577,307)</td>
<td>(7,015,363)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Financing Activity</strong>—reduction of long-term debt</td>
<td></td>
<td>(559,960)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Net increase in cash and cash equivalents</strong></td>
<td>$547,885</td>
<td>186,555</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cash and cash equivalents, beginning of year</strong></td>
<td>$1,059,824</td>
<td>873,221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cash and cash equivalents, end of year</strong></td>
<td>$1,607,709</td>
<td>$1,059,824</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Supplemental cash flows information</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cash paid for interest</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income taxes paid</td>
<td>$382,572</td>
<td>$45,207</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

See notes to consolidated financial statements.
The American Legion National Headquarters and Subsidiary Notes to Consolidated Financial Statements

The American Legion National Headquarters (the Legion) is a national veterans organization, which was declared to be a corporate body by an Act of the United States Congress on September 14, 1919.

According to the Original Act and Subsequent Amendments, the purpose of the Legion is: “To uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States of America; to promote peace and good will among the peoples of the United States and all the nations of the earth; to preserve the memories and incidents of the two World Wars and the other great battles fought to uphold democracy; to extend the line and fellowship born of service; and to communicate the effects of its members to utmost helpfulness and service to their country.”

Approximately 50% of the Legion’s income is derived from membership dues. An additional 15% is generated through subscriptions and advertising for the American Legion Magazine. Additionally, income is derived from investment income, which includes the sale of property, stock, and other items, and from investment income.

The preparation of financial statements in conformity with generally accepted accounting principles requires management to make estimates and assumptions that affect financial statements or disclosures. These estimates and assumptions are based on the most current available information. The use of different estimates or assumptions could result in different financial statements or disclosures.

Principles of Consolidation

The consolidated financial statements include the accounts of The American Legion National Headquarters, and all wholly owned subsidiaries, Haynes and Partners Communications Inc. (HPC), and material inter-organizational accounts and transactions between the Legion and the American Legion Foundation. The preparation of the consolidated financial statements requires management to make estimates and assumptions that affect financial statements or disclosures. The use of different estimates or assumptions could result in different financial statements or disclosures.

Support and Revenue

The American Legion Magazine. Another significant source of income is Emblem sales, which includes additional 15% is generated through subscriptions and advertising for the American Legion Magazine. The remaining sole is made primarily within the State of Indiana.

Principles of Consolidation

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Principles of Consolidation

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Support and Revenue

The American Legion Magazine. Another significant source of income is Emblem sales, which includes additional 15% is generated through subscriptions and advertising for the American Legion Magazine. The remaining sole is made primarily within the State of Indiana.
The American Legion National Headquarters and Subordinate

### Note 4 - Paid-Up-For-Life Membership Fund

The National Executive Committee approved the establishment of a life membership plan available to any member of a participating department. In accordance with this plan, the assets of the Paid-Up-For-Life Membership Fund are segregated in a trust account from which funds equal to the annual dues of life members are withdrawn for current operations each year. The trust agreement provides that the Legions has the right to withdraw part or all of the assets of the trust account and to modify or terminate the trust agreement at its discretion.

### Note 5 - Restricted and Reserve Funds

The Restricted Fund is designated for use by the National Finance Committee and National Executive Committee of the American Legion. Earnings of the Restricted Fund, along with the principal, can be expended only upon recommendation of these committees. The Reserve Fund is designated for use by the National Finance Committee. The principal can be expended only by action of the American Legion in its national convention, or by a two-thirds affirmative vote of the National Finance Committee in two consecutive meetings at least 60 days apart.

### Note 6 - Life Insurance Plan

During October 1992, the National Executive Committee approved a resolution to terminate the Legions Life Insurance Fund. Upon dissolution of the fund on April 1993, funds remaining in the trust totaling $4,285,904 were transferred to a non-trust sub-account (annual the American Legion Life Insurance Fund) under control of the Legions for use in youth programs.

The Legion's National Executive Committee has voted to transfer assets within the American Legion Life Insurance Fund to several programs of the American Legion as follows: At December 31, 1998, $1,100,000 in funds had been approved for use in designated programs during 1999.

### Note 7 - Permanently Restricted Net Assets

The Legion received $5,000,000 from the Samsung Group during 1996. The principal is to be permanently endowed and the income is to be used to fund undergraduate scholarships for descendants of veterans and other wars in which U.S. servicemen and servicewomen participated. Such scholarships will be administered by the Legion.

### Note 8 - American Legion Endowment Fund Corporation

The American Legion Endowment Fund Corporation (the Corporation) was incorporated in 1925 as a not-for-profit corporation with perpetual existence to act as trustee for the American Legion Endowment Fund (the Endowment Fund), which was created to provide permanent funding for rehabilitation of American veterans and assistance to orphans of veterans. In August 1946, the Trust transferred securities having a market value of $2,000,000 to the Endowment Fund. The assets transferred have been held segregated by the Endowment Fund and the principal retained to the 1946 transfer, which had a market value of $2,131,470 and $2,115,808 at December 31, 1998 and 1997, may be withdrawn by the Legion, if needed, for rehabilitation of veterans or assistance to orphans of veterans.

In 1999, the Corporation received $10,000,000 from The Samsung Group, $5,000,000 from Wal-Mart Stores Inc., and $1,400,000 from the Leo Burnett Chicago Foundation.
Notes To Consolidated Financial Statements

The legion and HPC have several non-cancelable operating leases, primarily for facilities, computer equipment, copiers and cash registers that expire over the next six years. Rental expense for these leases aggregated $505,824 in 1998 and $711,954 in 1997.

Future minimum lease payments under operating leases are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years Ending December 31</th>
<th>1999</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>Thereafter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$139,932</td>
<td>136,369</td>
<td>115,553</td>
<td>77,000</td>
<td>66,000</td>
<td>14,000</td>
<td>$209,773</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total minimum lease payments</td>
<td>$530,773</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition, the Legion has a lease with the State of Indiana for rental of the National Headquarters building in Indianapolis through June 30, 2002. The lease can be renewed at the option of the Legion for five additional four-year periods. According to the terms of the lease, the Legion is required to maintain the interior of the building, and provide adequate insurance on the building to the fair market value. The cost of maintenance approximated $348,000 and $352,000 in 1998 and 1997, respectively. Insurance coverage is included in the Legion's general insurance policy.

The following is a reconciliation of income taxes at the federal statutory rate to actual income tax recorded by HPC:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Currently payable:</th>
<th>Deferred:</th>
<th>Resulting from federal statutory tax rate adjustment:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Federal statutory rate</td>
<td>$340,000</td>
<td>$200,000</td>
<td>$540,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nondeductible expenses</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net income before taxes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$440,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State income tax</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actual income tax</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$450,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The deferred tax asset and liability are included in other accounts receivable and other accounts payable, respectively, in the statement of financial position.

Net assets released from donor restrictions by incurring expenses satisfying the restricted purposes or by occurrence of other events specified by donors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years Ended December 31</th>
<th>1998</th>
<th>1997</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Purpose restrictions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overseas groves decoration</td>
<td>$289,745</td>
<td>$55,194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scholarships and grants (including relief aid)</td>
<td>500,000</td>
<td>1,901,344</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>425,428</td>
<td>397,293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total net assets released from restrictions</td>
<td>$1,215,173</td>
<td>$2,349,931</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Net assets released from designations by satisfying the designations previously established.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years Ended December 31</th>
<th>1998</th>
<th>1997</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Purpose designations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flag education</td>
<td>$1,448,884</td>
<td>$1,178,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paid-Up-For-Life memberships</td>
<td>2,019,044</td>
<td>1,828,942</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth programs (Life Insurance Plan)</td>
<td>1,100,000</td>
<td>1,100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>424,998</td>
<td>407,720</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total net assets released from designations</td>
<td>$4,992,948</td>
<td>$4,515,482</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Employee Benefits

The Legion has a defined benefit pension plan covering substantially all of its employees as well as those of certain affiliated and endorsed groups. The plan was established in 1944 by vote of the Legion's National Convention. Contributions to the plan are made by the Legion and other participating groups on the basis of annual actuarial valuations. The following table sets forth the Legion's portion of the plan's funded status and amounts recognized in the Legion's consolidated statement of financial position at December 31, 1998 and 1997.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years Ended December 31</th>
<th>1998</th>
<th>1997</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Benefit obligation</td>
<td>$222,066,000</td>
<td>$214,466,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rate of return on assets</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rate of compensation increase</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total funded status</td>
<td>$222,066,000</td>
<td>$214,466,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepaid benefit cost recognized in the balance sheet</td>
<td>$11,199,193</td>
<td>1,100,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The defined benefit cost and liability are included in other accounts receivable and other liabilities, respectively, in the statement of financial position.

Notes To Consolidated Financial Statements

The American Legion National Headquarters and Subsidiary

The American Legion 1999 National Convention
### Year Ended December 31

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Services</th>
<th>1998</th>
<th>1997</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Veterans affairs</td>
<td>$28,130,653</td>
<td>$28,888,412</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Americanism and children and youth activities</td>
<td>$3,552,204</td>
<td>$5,988,697</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flag education and legislation</td>
<td>3,979,706</td>
<td>2,022,343</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct response advertising and marketing</td>
<td>838,801</td>
<td>387,889</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total program services</strong></td>
<td><strong>35,091,365</strong></td>
<td><strong>39,107,311</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting Services</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information and general</td>
<td>10,945,227</td>
<td>9,133,396</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Membership</td>
<td>5,430,306</td>
<td>6,949,817</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fundraising</td>
<td>841,898</td>
<td>1,066,579</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total expenses</strong></td>
<td><strong>$52,708,866</strong></td>
<td><strong>$56,077,878</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Notes to Consolidated Financial Statements

**Note 14 - Functional Expenses**

The following represents a functional breakdown of the American Legion National Headquarters' expenses by program and supporting services.

**Year Ended December 31**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Services</th>
<th>1998</th>
<th>1997</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Veterans affairs</td>
<td>$28,130,653</td>
<td>$28,888,412</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Americanism and children and youth activities</td>
<td>$3,552,204</td>
<td>$5,988,697</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flag education and legislation</td>
<td>3,979,706</td>
<td>2,022,343</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct response advertising and marketing</td>
<td>838,801</td>
<td>387,889</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total program services</strong></td>
<td><strong>35,091,365</strong></td>
<td><strong>39,107,311</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting Services</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information and general</td>
<td>10,945,227</td>
<td>9,133,396</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Membership</td>
<td>5,430,306</td>
<td>6,949,817</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fundraising</td>
<td>841,898</td>
<td>1,066,579</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total expenses</strong></td>
<td><strong>$52,708,866</strong></td>
<td><strong>$56,077,878</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note 16 - Year 2000**

Like all entities, the Legion is exposed to risks associated with the Year 2000 issue, which affects computer software and hardware, transactions with customers, vendors, and other entities, and equipment dependent upon microchips. The Legion has begun, but not yet completed, the process of identifying and remediating potential Year 2000 problems. It is not possible for any entity to guarantee the results of its own remediation efforts or to accurately predict the impact of the Year 2000 issue with which the Legion does business. If remediation efforts of the Legion or third parties with which the Legion does business are not successful, the Year 2000 issue could have negative effects on the Legion's financial condition and results of operations in the near term.
Reconciliation of Audited Financial Statements to Internal Financial Statements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year Ended December 31</th>
<th>1998</th>
<th>1997</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Change in Net Assets - Internal Financial Statements</td>
<td>$3,957,122</td>
<td>$2,204,188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in net assets before net unrealized gains not included in internal financials</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unrestricted designated</td>
<td>51,602</td>
<td>329,989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporarily restricted</td>
<td>152,541</td>
<td>312,609</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4,161,265</td>
<td>2,846,786</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net unrealized gains</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General</td>
<td>64,809</td>
<td>245,363</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unrestricted designated</td>
<td>1,462,750</td>
<td>3,070,116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporarily restricted</td>
<td>145,613</td>
<td>358,836</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,673,172</td>
<td>3,303,509</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in Net Assets - Audited Financial Statements</td>
<td>$5,834,437</td>
<td>$6,521,101</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### AMERICAN LEGION ENDOWMENT FUND

Forseeing the necessity of a recurring income source for funding its war veterans rehabilitation and child welfare programs, The American Legion conducted a national campaign in 1925 which raised approximately $5 million for this purpose. The funds contributed were entrusted to the custody of the American Legion Endowment Fund Corporation.

The Corporation was incorporated under the laws of the State of Delaware in 1925 and a trust agreement between The American Legion and the Corporation was signed. Funds are administered by the Corporation in accordance with the trust agreement and annual net investment income is paid to The American Legion for use in the aforementioned programs.

The results of operations and financial condition of The American Legion Endowment Fund Corporation for each of the last five years is summarized below (taken from the annual audit report prepared by Olive LLP, Indianapolis, Indiana).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total assets (1)</td>
<td>$8,035,988</td>
<td>$7,927,268</td>
<td>$8,694,667</td>
<td>$8,162,289</td>
<td>$7,846,801</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investments (1)</td>
<td>$7,918,724</td>
<td>$7,823,846</td>
<td>$7,830,853</td>
<td>$7,991,301</td>
<td>$7,644,325</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest income</td>
<td>$503,588</td>
<td>$519,819</td>
<td>$539,700</td>
<td>$575,688</td>
<td>$550,155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contributions (4)</td>
<td>$27,964</td>
<td>(744,754)</td>
<td>765,598</td>
<td>7,552</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net realized gains</td>
<td>5,596</td>
<td>9,739</td>
<td>48,948</td>
<td>60,891</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net unrealized gains (losses)</td>
<td>133,672</td>
<td>39,724</td>
<td>(258,531)</td>
<td>424,307</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation and Children and Youth Programs of The American Legion National Headquarters (2)</td>
<td>(459,669)</td>
<td>(487,152)</td>
<td>(300,367)</td>
<td>(496,538)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other expenses</td>
<td>(53,232)</td>
<td>(32,667)</td>
<td>(39,533)</td>
<td>(48,226)</td>
<td>(46,472)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in net assets</td>
<td>$157,899</td>
<td>($695,291)</td>
<td>$556,015</td>
<td>$523,674</td>
<td>$503,683</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funds transferred to The American Legion (3)</td>
<td>$508,886</td>
<td>$502,072</td>
<td>$524,339</td>
<td>$550,057</td>
<td>$537,035</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average yield on value of investments at market</td>
<td>6.47%</td>
<td>6.77%</td>
<td>7.44%</td>
<td>8.14%</td>
<td>6.99%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(1) Beginning in 1995, investments are included at fair value in accordance with Statement of Financial Accounting Standards (SFAS) No. 124, contributions are recorded in accordance SFAS 116, and the financial statements are prepared in accordance with SFAS 117.

(2) Accrual basis

(3) Cash basis

(4) 1997 amount includes adjustments to write off contribution receivable of $759,000.
## Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABMC</td>
<td>American Battle Monuments Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACE</td>
<td>Air Combat Element</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADVETS</td>
<td>Assistant Directors for Veterans' Employment and Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AFRH</td>
<td>Armed Forces Retirement Home</td>
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