PROCEDINGS OF THE 99TH NATIONAL CONVENTION
OF THE AMERICAN LEGION

COMMUNICATION

FROM

THE DIRECTOR, NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE
DIVISION, THE AMERICAN LEGION

TRANSMITTING

A FINANCIAL STATEMENT AND INDEPENDENT AUDIT OF THE
AMERICAN LEGION, AND PROCEEDINGS OF THE 99TH ANNUAL
NATIONAL CONVENTION OF THE AMERICAN LEGION, HELD IN
RENO, NEVADA FROM AUGUST 22–24, 2017, AND A REPORT ON
THE ORGANIZATION’S ACTIVITIES FOR THE YEAR PRECEDING
THE CONVENTION

JANUARY 20, 2018.—Referred to the Committee on Veterans’ Affairs and
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LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

THE AMERICAN LEGION,

Hon. PAUL RYAN,
Speaker of the House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. SPEAKER: In compliance with current public law, we herewith transmit for printing as a House document, a financial statement and independent audit of The American Legion, and proceedings of our 99th annual National Convention held in Reno, Nevada from August 22–24, 2017, and a report on our organization’s activities for the year preceding the convention.

For God and Country,

MATTHEW SHUMAN,
Director, National Legislative Division.
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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 résumé of what took place at the Ninety-Ninth Annual National Convention in Reno, Nevada, August 22, 23, 24, 2017.

The final report of the national organization for the period ending December 31, 2016, and balance sheet as of December 31, 2016, and surplus analysis, January 1, 2016, to December 31, 2016, are included in the Summary.

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 resolve clause(s) be used when a quotation from a resolution is required for publication.

Daniel S. Wheeler
National Adjutant

Note: At various times, the national vice commanders, as follows, presided over the Convention sessions, when called upon by the presiding officer, in accordance with the Uniform Code of Procedure as shown in the verbatim proceedings: Paul Martel, Florida; Fae Casper, Georgia; Douglas L. Boldt, Nebraska; Paul L. Espinoza, New Mexico; Vincent James Troiola, New York.
NATIONAL CONVENTIONS AND NATIONAL OFFICERS
THE AMERICAN LEGION, 1919 to Date

Note: In the following list it should be noted that the terms of each group of officers expire with that particular convention under which they are listed.
*indicates deceased

HONORARY COMMANDERS
General of the Armies of the United States John J. Pershing*
Marshall of France Ferdinand Foch

PARIS CAUCUS
Paris, France, March 15 - 17, 1919
Permanent Chairman: Bennett C. Clark*, Missouri (Voted title of Past National Commander at the 1926 National Convention)
Chairman Pro Tempore: Thomas W. Miller*, Delaware (Voted title of Past National Commander at the 1968 National Convention)
Secretary: Eric Fisher Wood*, Pennsylvania (Voted title of Past National Commander at the 1955 National Convention)

At the Paris Caucus an Executive Committee was elected to complete arrangements, the chairman and secretary of which were:
Chairman: Milton J. Foreman*, Illinois (Voted title of Past National Commander at the 1921 National Convention)
Secretary: George A. White*, Oregon

ST. LOUIS CAUCUS
St. Louis, Mo., May 8 - 10, 1919
Temporary Chairman: Theodore Roosevelt, Jr.*, New York (Voted title of Past National Commander at 1949 National Convention)
Permanent Chairman: Henry D. Lindsley*, Texas (Voted title of Past National Commander at the 1919 National Convention)
Vice Chairmen: John J. Sullivan*, Washington; Fred Humphrey*, New Mexico; P.C. Calhoun*, Connecticut (Voted titles of Past National Vice Commanders at 1933 National Convention)
Secretary: Eric Fisher Wood*, Pennsylvania (Voted title of Past National Commander at the 1955 National Convention)
Chaplain: Thomas H. Wiles*, Colorado

1st NATIONAL CONVENTION
Minneapolis, Minn., Nov. 10 - 12, 1919
Chairman: Henry D. Lindsley*, Texas, Past National Commander

2nd NATIONAL CONVENTION
Cleveland, Ohio, Sept. 27 - 29, 1920

3rd NATIONAL CONVENTION
Kansas City, Mo., Oct. 31 – Nov. 2, 1921

4th NATIONAL CONVENTION
New Orleans, La., Oct. 16 - 20, 1922
Commander: Hanford MacNider*, Iowa Vice Commanders: H. Nelson Jackson*, Vermont; George L. Berry*, Tennessee; Raymond O. Brackett*, Massachusetts; Charles H. Kendrick*, California; John A. McCormack*, Colorado
Adjudant: Lemuel Bolles*, Washington
Treasurer: Robert H. Tyndall*, Indiana
Chaplain: Rev. Earl A. Blackman*, Kansas
Historian: Eben Putnam*, Massachusetts
Judge Advocate: Robert A. Adams*, Indiana

5th NATIONAL CONVENTION
San Francisco, Calif., Oct. 16 - 19, 1923
Commander: Alvin M. Owlsley*, Texas
Vice Commanders: Edward J. Barrett*, Wisconsin; Watson B. Miller*, District of Columbia; E. Erle Cocker, St.*, Georgia; Robert O. Blood*, New Hampshire; Chiles P. Plummer*, Wyoming
Adjudant: Lemuel Bolles*, Washington
Treasurer: Robert H. Tyndall*, Indiana
Chaplain: Rev. William P. O'Connor*, Ohio
Historian: Eben Putnam*, Massachusetts
Judge Advocate: Robert A. Adams*, Indiana

6th NATIONAL CONVENTION
St. Paul, Minn., Sept. 15 - 19, 1924
Commander: John R. Quinn*, California
Dr. I. Thurman Mann*, North Carolina
Adjudant: Lemuel Bolles*, Washington
Resigned 2-1-24; Succeeded by Russell G. Crevison*, Indiana
Treasurer: Robert H. Tyndall*, Indiana
Chaplain: Rev. Ezra Clemens*, Minnesota
Historian: Eben Putnam*, Massachusetts
Judge Advocate: Robert A. Adams*, Indiana

7th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Omaha, Neb., Oct. 5 - 9, 1925
Commander: James A. Drain*, Washington
Adjudant: Russell G. Crevison*, Indiana,
Resigned; Succeeded by James F. Barton*, Iowa
Treasurer: Robert H. Tyndall*, Indiana
Historian: Eben Putnam*, Massachusetts
Judge Advocate: Robert A. Adams*, Indiana

8th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Philadelphia, Pa., Oct. 11 - 15, 1926
Commander: John R. McQuigg*, Ohio
Bennett C. Clark*, Missouri, Past National Commander
Vice Commanders: Joseph Y. Cheney*, Florida; Hughes B. Davis*, Oklahoma; Vincent A. Carroll*, Pennsylvania; Raymond B. Littlefield*, Rhode Island; Judge James A. Howell*, Utah
Adjudant: James F. Barton*, Iowa
Treasurer: Robert H. Tyndall*, Indiana
Chaplain: Rev. William E. Patrick*, California
Historian: Eben Putnam*, Massachusetts
Judge Advocate: Robert A. Adams*, Indiana

9th NATIONAL CONVENTION
New York, N.Y., Oct. 18, 1927
Paris, France, Sept. 19 - 22, 1927
Commander: Howard P. Savage*, Illinois
Vice Commanders: C. Thomas Busha, Jr.*, Montana; Stafford King*, Minnesota; John G. Sims*, Tennessee; John E. Curtiss*, Nebraska; Dr. John G. Towne*, Maine
Adjudant: James F. Barton*, Iowa
Treasurer: Robert H. Tyndall*, Indiana
Historian: Eben Putnam*, Massachusetts
Judge Advocate: Robert A. Adams*, Indiana

10th NATIONAL CONVENTION
San Antonio, Texas, Oct. 8 - 11, 1928
Commander: Edward E. Spafford*, New York
Adjudant: James F. Barton*, Iowa
Chaplain: Rev. Gill Robb Wilson*, New Jersey
Historian: Eben Putnam*, Massachusetts
Treasurer: Bowman Elder*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Scott W. Lucas*, Illinois

11th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Louisville, Ky., Sept. 30 - Oct. 2, 1929
Commander: Paul V. McNutt*, Indiana
Vice Commanders: Lawrence E. McGann, Jr.*, Illinois; George W. Malone*, Nevada; Edward L. White*, Connecticut; Miller C. Foster*, South Carolina; Walton D. Hood*, Texas
Adjudant: James F. Barton*, Iowa
Chaplain: Rabbi Lee J. Levienger*, Delaware
Treasurer: Bowman Elder*, Indiana
Historian: Eben Putnam*, Massachusetts
Judge Advocate: Scott W. Lucas*, Illinois

12th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Boston, Mass., Oct. 6 - 9, 1930
Commander: O.L. Bodenhamer*, Arkansas
Vice Commanders: Milt D. Campbell*, Ohio; John J. Dugan*, Delaware; Morton M. David*, Colorado; Frank Schoble, Jr.*, Pennsylvania; Willis M. Brewer*, Michigan
Adjudant: James F. Barton*, Iowa
Treasurer: Bowman Elder*, Indiana
Historian: Eben Putnam*, Massachusetts
Judge Advocate: Scott W. Lucas*, Illinois

13th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Detroit, Mich., Sept. 21 - 24, 1931
Commander: Ralph T. O'Neil*, Kansas
Vice Commanders: Bert S. Hyland*, Vermont; Roland B. Howell*, Louisiana; Harry B. Henderson, Jr.*, Wyoming; Dr. James A. Duff*, West Virginia; Dr. Neal D. Williams*, Missouri
Adjudant: James F. Barton*, Iowa
Chaplain: Rev. Joseph N. Barnett*, Wisconsin
Treasurer: Bowman Elder*, Indiana
Historian: Eben Putnam*, Massachusetts
Judge Advocate: Scott W. Lucas*, Illinois to 6-24-31; Succeeded by Acting Judge Advocate: Robert A. Adams*, Indiana

14th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Portland, Ore., Sept. 12 - 15, 1932
Commander: Henry L. Stevens, Jr.*, North Carolina
Vice Commanders: Richard F. Paul*, Massachusetts; Forrest G. Cooper*, Mississippi; Roy L. Cook*, New Mexico; Frank N. Brooks*, Washington; Harold L. Plummer*, Wisconsin
Adjudant: James F. Barton*, Iowa
Chaplain: Rev. Harris A. Darche*, Illinois
Treasurer: Bowman Elder*, Indiana
Historian: Eben Putnam*, Massachusetts
Judge Advocate: Remster A. Bingham*, Indiana

15th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Chicago, Ill., Oct. 2 - 5, 1933
Commander: Louis A. Johnson*, West Virginia
Vice Commanders: Russell Meadows*, Arizona; Robert D. Flory*, Nebraska; William E. Easterwood, Jr.*, Texas; John J. Maloney*, Maine; Chas. A. Mills*, Florida
Adjudant: Frank E. Samuel*, Kansas
Chaplain: Rev. Irwin Q. Wood*, Idaho
Treasurer: Bowman Elder*, Indiana
Historian: Eben Putnam*, Massachusetts (died January 22, 1933); Succeeded by Thomas M. Owen, Jr.*, Alabama
Judge Advocate: Remster A. Bingham*, Indiana

16th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Miami, Fla., Oct. 22 - 25, 1934
Commander: Edward A. Hayes*, Illinois
Vice Commanders: Charles R. Mabey*, Utah; Robert L. Gordon*, Arkansas; Miguel Munoz*, Puerto Rico; Ed W. Carruth*, Kansas; Charles L. Woolley*, Rhode Island
Adjudant: Frank E. Samuel*, Kansas
Chaplain: Rev. Robert J. White*, Massachusetts
Historian: Thomas M. Owen, Jr.*, Alabama
Treasurer: Neal Grider*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Remster A. Bingham*, Indiana

17th NATIONAL CONVENTION
St. Louis, Mo., Sept. 23 - 26, 1935
Commander: Frank N. Belgrano, Jr.*, California
Vice Commanders: Daniel J. Doherty*, Massachusetts; Harold J. Warner*, Oregon; John K. Kennelly*, North Dakota; Milo J. Warner*, Ohio; Que moyo Melton*, Georgia
Adjudant: Frank E. Samuel*, Kansas
Chaplain: Rev. Dr. Park W. Huntington*, Delaware
Historian: Thomas M. Owen, Jr.*, Alabama
Treasurer: James A. Drain*, Washington
Judge Advocate: James A. Drain*, Washington

18th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Cleveland, Ohio, Sept. 21 - 24, 1936
Commander: Ray Murphy*, Iowa
Vice Commanders: Raymond F. Gates*, Connecticut; Dr. I.E. Whitlock*, Florida; Oscar W. Worth wine*, Idaho; Dr. F. Whitney Godwin*, Virginia; Louis R. Proust*, Wyoming
Adjudant: Frank E. Samuel*, Kansas
Chaplain: Rt. Rev. Msgr. Thomas D. Kennedy*, Missouri
Historian: Thomas M. Owen, Jr.*, Alabama
Treasurer: John R. Ruddick*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana

19th NATIONAL CONVENTION
New York, N.Y., Sept. 20 - 23, 1937
Commander: Harry W. Colmery*, Kansas
Vice Commanders: Salvatore A. Capodice*, California; Leo A. Temmey*, South Dakota; Leonard Sisk*, Tennessee; J. Fred Johnson, Jr.*, Alabama; Jack Crowley*, Vermont
Adjudant: Frank E. Samuel*, Kansas
20th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Los Angeles, Calif., Sept. 19 - 22, 1938
Commander: Daniel J. Doherty*, Massachusetts
Vice Commanders: Drury M. Phillips*, Texas; Phil M. Conley*, West Virginia; Harry M. Johnson*, Montana; James F. Daniel, Jr.*, South Carolina; James R. Mahaffy*, Hawaii
Adjutant: Frank E. Samuel*, Kansas
Chaplain: Rev. Frank J. Lawler*, Illinois
Historian: Thomas M. Owen, Jr.*, Alabama
Treasurer: John R. Ruddick*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana

21st NATIONAL CONVENTION
Chicago, Ill., Sept. 25 - 28, 1939
Commander: Stephen F. Chadwick*, Washington
Adjutant: Frank E. Samuel*, Kansas
Chaplain: Rev. Jerome L. Fritsche*, Nebraska
Historian: Thomas M. Owen, Jr.*, Alabama
Treasurer: John R. Ruddick*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana

22nd NATIONAL CONVENTION
Boston, Mass., Sept. 23 - 26, 1940
Commander: Raymond J. Kelly*, Michigan
Vice Commanders: Leo E. Ray*, New Hampshire; Charles Q. Kelly*, Arkansas; Matthew J. Murphy*, Illinois; James B. Fitzgerald*, Maryland; H. Elwyn Davis*, Colorado
Adjutant: Frank E. Samuel*, Kansas
Chaplain: Rt. Rev. Msgr. Patrick N. McDermott*, Iowa
Historian: Thomas M. Owen, Jr.*, Alabama
Treasurer: John R. Ruddick*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana

23rd NATIONAL CONVENTION
Milwaukee, Wis., Sept. 15 to 18, 1941
Commander: Milo J. Warner*, Ohio
Vice Commanders: Erwin A. Froyd*, Wyoming; James L. McCrory*, Nebraska; Harold P. Redden*, Massachusetts; Edward R. Stirling*, Pennsylvania; Alcee S. Legendre*, Louisiana
Adjutant: Frank E. Samuel*, Kansas

Chaplain: Rev. Brigadier William G. Gilks*, Texas
Historian: Thomas M. Owen, Jr.*, Alabama
Treasurer: John R. Ruddick*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana

24th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Kansas City, Mo., Sept. 19-21, 1942
Commander: Lynn U. Stambaugh*, North Dakota
Adjutant: Frank E. Samuel*, Kansas
Chaplain: Rev. Frederick J. Halloran*, New Jersey
Historian: Thomas M. Owen, Jr.*, Alabama
Treasurer: John R. Ruddick*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana

25th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Omaha, Neb., Sept. 21 - 23, 1943
Commander: Roane Waring*, Tennessee
Vice Commanders: John T. Batten*, Alabama; Arthur J. Connell*, Connecticut; Fred G. Fraser*, District of Columbia; Herman H. Lark*, Missouri; Jefferson Davis Atwood*, New Mexico
Adjutant: Frank E. Samuel*, Kansas, (died July 25); Succeeded by Donald G. Glasscoff*, Michigan, Acting Adjutant
Chaplain: Dr. Paul De Forrest Mortimore*, Idaho
Historian: Thomas M. Owen, Jr.*, Alabama
Treasurer: John R. Ruddick*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana

26th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Chicago, Ill., Sept. 18 - 20, 1944
Commander: Warren H. Atherton*, California
Vice Commanders: Martin V. Coffey*, Ohio; E.A. Littlefield*, Utah; Robert 'Roy' McMillan*, North Carolina; Edward Al Mulrooney*, Delaware; Hector G. Staples*, Maine
Adjutant: Donald G. Glasscoff*, Michigan
Historian: Thomas M. Owen, Jr.*, Alabama
Treasurer: John R. Ruddick*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana

27th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Chicago, Ill., Nov. 18 - 21, 1945
Commander: Edward N. Scheiberling*, New York
Vice Commanders: Bascom F. Jones*, Tennessee; Frank E. McCaffrey*, Rhode Island; Dan M. McDade*, Oregon; Ray S. Pierson*, Kansas; William P. Shadoan*, Kentucky
Adjutant: Donald G. Glascoff*, Michigan
Chaplain: Rev. DeWitt C. Mallory*, Florida
Historian: Thomas M. Owen, Jr. *, Alabama
Treasurer: John R. Ruddick*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana

28th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Commander: John Stelle *, Illinois
Vice Commanders: R. Graham Huntington*, New Jersey; Fred LaBoon*, Oklahoma; Sam L. Latimer, Jr. *, South Carolina; H. Dudley Swin*, Idaho;
Jeremiah Twomey*, Massachusetts
Adjutant: Donald G. Glascoff*, Michigan
Historian: Thomas M. Owen, Jr. *, Alabama
Treasurer: John R. Ruddick*, Indiana, (died 7-13-45); Succeeded by Neal Grider*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana

29th NATIONAL CONVENTION
New York, N.Y., Aug. 28 – 31, 1947
Commander: Paul H. Griffith*, Pennsylvania
Adjutant: Donald G. Glascoff*, Michigan
Chaplain: Rev. Arthur L. Rustad*, Minnesota
Historian: Thomas M. Owen, Jr. *, Alabama
Treasurer: Neal Grider*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana

30th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Miami, Fla., Oct. 18 - 20, 1948
Commander: James F. O'Neil*, New Hampshire
Vice Commanders: LeRoy William Barns*, South Dakota; Albert A. Cree*, Vermont; Richard B. Ott*, Washington; Myron R. Renick*, West Virginia;
Joe W. White*, Georgia
Adjutant: Henry H. Dudley*, Nebraska
Chaplain: Rev. Fr. Frank L. Harrington*, Montana
Historian: Thomas M. Owen, Jr. *, Alabama
Treasurer: Neal Grider*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana

31st NATIONAL CONVENTION
Philadelphia, Pa., Aug. 29 – Sept. 1, 1949
Commander: S. Perry Brown*, Texas
Theodore Roosevelt, Jr.*, (NY), Past National Commander
Vice Commanders: James Lane*, (AL);
Leonard W. Moody*, (AR); James Annin*, (MT); Walter E. Alessandroni*, (PA);
Edward J. Kelly*, (CT)
Chaplain: Rev. Thomas Grice*, (CA)
Historian: Monte C. Sandlin*, (AL)
Treasurer: Neal Grider*, (IN)
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, (IN)

32nd NATIONAL CONVENTION
Los Angeles, Calif., Oct. 9 – 12, 1950
Commander: George N. Craig*, (IN)
Vice Commanders: Milton G. Booek*, (MN); David H. Fleisher*, (MO); Frank E. Lowe*, Maine; J. E. Martie*, (NV); Dr. D. R. Perry*, (NC)
Adjutant: Henry H. Dudley*, Nebraska
Chaplain: Rev. Fr. Edward J. Carney*, O.S.A., Massachusetts
Historian: Monte C. Sandlin*, Alabama
Treasurer: Neal Grider*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana

33rd NATIONAL CONVENTION
Miami, Fla., Oct. 15 – 18, 1951
Commander: Erle Cocke, Jr.*, Georgia
Vice Commanders: Joe H. Adams*, Florida;
Herbert J. Jacobi*, District of Columbia;
Felix Pogliano*, Colorado; Lewis K. Gough*, California; Fred C. Bramlage*, Kansas
Adjutant: Henry H. Dudley*, Nebraska
Chaplain: Rabbi David Lefkowitz*, Louisiana
Historian: Monte C. Sandlin*, Alabama
Treasurer: Neal Grider*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana

34th NATIONAL CONVENTION
New York, N.Y., Aug. 25 – 28, 1952
Commander: Donald R. Wilson*, West Virginia
Vice Commanders: Adolph F. Bremer*, Minnesota; Frank R. Kelley*,
Massachusetts; Thomas E. Paradise*, New York; Oscar B. Rohiff*, Wyoming;
Audley H. Ward*, South Carolina
Adjutant: Henry H. Dudley*, Nebraska
Chaplain: Rev. Olaf G. Birkeland*, Wisconsin
Historian: Monte C. Sandlin*, Alabama
Treasurer: Neal Grider*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana
35th NATIONAL CONVENTION  
St. Louis, Mo., Aug. 31 – Sept. 3, 1953  
Commander: Lewis K. Gough*, California  
Adjutant: Henry H. Dudley*, Nebraska  
Chaplain: Rev. Fr. John E. Duffy*, Ohio  
Historian: Monte C. Sandlin*, Alabama  
Treasurer: Neal Grider*, Indiana  
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana  

Chaplain: Rev. Joseph MacCarroll*, New Jersey  
Historian: Robert T. Fairey*, South Carolina  
Treasurer: Neal Grider*, Indiana  
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana

36th NATIONAL CONVENTION  
Vice Commanders: John A. High*, New Hampshire; D. Deward H. Reed*, New Mexico; Truman C. Wold*, North Dakota; Thomas W. Bird*, North Carolina; Herbert M. Walker*, Pennsylvania  
Adjutant: Henry H. Dudley*, Nebraska  
Chaplain: Dr. Tom B. Clark*, Oklahoma  
Historian: Robert T. Fairey*, South Carolina  
Treasurer: Neal Grider*, Indiana  
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana

37th NATIONAL CONVENTION  
Miami, Fla., Oct. 10 – 13, 1955  
Commander: Seaborn P. Collins*, New Mexico  
Eric Fisher Wood*, Pennsylvania, Past National Commander  
Vice Commanders: Leonard L. Jackson*, Louisiana; Patrick H. Mangan*, Jr., Vermont; Howard C. Kingdom*, Ohio; Dr. Carl J. Rees*, Delaware; Robert L. Shelby*, Utah  
Adjutant: Henry H. Dudley*, Nebraska  
Chaplain: Rev. Albert J. Hoffman*, Iowa  
Historian: Robert T. Fairey*, South Carolina  
Treasurer: Neal Grider*, Indiana  
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana

38th NATIONAL CONVENTION  
Los Angeles, Calif., Sept. 3 – 6, 1956  
Commander: J. Addington Wagner*, Michigan  
Adjutant: Henry H. Dudley*, Nebraska (resigned); succeeded by E. A. Blackmore*, Wyoming

39th NATIONAL CONVENTION  
Atlantic City, N.J., Sept. 16 – 19, 1957  
Commander: W. C. 'Dan' Daniel*, Virginia  
Vice Commanders: Gaylor M. Brown*, Iowa; George T. Lewis*, Jr., Tennessee; Carl R. Moser*, Oregon; John E. Stay*, Pennsylvania; J. Edward Walter*, Maryland  
Adjutant: E. A. Blackmore*, Wyoming  
Chaplain: Rev. Bernard W. Gerdon*, Indiana  
Historian: Robert T. Fairey*, South Carolina  
Treasurer: Neal Grider*, Indiana  
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana

40th NATIONAL CONVENTION  
Chicago, Ill., Sept. 1 – 4, 1958  
Commander: John S. Gleason, Jr.*, Illinois  
Vice Commanders: William A. Cottrell*, Hawaii; Ramon R. Guas*, Puerto Rico; Harry W. Miller*, West Virginia; Leo A. Lemos*, Rhode Island; Isadore E. Levine*, Indiana  
Adjutant: E. A. Blackmore*, Wyoming  
Chaplain: Rev. Fr. Feltham S. James*, South Carolina  
Historian: Mrs. Charles A. (Emily) Herbert*, New Jersey  
Treasurer: Neal Grider*, Indiana  
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana

41st NATIONAL CONVENTION  
Minneapolis, Minn., Aug. 24 – 27, 1959  
Commander: Preston J. Moore*, Oklahoma  
Vice Commanders: C. D. DeLoach*, District of Columbia; John W. Collins*, Pennsylvania; James B. Kerrigan*, Missouri; Robert Charles Smith*, Louisiana; James C. Bangs*, Idaho  
Adjutant: E. A. Blackmore*, Wyoming  
Historian: Mrs. Charles A. (Emily) Herbert*, New Jersey  
Treasurer: William Francis Polen*, Indiana  
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana

42nd NATIONAL CONVENTION  
Miami Beach, Fla., Oct. 15 – 20, 1960  
Commander: Martin B. McKneally*, New York  
Vice Commanders: William A. Brennan, Jr.*, Indiana; A. Layman Harman*, South Carolina; Nate V. Keller*, Minnesota; (died
7-25-60); Succeeded by Irven Frank Gianotti*, Minnesota (appointed 9-14-60); Willard W. Brandt*, North Dakota; Charles McGonegal†, California; (died 1-27-60); Succeeded by Corydon T. Hill†, California (appointed 5-4-60)

Adjudant: E. A. Blackmore*, Wyoming
Chaplain: Rabbi Robert I. Kahn* D.H.L.,
Texas
Historian: Mrs. Charles A. (Emily) Herbert*,
New Jersey
Treasurer: William Francis Polen*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

43rd NATIONAL CONVENTION
Denver, Colo., Sept. 9 – 14, 1961
Commander: William R. Burke*, California
Vice Commanders: George K. Walker*,
Massachusetts; James M. Wagonseiler*,
Ohio; Vincent J. Maxheim*, Iowa; Dr. Harry H. Kretzler*,
Washington;
R. C. Godwin*, North Carolina
Adjudant: E. A. Blackmore*, Wyoming
Chaplain: Rev. William H. Moss*,
Tennessee
Historian: Glenn B. Hoover*, Iowa
Treasurer: William Francis Polen*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

44th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Las Vegas, Nev., Oct. 5 – 11, 1962
Commander: Charles L. Bacon*, Missouri
Vice Commanders: Walter W. Barnard*,
Montana; Edward T. Hoak*, Pennsylvania;
Wilson H. Morrison*, Michigan; J. Milton
Patrick*, Oklahoma;
Edward Wysocki*, New Jersey
Adjudant: E. A. Blackmore*, Wyoming
Chaplain: Rev. Fr. Robert G. Keating*,
Connecticut
Historian: Earl David Young*, Colorado
Treasurer: William Francis Polen*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

45th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Miami Beach, Fla., Sept. 6 – 12, 1963
Commander: James E. Powers*, Georgia
Vice Commanders: Harold D. Beaton*,
District of Columbia; James W. Doon*, New
Hampshire; Claude A. Hamilton*, South
Dakota; Paschal C. Reese*, Florida; Victor
F. Whittlesea*, Nevada
Adjudant: E.A. Blackmore*, Wyoming
Chaplain: Rabbi Albert M. Shulman*,
Indiana
Historian: H. Armand de Masi*, Italy
Treasurer: William Francis Polen*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

46th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Dallas, Texas, Sept. 18 – 24, 1964
Commander: Daniel F. Foley*, Minnesota
Vice Commanders: Earl D. Franklin, Jr.*, Colorado; Emilios I. Iglesias*, Vermont;
Garland D. Murphy, Jr.*, M.D., Arkansas;
George Emory Sipple*, Wisconsin; Harry
Wright*, Mexico
Adjudant: E.A. Blackmore*, Wyoming
Chaplain: Rev. Fr. John J. Howard*,
Virginia
Historian: H. Armand de Masi*, Italy
Treasurer: William Francis Polen*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

47th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Portland, Ore., Aug. 20 – 26, 1965
Commander: Donald E. Johnson*, Iowa
Vice Commanders: David Aronberg*,
Kentucky; Herbert D. Black*, South
Carolina; Ward W. Husted*, Wyoming;
Edward H. Lynch, Jr.*, Connecticut;
Joseph Paul*, Michigan
Adjudant: E.A. Blackmore*, Wyoming
Chaplain: Rev. Fr. Morris N. Dummet*,
Louisiana
Historian: Harold A. Shindler*, Indiana
Treasurer: William Francis Polen*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

48th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Commander: L. Eldon James*, Virginia
Vice Commanders: Dr. A. R. Choppin*,
Louisiana; William E. Galbraith*, Nebraska;
Robert O. Phillips*, Philippines; William J.
Rogers*, Maine; Tom Soleng*, Arizona
Adjudant: E. A. Blackmore*, Wyoming (died
4-21-67); Succeeded by Earnest N. Schmit*,
North Dakota (Appointed 5-4-67)
Chaplain: Rev. Alfred C. Thompson*, New
York
Historian: Harold A. Shindler*, Indiana
Treasurer: William Francis Polen*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

49th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Commander: John E. Davis*, North Dakota
Vice Commanders: Robert M. Fritz*,
Indiana; Lewis W. Emerich*, Texas;
50th NATIONAL CONVENTION
New Orleans, La., Sept. 6 – 12, 1968
Commander: William E. Galbraith*, Nebraska
Vice Commanders: Coleman Nolen*, Oklahoma; Louis R. J. Malo*, Rhode Island; Roscoe D. Curtiss*, Tennessee; Dr. Edwin L. Peterson*, Utah; Marvin W. Roth*, Wisconsin
Adjutant: William F. Hauck*, Indiana
Chaplain: Rev. Fr. Edward P. Nolan*, Pennsylvania
Historian: Harold A. Shindler*, Indiana
Treasurer: William Francis Polen*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

51st NATIONAL CONVENTION
Atlanta, Ga., Aug. 22 – 28, 1969
Commander: William C. Doyle*, New Jersey
Vice Commanders: C. Russell Huber*, Alaska; John A. Jones*, West Virginia; Howard E. Lohman*, Minnesota; Lewis E. McCray*, Alabama; Maurice Parisien*, Maine
Adjutant: William F. Hauck*, Indiana
Chaplain: Rev. C. J. Olander*, Mississippi
Historian: Harold A. Shindler*, Indiana
Treasurer: William Francis Polen*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

52nd NATIONAL CONVENTION
Commander: J. Milton Patrick*, Oklahoma
Vice Commanders: Kent. T. Lundgren*, Michigan; Roland D. Marble*, Mississippi; Raymond F. Mudge*, New Hampshire; Earl R. Norgard*, Oregon;
Gilberto M. Font*, Puerto Rico
Adjutant: William F. Hauck*, Indiana
Chaplain: Rev. Fr. William D. Curtis*, Minnesota
Historian: John A. May*, South Carolina
Treasurer: William Francis Polen*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

53rd NATIONAL CONVENTION
Houston, Texas, Aug. 27 – Sept. 2, 1971
Commander: Alfred P. Chanie*, California
Vice Commanders: Claude Carpenter*, Arkansas; Max Hanson*, Idaho; Robert E.L. Eaton*; Maryland; Gabriel T. Olga*, Massachusetts; John E. Gilbert*, Pennsylvania
Adjutant: William F. Hauck*, Indiana
Chaplain: Rev. Milton B. Faust*, North Carolina
Historian: Howard M. Swinney*, Kentucky
Treasurer: William Francis Polen*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

54th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Chicago, Ill., Aug. 18 – 24, 1972
Commander: John H. Geiger*, Illinois
Vice Commanders: Howard W. Fann*, Kentucky; Arthur M. MacCarthy*, Florida; Roy Sweet*, Vermont; Harry G. Wiles*, Kansas; Wallace C.S. Young*, Hawaii
Adjutant: William F. Hauck*, Indiana
Chaplain: Rev. Fr. Paul J. Schwaab*, Nebraska
Historian: G. Greer McCallister*, Ohio
Treasurer: William Francis Polen*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

55th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Honolulu, Hawaii, Aug. 17 – 23, 1973
Commander: Joe L. Matthews*, Texas
Vice Commanders: Tim T. Craig*, North Carolina; Sam Gray*, California; Donald L. Gruenbaum*, Ohio; Albert J. Moeller*, New Jersey; Raymond J. Novak*, South Dakota
Adjutant: William F. Hauck*, Indiana
Chaplain: Rev. L. P. Fitzpatrick*, Iowa
Historian: Mrs. Loretta O. Phillips*, California
Treasurer: William Francis Polen*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

56th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Miami Beach, Fla., Aug. 16 – 22, 1974
Commander: Robert E. L. Eaton*, Maryland
Vice Commanders: John N. Roberto*, Connecticut; Frank C. Brooks*, Washington; Gilbert E. Sheeks*, Indiana; Merrick W. Swords, Jr.*, Louisiana;
N. E. Brown*, South Carolina
Adjutant: William F. Hauck*, Indiana
Chaplain: Rev. Jerome D. Fortenberry, Missouri
Historian: R. Robert Filter*, Wisconsin
Treasurer: William Francis Polen*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

57th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Minneapolis, Minn., Aug. 15 – 21, 1975
Commander: James M. Wagonseller*, Ohio
Maurice Stember*, New York, Past National Commander
Vice Commanders: Boyd H. Clemens, North Dakota; Jack W. Flynt*, Texas; Jay E. Harville*, Tennessee; Donald H. Jeffery*, Pennsylvania; William A. Lindsay*, Montana
Adjutant: William F. Hauck*, Indiana
Chaplain: Rev. Harvey T. Goodling*, Oregon
Historian: Nolie C. Deas, Sr.*, Florida
Treasurer: William Francis Polen*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

58th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Seattle, Wash., Aug. 20 – 26, 1976
Commander: Harry G. Wiles*, Kansas
Vice Commanders: John W. Adams, Jr., Kentucky; Fred W. Anderson, Jr.*, Nevada; Leo F. Malloy*, Massachusetts; Thomas W. Miller*, Arkansas; James F. Walker*, Minnesota
Adjutant: William F. Hauck*, Indiana
Chaplain: Rev. Claude E. Smithmier, Georgia
Historian: Mrs. Dorothy Crimes*, Colorado
Treasurer: William Francis Polen*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

59th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Denver, Colo., Aug. 19 – 25, 1977
Commander: William J. Rogers*, Maine
Vice Commanders: Lloyd J. Berken*, Wisconsin; Thomas B. Coll*, District of Columbia; Robert B. Grauberger*, Colorado; Frank A. Kelly, Georgia; Wilbur Walker*, Virginia
Adjutant: William F. Hauck*, Indiana
Chaplain: Rev. Fr. James C. Tuxbury, North Dakota
Treasurer: William Francis Polen*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

60th NATIONAL CONVENTION
New Orleans, La., Aug. 18 – 24, 1978
Commander: Robert Charles Smith*, Louisiana
Vice Commanders: Eugene V. Lindquist*, Minnesota; Roger A. Munson*, Ohio; John J. O’Connell*, Rhode Island; Chester Phillips*, West Virginia; Irving B. Selmer*, Wyoming
Adjutant: Frank C. Momsen*, Minnesota
Chaplain: Rev. Fr. Walter D. Power*, Maryland
Historian: Arnold J. Stockstad*, North Dakota
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

61st NATIONAL CONVENTION
Houston, Texas, Aug. 17 – 23, 1979
Commander: John M. Carey*, Michigan
Hamilton Fish*, New York, Past National Commander
Adjutant: Frank C. Momsen*, Minnesota
Chaplain: R. Drew Wolcott*, Mexico
Historian: Harry H. Kretzler, M.D. *, Washington
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

62nd NATIONAL CONVENTION
Boston, Mass., Aug. 15 – 21, 1980
Commander: Frank I. Hamilton*, Indiana
Vice Commanders: G. Y. Fails*, New Mexico; Keith A. Kreul, Wisconsin; Bob Legan*, Arkansas; Max E. Robinson*, North Carolina; Lawrence R. Spaulding*, New Hampshire
Adjutant: Frank C. Momsen*, Minnesota
Chaplain: Rev. Karl E. Knielsen*, California
Historian: Phillip Haddad, Oklahoma
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

63rd NATIONAL CONVENTION
Commander: Michael J. Kogutek *, New York
Vice Commanders: Ralph M. Godwin*, Mississippi; Keith H. Gwilliam*, Utah; Matthew W. Jamieson*, Michigan; Robert W. Lowry *, Nebraska; Dr. Almo J. Sebastianelli, Pennsylvania
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan

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Chaplain: Rev. George S. Macres*, Minnesota
Historian: Neal S. Sundeen, Arizona
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

64th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Chicago, Ill., Aug. 20 – 26, 1982
Commander: Jack W. Flynt*, Texas
Vice Commanders: Frank T. Markovich*, Missouri; Dan C. McDonough*, Alaska;
Percy C. Miller*, Tennessee; Melvin 'Doc' Simon, Vermont; David A. Wade*, Maryland
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Rev. George R. M. Rumney*, Virginia
Historian: Bernard J. Chisholm*, Minnesota
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

65th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Commander: Al Keller, Jr.*, Illinois
Vice Commanders: Robert C. Gabrielson*, South Dakota; Margaret M. Malone*, New Jersey; H. Melvin Napier, Indiana; Jack C. Plato*, Oregon; Leo O. Walker*, Oklahoma
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Rev. Fr. John D. Kempf*, Ohio
Historian: James W. Conway*, Massachusetts
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

66th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Salt Lake City, Utah, Sept. 3 – 5, 1984
Commander: Keith Kreul, Wisconsin
Vice Commanders: J. Leslie Brown, Jr.*, Kentucky; Roberto Gonzalez-Vazquez*, Puerto Rico; Charles R. Green*, Ohio;
Robert W. Groccia*, Massachusetts, John N. Lockhart*, Hawaii
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: James Clay McKee, Utah
Historian: Herberta T. Stark*, New Hampshire
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

67th NATIONAL CONVENTION
New Orleans, La., Aug. 23 – 28, 1985
Commander: Clarence M. Bacon, Maryland
Vice Commanders: Robert S. Turner, Georgia; Harold E. Collett*, Idaho; Ronald D. Birk*, Kansas; Stewart Kunde*, Minnesota; Stephen J. Mikosky*, Pennsylvania
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Historian: Roy B. Mahoney, Florida
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

68th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Cincinnati, Ohio, Aug. 29 – Sept. 4, 1986
Commander: Dale L. Renaud*, Iowa
Vice Commanders: Bernard Black, South Carolina; Norman Conn*, California; Vito M. DeFilipp*, Maine; Miles S. Epling, West Virginia, H. F. 'Sparky' Gierke*, North Dakota
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Dr. Gordon L. Patterson*, Nebraska
Historian: Ethel M. Matuschka*, Wisconsin
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

69th NATIONAL CONVENTION
San Antonio, Texas, Aug. 21 – 27, 1987
Commander: James P. Dean*, Mississippi
E. Roy Stone, Jr.*, South Carolina, Past National Commander
Vice Commanders: William M. Detweiler, Louisiana; Doris R. Gross*, Washington;
Donald E. Neil*, Delaware; Allen L. Titus*, Indiana; Ervin F. Van Dyke*, Wisconsin
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Rev. Fr. Arthur J. Jakobiak, New Mexico
Historian: J. Ruffin Apperson*, Virginia
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

70th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Louisville, Ky., Sept. 6 – 8, 1988
Commander: John P. 'Jake' Comer, Massachusetts
Vice Commanders: Neale V. Cabral*, Connecticut; Joe Frank, Jr., Missouri; W. P. 'Bill' Peterson*, Montana; Paul B. Phifer, Jr.*, Virginia; F. Leon Reed*, Arkansas
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Rev. Jerry Salveson*, Minnesota
Historian: Edward F. Brennan*, Illinois
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

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71st NATIONAL CONVENTION
Baltimore, Md., Sept. 5 – 7, 1989
Commander: H.F. 'Sparky' Gierke*, North Dakota
Vice Commanders; Thomas L. Gabel*, Ohio; Harvey Holcomb*, Texas; Archie Pozzi, Jr. *, Nevada; Ray G. Smith, Sr.*,
North Carolina: John P. Tipping, New York
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Rev. F. Robert Davidson, Michigan
Historian: Richard A. Stevens, Sr.*, Louisiana
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

72nd NATIONAL CONVENTION
Indianapolis, Ind., Aug. 28 - 30, 1990
Commander: Miles S. Epling, West Virginia
Vice Commanders: Vincent E. Blank*, Iowa; Joseph E. Caouette, New Hampshire; Andrew J. Cooper, Alabama; Gerald Goetzinger, South Dakota;
Vinton R. Guy*, Colorado
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Lynn S. Kearsley*, Idaho
Historian: C. Carl Pilgrim*, South Carolina
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

73rd NATIONAL CONVENTION
Commander: Robert S. Turner, Georgia
Vice Commanders: Lewis Adams, Nebraska; James T. Anderson *, Wyoming; Fred M. Ingeless*, Mississippi; Harry F. McDowell*, Florida; George E. Sampson, New Jersey
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Rev. Michas M. Ohnstad, Minnesota
Historian: Harold Matthew Branton, Texas
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

74th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Chicago, Ill., Aug. 25 – 27, 1992
Commander: Dominic D. DiFrancesco, Pennsylvania
Vice Commanders: James 'Jim' G. Brouillette, Vermont; Thomas P. Cadmus*, Michigan; Ronald C. Murphy*, Arizona; Lawrence F. Roy, Oklahoma; Lee R. Stolpus*, Kansas
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Rev. Donal M. 'Jack' Squires*, West Virginia
Historian: Bettie M. Canon*, Montana
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

75th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Pittsburgh, Pa., Sept. 3 – 9, 1993
Commander: Roger A. Munson*, Ohio
Vice Commanders: Joseph V. Adams*, Pennsylvania; Paul Andrejewski*, Minnesota; Robert E. 'Jack' David, South Carolina; John William 'Bill' Murphy*, Arkansas; Louis A. 'Tony' Santillanes, New Mexico
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Rev. James R. Wagner, Mississippi
Historian: Delfo Barabani*, Massachusetts
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

76th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Minneapolis, Minn., Sept. 6 – 8, 1994
Commander: Bruce Thiesen, California
Vice Commanders: Juan H. Cintron*, Puerto Rico; Douglas A. Mason*, Utah; John J. Mulkern*, Massachusetts; K. W. Ohl*, Indiana; Curtis O. Twete, North Dakota
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Msgr. Raymond J. Kozlowski*, New York
Historian: Marjorie T. Simpson*, Georgia
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

77th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Indianapolis, Ind., Sept. 4 – 6, 1995
Commander: William M. Detweiler, Louisiana
Vice Commanders: Joseph T. Craig*, Alaska; Silas M. Noel, Kentucky; Calvin E. Patton*, Maryland; H. Gordon Burleigh*, New York; Vernon K. Grosenick*, Wisconsin
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Rev. Roy L. Pryor*, South Carolina
Historian: M. LaReine Maxey*, Nevada, (died 10-7-94); Succeeded by Carl S. Wipperman, Washington (appointed 10-19-94)
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland
78th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Salt Lake City, Utah, Aug. 30 – Sept. 5, 1996
Commander: Daniel A. Ludwig, Minnesota
Vice Commanders: Keith Baker*, Iowa;
William L. Cicotte, Maine; Robert D. Scott,
Oregon; C. Darrel Haskell, South Dakota;
Ralph J. Reel*, Tennessee
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Joseph E. Reynolds*, Texas
Historian: R. Paul Tenney*, Vermont
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr.,
Maryland

79th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Orlando, Fla., Aug. 29 – Sept. 4, 1997
Commander: Joseph J. Frank, Missouri
Vice Commanders: Wilson R. Timmons*,
Florida; Orland H. Taylor*, Hawaii; Roger
L. Wild*, Nebraska; Albert M. Robotti*,
New Jersey; Robert L. Bowen, Virginia
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Charles H. Richmond*, Oklahoma
Historian: Barbara 'Bobbe' Stuvengen*,
Wisconsin
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr.,
Maryland

80th NATIONAL CONVENTION
New Orleans, La., Sept. 4 – 10, 1998
Commander: Anthony Jordan, Maine
Vice Commanders: Erwin Gus Williams,
Connecticut; Conrad A. Chisholm*, Idaho;
Norris W. Preston, Missouri; Gerald L.
Moore*, Ohio; Robert E. Vass*, West
Virginia
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Rev. Henry E. Eisenhart*,
Pennsylvania
Historian: Tommy Mills*, Mississippi
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr.,
Maryland

81st NATIONAL CONVENTION
Anaheim, Calif., Sept. 3 – 9, 1999
Commander: Butch L. Miller, Virginia
Vice Commanders: Leo P. Burke*,
California; Roger L. Tingle, Georgia;
James W. Gravenstein, Kansas; Fernando
M. Goulart, Rhode Island; John D. Morris,
Texas
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Rev. Robert J. Sweeney, New
York
Historian: Robert L. Klipstine*, Ohio
Treasurer: George A. Buskirk, Jr., Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr.,
Maryland

82nd NATIONAL CONVENTION
Milwaukee, Wis., Sept. 1 – 7, 2000
Commander: Alan G. Lance, Sr., Idaho
Vice Commanders: James F. Fraughnaugh*,
Alabama; Milton W. Lobstein, Michigan;
Robert Skallerud*, Minnesota; Robert F.
Neville, New York;
L. Harry Easley*, Washington
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: David R. Brown, Louisiana
Historian: Robert Mead*, Nebraska
Treasurer: George A. Buskirk, Jr., Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr.,
Maryland

83rd NATIONAL CONVENTION
Commander: Ray G. Smith*, North Carolina
Vice Commanders: Charles C. Ragsdoll*,
Arkansas; James E. Koutz, Indiana;
Henry P. Bradley, Massachusetts; John C.
Pellegrini, Montana; William A. Weatherly*,
South Carolina
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Calvin C. Turpin, California
Historian: James Buterbaugh, Kansas
Treasurer: George A. Buskirk, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr.,
Maryland

84th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Charlotte, N.C., Aug. 27 – 29, 2002
Commander: Richard J. Santos, Maryland
Vice Commanders: Russell H. Hanseter,
Wisconsin; Charles R. John*, Oklahoma;
Terry D. Lewis, Pennsylvania; James F.
Mareschal, Missouri; Dale R. Salmen*,
Nevada
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: David F. Russell, Virginia
Historian: Walter L. Davis, Michigan
Treasurer: George A. Buskirk, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr.,
Maryland

85th NATIONAL CONVENTION
St. Louis, Mo., Aug. 26 – 28, 2003
Commander: Ronald F. Conley,
Pennsylvania
Vice Commanders: Jefferson 'Jeff'
Luginbuel; Roy L. Kirkham, Louisiana;
Robert M. Johnson*, Maryland; Robert G.
Bournival, New Hampshire;
Donavon R. Mason, South Dakota
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Rev. Norris A. Keirn, Indiana
Historian: Donald F. Simons, Texas
Treasurer: George A. Buskirk, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

86th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Nashville, Tenn., Aug. 31, Sept. 1, 2, 2004
Commander: John A. Brieden, III, Texas
Vice Commanders: Richard G. Denbow, Iowa; Michael Dennis Helm, Nebraska;
Fang A. Wong, New York; Clinton E. Thompson, North Carolina; Todd E. White, Wyoming
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Rev. Dr. William J. P. Doubek, III, Missouri
Historian: Fae Casper, Georgia
Treasurer: George A. Buskirk, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

87th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Honolulu, Hawaii, Aug. 23–25, 2005
Commander: Thomas P. Cadmus, Michigan
Vice Commanders: Marco A. Valenzuela, Arizona; Charles W. Barrett, Georgia;
Samuel Barney*, Ohio; Wayne B. Richey, South Carolina; Linda M. Thayer, Vermont
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Rev. James T. Akers, Kansas
Historian: W. Frazier Brinley, Connecticut
Treasurer: George A. Buskirk, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

88th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Salt Lake City, Utah, Aug. 29–31, 2006
Commander: Thomas L. Bock, Colorado
Vice Commanders: Willard F. Coffey, Michigan; James H. Hall, New Jersey;
Taurino J. Trevino*, New Mexico; Sebastian T. Roll*, North Dakota; Michael E. Harris, Virginia
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Steven E. Wright, Utah
Historian: Johnny B. Keel, Louisiana
Treasurer: George A. Buskirk, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

89th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Commander: Paul A. Morin, Massachusetts
Vice Commanders: Bryon W. White*, Alabama; Elgin Wahlborg, Kansas;
Lloyd H. Woods, Maine; Robert C. Lahiere, Tennessee; Allan C. Setterberg, Utah
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Stanley Gruneich, South Dakota

Historian: Michael J. Miskell, Pennsylvania
Treasurer: George A. Buskirk, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

90th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Commander: Martin F. Conatser, Illinois
Vice Commanders: Peggy G. Dettori, Alaska; Thomas L. Burns, Jr., Delaware;
Randall A. Fisher, Kentucky; Donald Hayden, Minnesota; David A. Korth*, Wisconsin
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
(Voted title of Past National Commander, effective 10/16/2008)
Chaplain: Rev. Elliott L. Foss, Jr. Georgia
Historian: James M. Holmes, Indiana
Treasurer: George A. Buskirk, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

91st NATIONAL CONVENTION
Louisville, Ky., Aug. 25–27, 2009
Commander: David K. Rehebin, Iowa
Vice Commanders: James A. LaCoursiere, Jr., Connecticut
Michael J. Landkamer, Nebraska
James W. Davis, West Virginia
Harley W. Ray, Oregon; Dellan 'Shorty' T. Simmons, Texas
Adjutant: Daniel S. Wheeler, Virginia
Chaplain: Rev. Lawrence 'Larry' Vollink, Michigan
Historian: Charles J. Zelinsky, Illinois
Treasurer: George A. Buskirk, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

92nd NATIONAL CONVENTION
Milwaukee, Wis., Aug. 30, Sept. 1, 2, 2010
Commander: Clarence E. Hill, Florida
Vice Commanders: Morris M. Bentley, Idaho, Dr. Gordon B. Browning, Maryland,
Mark A. Avis, Massachusetts, James C. Morris, Ohio, Eugene Schumacher, South Dakota
Adjutant: Daniel S. Wheeler, Virginia
Chaplain: Rev. John L. Beaver, Alabama
Historian: James T. Higuera, California
Treasurer: George A. Buskirk, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

93rd NATIONAL CONVENTION
Minneapolis, Minn., Aug. 30–Sept. 1, 2011
Commander: Jimmie L. Foster, Alaska
Vice Commanders: Russell J. Henry, Louisiana; John M. Mella, Michigan; Carlos
Orria-Medina, Puerto Rico; Eugene R. Pytka, Rhode Island; William F. Schrier, Washington
Adjudant: Daniel S. Wheeler, Virginia
Chaplain: Rev. Daniel J. Seehafer, Wisconsin
Historian: James Fratolillo, Massachusetts
Treasurer: George A. Buskirk, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

94th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Indianapolis, Ind., Aug. 28 - 30, 2012
Commander: Fang A. Wong, New York
Richard M. Pedro, New York, Past National Commander
Vice Commanders: Mervin G. Gunderson, Montana; James H. Hales, Jr., Pennsylvania; Milton G. Heifner, Iowa; Larry D. Sheets, Florida; David N. Voyle, Missouri
Adjutant: Daniel S. Wheeler, Virginia
Chaplain: Gerald Theriot, Louisiana
Historian: Robert B. Craig, Nebraska
Treasurer: George A. Buskirk, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr. Maryland

Vice Commanders: Paul O. Sanford, Kansas; Douglas C. Haggan, France;
Richard W. Neville, North Carolina; William R. Bryant, Virginia; Gerald L. Jacobs, Wyoming
Adjutant: Daniel S. Wheeler, Virginia
Chaplain: Tierian ‘Randy’ Cash, North Carolina
Historian: Susan B. Mason, Florida
Treasurer: George A. Buskirk, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

95th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Houston, Texas, Aug. 27 – 29, 2013
Commander: James E. Koutz, Indiana
Vice Commanders: Jeanette Rae, Nevada; John E. Neylon, New Hampshire; Glenn A. Hickman, Ohio; James H. Holland, South Carolina; David R. Hall, West Virginia
Adjutant: Daniel S. Wheeler, Virginia
Chaplain: Ronald Derrick, Idaho
Historian: N. Larry Rozier, North Carolina
Treasurer: George A. Buskirk, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr. Maryland

99th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Reno, Nev., Aug. 22 – 24, 2017
Commander: Charles E. Schmidt, Oregon
Vice Commanders: Paul Martel, Florida; Fae Casper, Georgia; Douglas L. Boldt, Nebraska; Paul L. Espinoza, New Mexico; Vincent James Troiola, New York
Adjutant: Daniel S. Wheeler, Virginia
Chaplain: Harvey H. Klee, Texas
Historian: Paul D. Bennett, Missouri
Treasurer: George A. Buskirk, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

96th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Charlotte, N. C. Aug. 26 – 28, 2014
Commander: Daniel M. Dellinger, Virginia
Vice Commanders: Douglas W. Wooddell, Colorado; Robert E. Newman, Indiana; William A. Rakestraw, Jr., New Jersey; Wayne D. Satrom, North Dakota; Paul E. Dillard, Texas
Adjutant: Daniel S. Wheeler, Virginia
Chaplain: Daniel A. McCure, Iowa
Historian: Charemon Dunham, South Dakota
Treasurer: George A. Buskirk, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

97th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Commander: Michael D. Helm, Nebraska

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PROCEEDINGS
of the
99th Annual Convention
of
The American Legion
Tuesday, August 22, 2017

... At 8:30 a.m., the delegates assembled for the 99th Annual National Convention, and the following proceedings were had.

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: Ladies and gentlemen, as we begin our program, please join me in a round of applause for Rick Pedro on the keyboard. (Applause)

Call to Order
Charles E. Schmidt, Oregon, National Commander

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: The 99th National Convention of The American Legion will come to order.

Ladies and gentlemen, please rise as the National Champion Color Guard from Newport Harbor Post 291, Newport Beach, California, presents the Colors. Remain standing while rendering a hand salute for the singing of the National Anthem by Neal McCoy. Advance the colors.

... At this time, the delegation rose and rendered a salute to the Colors, followed by which the National Anthem was performed by Neal McCoy. (Applause)

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: Color Guard, you may retire. Thank you! For the invocation, I call on National Chaplain Harvey H. Klee of Texas. Ladies and gentlemen, please uncover.

Invocation
Harvey H. Klee, Texas, National Chaplain

Dearly beloved, merciful and loving God, Your prophet Joshua instructed us to be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid. Do not be discouraged, for the Lord, your God, will be with you wherever you go.

And by Your grace The American Legion has taken that message to heart in service to veterans and their families everywhere, and has grown to be the largest veterans organization in the world. And so we begin this gathering in conjunction with the 99th National Convention in humble gratitude for Your divine benevolence, never forgetting the source of our past and future success lie in You.

May "For God and Country" not be just a motto but a way of life, a way of life dedicated to veterans and their rehabilitation, national security, Americanism and children and youth. Heavenly Father, we are a simple people who insist at times on making life more complicated than it need be. So help us out here, Lord. Grant through your loving kindness our National Convention will be a resounding success.

May all go well without major hiccups, with problems easily fixed and issues resolved in good spirit and friendly humor. Let good health and circumstance prevail for all attending this convention with bodies well fed and well rested. Help us to be patient with one another and turn our differences into strength, not weakness. May kindness predominate in our relationships with one another.
As to our scheduled events, may all arrive on time, leave on time, and have a good
time; and may the presentations be meaningful and enlightening and, when appropriate,
entertaining; and when all is said and done, may we leave this convention better for having
attended. This we pray in Your most precious and holy name, Amen.

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: Thank you, Chaplain Klee.

Pledge of Allegiance
Kevin J. Owens, Oregon, National Sergeant-at-Arms

Please remain uncovered as National Sergeant-at-Arms Kevin J. Owens of Oregon
leads us in the Pledge of Allegiance.
... At this time, the delegation recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

POW/MIA Empty Chair Ceremony
G. Michael Schlee, Maryland, Chairman, National Security Commission
E. C. Toppin, North Carolina, Vice Chairman, National Security Commission

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: At this time, we pause to remember those
who are listed as prisoners of war or missing in action from wars in which we have been
engaged. We in The American Legion will never forget them. We will not ease the pressure
on our government to do the right thing and continue to work for an accounting of all those
missing. I now call on the chairman of the National Security Council, G. Michael Schlee,
of Maryland and Vice Chairman E.C. Toppin of North Carolina to place the POW /MIA
flag on the empty chair.

Preamble to The American Legion Constitution
Charles E. Schmidt, Oregon, National Commander

Cover. Let us reaffirm our commitment to the principles and ideals of our American
Legion that was founded upon by reciting the preamble to the constitution.
... At this time, the delegation recited the preamble to The American Legion
Constitution.

Law Enforcement and Tolerance
Charles E. Schmidt, Oregon, National Commander

You may be seated. Before we begin our opening, I would like to point to yet another
reason why I am so proud to be a Legionnaire. It involves the vision of our founders. In
1923, The American Legion passed a national resolution at our convention in San
Francisco that is as relevant today as it was 94 years ago. It resonates so well that I would
like to read it over now. Resolution No. 407, titled Law Enforcement and Tolerance, and I
quote:
"WHEREAS, The fundamental law of our country guarantees to all people equal
rights and opportunities and the right to worship their God as they see fit; and
WHEREAS, It is provided that our laws shall be made and enforced by representatives
of our people, chosen under the law to do so; and
WHEREAS, Membership of The American Legion is made up of those who served
our country in time of great national stress, without distinction as to race, color, creed or
class; and
WHEREAS, The American Legion is pledged to the orderly enforcement of our laws
through our lawful agencies; now, therefore, be it
RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in San
Francisco, California, October 15-19, 1923, That we consider individuals, groups of
individuals or organizations which creates or fosters racial, religious or class strife among
our people, or which takes into their own hands the enforcement of law, determination of
guilt or infliction of punishment to be un-American, a menace to our liberties and
destructive to our fundamental right; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That we consider such action by any individual, groups or organizations
to be inconsistent with the ideals and purposes of The American Legion."

Ladies and gentlemen, once again The American Legion was on the right side of
history, and we still are today. The American Legion National Executive Committee, just
reaffirmed Resolution 407 without changing a single word. (Applause)

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: Our master of ceremonies for this morning
is a true country music star. He has released fifteen studio albums on various labels and
has released 34 singles to country radio. In 1993 he broke through with the back-to-back
number one singles "No Doubt About It" and "Wink" from his platinum-certified album
No Doubt About It. His success continued with a string of hits, including "Billy's Got His
Beer Goggles On." Although he has won numerous awards, he is most proud of
participating in 15 USO tours. His patriotism was on full display when in 2016 he recited
the Pledge of Allegiance live on his Facebook page every morning. Before calling him up
here, let's watch a brief video. ... At this time, the delegation viewed a video.

Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome a proud American, Neal McCoy! (Applause)

Opening Ceremony
Neal McCoy

Thank you. Oh, please sit down. Thank you very much. Thank you, y'all. I'm the one
that should stand for you guys, and I do quite often. Thanks for having us here. I'm going
to sing something right quick. If you will, like I sing the National Anthem, I'm going to
sing "God Bless America." And I'd be honored if you'd sing it with me. And I often joke,
when I sing the National Anthem, I get a lot of young people that come up and say, you
know, "What's the best way to sing that?" I say, "Here's the way you sing it: Get up and
sing it the way God wrote it." In case somebody else wants to sing along with you, don't
throw all those twists and curves in there. It's not worth it. You're screwing everybody up.
(Applause)

One of my pet peeves. So I'm going to sing one this morning, and I appreciate it if
you sing it with me. I'll start it right here.

... At this time, Neal McCoy performed "God Bless America." Nice job. (Applause)

Good morning. Good morning. Good morning, young people. Nice to see young
people. There's an old song that says youth is wasted on the young. I never understood that
when I was young. I thought it was the stupidest lyrics I ever heard. Now that as you get
older I understand it. I've got a two-year-old and six-year-old, both grandsons, and it's
entirely wasted on those two. (Laughter)

First of all, I'm glad to be here. I'm honored to be here. Kind of freaked out a little bit
when they handed me this piece of paper that has me listed as master of ceremonies,
because I really don't know that I am. But I'm sure honored to be here. It's awfully kind of
Commander Schmidt and all these folks to invite me here, and I had a pretty good speech
of what I was going to say in my mind, tell you a little bit about my family, but it was all
in that video that we just watched. So thank you very much. Have a good day. (Laughter)

I had not seen that. They did a very good job of editing it, because it is exactly what I
would say and probably what I was going to say here. I'll give you a little bit about my
history. I was born and raised in Jacksonville, Texas. Where are my Texas people? They're
supposed to clap anytime you say "Texas." (Applause)

You know the old saying: You can tell a Texan; you just can't tell them much.
(Laughter)

I was born and raised there in Jacksonville, which is in northeast Texas, what they call
the Pine Curtain. And I still live in Longview, Texas, which is about an hour north of

Proceedings of Tuesday, August 22, 2017
Jacksonville. Never moved too far off. I've been around the world many times, and every
state, province, a lot of different countries, there's no place like coming home. That's where
I was born and raised. My father graduated from Texas A&M in 1952. (Cheers)

Whoop! And thought that he was fixing to ship off to Korea just like most of his
friends did. Instead, I think because of his engineering degree, they sent him to the
Philippines. They started surveying, started to survey the jungles, get everything a little
closer so they could figure out where everything was.

Anyway, he met my mother in the Philippines. My mother is from Manila. She is the
second oldest of 18 children. Yeah, right. Oh, my gosh, where was reality TV when she
was growing up? (Laughter)

But her mother died young, and Mom was 13 when the Japanese occupied Manila. I
know I'm preaching to the proverbial choir in this room, but they hit Manila about the same
time they hit Pearl Harbor. So Mom was very tough. Raised us kids to be tough. Not always
fighting or anything, but to be tough minded, tough spirited. I'll give you just a quick
example of how tough she was. Because she was raising all these brothers and sisters in
some tough times, martial law, a lot of things going on in the Philippines.

When she had my older brother, born in Manila, they moved back, and they had my
sister and me around the Jacksonville, Texas, area, they thought it was very important for
us to mind our Ps and Qs. That's when Mom, coming from the Philippines and not having
all the freedoms that all of us wonderful folks have had here in the United States of
America, she started teaching us at a young age: You ought to be grateful and respectful
and understand what is giving you guys the right to do what you do and have the right to
say what you want to say when you want to say it.

Some of them, there's a lot of people saying them at the wrong times, if you ask me,
but they got the right to do that. So she started instilling in us as children how fortunate we
were to be in this country. So as I got older, it takes some of us a little longer to kind of
figure out life in general, figure out God in general, figure out what's going on. And
sometimes it takes us a little longer. Took me a little longer.

My older brother and older sister, who graduated from Texas A&M, they learned a
little sooner because they were a little smarter than me and they went to the right school. I,
in turn, started singing. But as you get older and you start to have children and then us
having grandchildren, what Mom was trying to teach us was right from wrong.

When I had the opportunity to take my first USO tour, Wayne Newton called me about
18 years ago. And he knew of me as an entertainer. Didn't know that much about me. We
took our first USO tour over to Bosnia and Italy and Hungary. And since then I've been on
15 USO tours, most of them with Wayne. We've been to Afghanistan seven different times,
Iraq a few different times, Pakistan, Bosnia, Italy, and Hungary. A lot of places some of
you folks have been, Germany, Belgium.

So it just instills in me, when I have an opportunity to be around what you folks do on
your daily lives in trying to let folks know about the constitution of some of these young
people up here, and they're grasping it pretty young, and I appreciate that, I probably didn't.
So it's nice to see young people that get it early. Some of you probably would admittedly
say: Yeah, I didn't get it either. Took a while to soak in on me. And it's okay. As long as it
soaks in, it don't matter when it soaks in. As long as you get it in there. But these kids are
all about it. I understand they're going to receive some pretty prestigious awards here in a
little bit. I'm honored to be up here and be a part of that.

But I just want to tell you that it's an honor for me to be in the room and invite you
tonight to our show. We have a concert tonight that we think you'll enjoy if you give us an
opportunity to entertain you. That's kind of what we do.

But he mentioned that I say the Pledge of Allegiance every day, and this morning I
said it outside of my bus for the 593rd day in a row. (Applause)

So if you're about that, if you're about our country and love what the Pledge stands
for and that flag and what that flag honors, I invite you to come over to Neal McCoy's fan
page every morning and say it with me. It's a big deal. In the 593 days, we've had probably
over 80 million views. And a lot of people have gotten on board, and now they say it every morning with me. As a matter of fact, I haven't missed it in 593 days, but I've been tardy or late because we're on the bus and sometimes cell service isn't that great. The second you're not there at a time, they're writing you and emailing you and texting you, saying, "What's the matter? Have you had a wreck? Is everything okay?" "Yeah, just in a bad cell. Hang on, I'm getting there."

But it's become a part of my life. And I'm honored that it has. Because my grandfather, serving in the World War, and then my father serving, and they've given us, my family and I, I've got a wife of almost 37 years. Our 37-year anniversary is coming up in October. We have two wonderful children. A 31-year-old daughter, who has given us two grandchildren, and a 23-year-old son. Because of them stepping up and understanding what it's going to take to protect the freedoms of this country and then serving our country, I'm fortunate enough to be here with a lot of other patriots in this room.

Commander Schmidt told me when I was up here visiting with him before this whole thing became real, he said, "So your grandfather was in the service and your father was in the service; so that says that you can be a Sons of The American Legion." And I said, "I'll take it. (Applause)

So I don't know where the paperwork is or what I've got to do, but I am honored and flattered to be associated with you guys and girls. Other than that, I don't have much to say. They told me don't talk too much but don't talk too little. So I really don't know where I am in that, where it falls in.

But thank you for emceeing and master of ceremonies, when they tell you you're going to emcee, I've emceed a lot of things, and that's pretty easy. But what it means when they write it out, "Master of Ceremonies," like, I don't do that. (Laughter)

But I'm glad to be here. Thank you for singing with me today. Music is just a great way to let your heart really sing. So I appreciate you singing with me today. If you get bored tonight and not doing nothing, come sing with us again, and we'll do something that you'll find in our show somewhere you'll like. We sing country music, but we do a little bit of everything. So, we invite you out tonight. And thank you for letting me be your master of ceremonies today. I'm honored to be here. (Applause)

The American Legion Youth Champions

ANNOUNCER: The 2016 American Legion Baseball All-Academic Team Captain hails from Chester, Virginia. He currently attends Virginia Military Institute in Lexington, Virginia. Upon graduation, he will be commissioned in the United States Army. Sponsored by Colonial Heights Post 284 in Colonial Heights, Virginia, please welcome your 2016 All-Academic Team Captain, Adam Conway. (Applause)

2016 American Legion Baseball All-Academic Team Captain
Adam Conway, Chester, Virginia

Good morning. I'm so excited to be in a room with people who love America as much as I do. Commander Schmidt, Commander Frain, President Davis, ladies and gentlemen and distinguished guests, I'm privileged to stand before you today. There are many people that are responsible for me being with you today. First and foremost, I would like to thank my Lord and savior Jesus Christ for living in the greatest nation on the planet. (Applause)

And also for the ability to play the greatest game in the world, baseball. (Applause)

Secondly, I'd like to thank my parents, Michael and Gail Conway; my sister, MaKayla Conway; and my grandma, Carol King. Thank you, Memaw. (Applause)

A very special thank you goes out to my local American Legion post, Post 284 of Colonial Heights, Virginia, especially Barb and Bill Gilmore for their countless hours and undying love of American Legion Baseball for over 20 years. (Applause)
Also, a special shout-out needs to go to Colonial Heights Post 284 Pirates coach and team mom, Gilbert and Amy Baber, because without them I would not be here standing before you today. A special thank you goes to Mr. Abrahams who has taken us around and treated us like rock stars this entire week, and it's been incredible. Last but not least, a very special thank you goes out to the National Scholarship Selection Committee, for this scholarship has helped to ease the financial burden of attending my first year at the Virginia Military Institute. (Applause)

My experience with American Legion Baseball has been nothing shy of extraordinary. And on behalf of over 66,000 American Legion Baseball players this year, we thank you. May God bless The American Legion, and may God bless the United States of America. Thank you all. (Applause)

ANNOUNCER: Our next Youth Champion was elected President of Boys Nation by his peers. He hails from Phenix City, Alabama, and was elected Governor of Alabama's Boys State and Alabama state president of a student-led organization. He plans to attend the University of Alabama to pursue a degree in political science. Sponsored by Post 135 in Phenix City, Alabama, please welcome your 2017 Boys Nation President, Darius Thomas. (Applause)

2017 Boys Nation President
Darius Thomas, Phenix City, Alabama

Hello, good morning. Thank you. Thank you. I would like to start by first and foremost thanking my mother for her strong support of me throughout my entire life. Thank you, Mom. (Applause)

I would like to thank Mr. Davis and my American Legion post, Post 135 of the great state of Alabama, for everything they've done for me. (Applause)

Lastly, I would like to thank you, The American Legion Family. Thank you for funding the scholarships that will lead to my education. Thank you for shaping my future. You know, I'm a young man with a single mother and a brother in prison until the year 2030, and success from that kind of background really isn't the status quo. However, I'll never let the status quo define me. (Applause)

My faith in God and my love of country is too deep, too strong for me to waste my life. Being on this stage is a testament to the fact that the American dream is still alive. Being on this stage is a testament that with God nothing shall be impossible. (Applause)

With my mother's love and God's guidance, there is nothing that I cannot achieve. So, lastly, I'd like to say myself, Emily, Adam, and Andrew, we are living proof that America's future is bright. Thank you, American Legion, for the hope, thank you for the love, thank you for the honor. May God bless The American Legion and may God bless these United States of America. Thank you. (Applause)

2017 Eagle Scout of the Year
Scott Moore, Jr., Clarksville, Tennessee

ANNOUNCER: The 2017 Eagle Scout of the Year is from Clarksville, Tennessee. He was awarded this honor for his tireless work at The Well, a homeless shelter and food ministry in downtown Clarksville, raising more than $1,400 and asking for toiletry donations from hotels in the area. He credits his active involvement with Boy Scouts and JROTC and his participation in Boys State for his acceptance into the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, New York. Due to his training obligations, Scott is unable to attend today. Please give a round of applause for the 2017 Eagle Scout of the Year, Scott Moore, Jr. (Applause)
ANNOUNCER: In competition at Colorado Springs a few weeks ago, two Youth Champions took top prize at the 2017 Junior Air Rifle Championships. Emily Stith of Colorado Springs, Colorado, claimed the precision championship title with an overall score of 2,477 out of a possible 2509, finishing with a precision final score of 104.7. In just a few weeks she plans to join the U.S. Army Marksmanship Unit in Fort Benning, Georgia. Please welcome your 2017 Precision Champion, Emily Stith. (Applause)

2017 Junior Shooting Sports Precision Champion
Emily Stith, Colorado Springs, Colorado

Hi everyone. I'd like to start off by thanking the inspirational man that ran the national competition that I competed in and all of the rounds leading up to it, Shayne Abrahams, National Commander Charles Schmidt, National Auxiliary President Mary Davis, my wonderful parents, and Colorado Department Commander Terry Clinton, and also everybody here that has a helping hand in The American Legion.

To everyone here in this room, thank you for being here. Without all of you my fellow champions and I wouldn't be here. Whether or not you're in the Auxiliary, the Sons of The American Legion, or any of the amazing programs that are run by The American Legion, you all help the youth and shape us. And we all can't say thank you enough.

When I was told that I would not win a national competition, I made sure to prove them wrong. When I was told that I would not go overseas and go to any national or any international world cups or world championships, I made sure to win silver in Czech Republic and Innsbruck, Austria, and made it to World Cups in Bangkok, Thailand, and Munich, Germany. I did so by representing this beautiful country and upholding my thanks in Christ and the sportsmanship that I was taught so well by everybody here. With that I have my eyes set on 2020, the Olympics. (Applause)

Thank you. I will always hold all of the lessons that I've learned in The American Legion when I go overseas to do that. This opportunity to speak in front of all of you guys has been absolutely unbelievable. I can't say thank you enough. May God bless the amazing American Legion and this beautiful country. Thank you. (Applause)

2017 Junior Shooting Sports Sporter Champion
Hailey Smith, Zion, Illinois

ANNOUNCER: In the Sporter category, the championship was captured by a young shooter representing Zion Benton NJROTC in Zion, Illinois. She won the title by firing a score of 2,330 out of a possible 2,400. This fall she is attending Marquette University in Milwaukee on a Navy ROTC full-ride scholarship. Although school commitments prevent her from being with us today, please acknowledge your 2017 Sporter Shooting Champion, Hailey Smith. (Applause)

ANNOUNCER: Our last Youth Champion hails from Newton, Massachusetts. He displayed his passion for encouraging youth to educate themselves on the U.S. Constitution with his prepared oration entitled "The Constitution: A Lasting Legacy." He's not only been recognized at several debate and public speaking tournaments, but he is also an accomplished wrestler. He is a senior in West Roxbury, Massachusetts, and plans a future in international relations and public policy. Sponsored by Post 440, please welcome your 2017 National Oratorical Contest winner, Andrew Steinberg. (Applause)
Ladies and gentlemen, Commander Schmidt, distinguished delegates, I would like to thank you for the profound honor of participating at the National Oratorical Contest and welcoming me to The American Legion Family. (Applause)

My exposure to The American Legion came through the Oratorical Contest. For others, programs like Boys Nation, Baseball, Shooting and so many others promote a culture of service, citizenship and commitment to bettering our communities and country. From my earliest interactions with Post 440 in my hometown of Newton, Massachusetts, to the national stage in Indianapolis, I have met the most incredible people. But I would especially like to thank Mr. Shayne Abrahams, who ran the entire national competition and has given all of us at the youth delegation the experience of a lifetime. (Applause)

And all of you for giving us the opportunity of a lifetime. We learn from your examples of leadership and service. Your message to us is clear: That studying the constitution matters. Investing in our generation matters. In a time where viewpoints concerning our nation can be polarizing, I returned from Indianapolis optimistic about our country's future. Optimistic not because my peers agreed on every issue, but because of what we shared: love of country, respect for our brave men and women in uniform, and the commitment to becoming the next guardians of American democracy. (Applause)

This fall I'll be a high school senior. I'm interested in pursuing public service, but I don't know exactly where my future will take me. But I promise you this: I will always work to protect the rights and liberties that you have fought to defend, and I will always strive to make sure The American Legion is proud of its investment in me for the years to come. Thank you and God bless. (Applause)

Presentation of the Spirit of Service Awards
Brigadier General Kevin Vereen, Deputy Commanding General, Operations
United States Army Recruiting Command
Donald E. Ballard, Medal of Honor Recipient

ANNOUNCER: The Spirit of Service Awards were first established by The American Legion in 2000 at our National Convention in Milwaukee. Each of the military branches selects an outstanding junior enlisted member to receive this distinguished award based on off-duty volunteerism. Assisting National Commander Schmidt in presenting the awards is Brigadier General Kevin Vereen of the U.S. Army Recruiting Command and Medal of Honor recipient Donald E. Ballard. Please rise as the commander leads us in rendering appropriate honors to Mr. Ballard.

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: Present arms! Order arms!

ANNOUNCER: Our first Spirit of Service Award recipient demonstrates a spirit of charity through her selfless dedication and voluntary commitments. As a volunteer instructor for the Health Professions Scholarship Program in Fort Knox, she contributed to educating future Army leaders, exhibiting exceptional volunteer service, and enhancing the U.S. Army Medical Department and the local community. In 2016, she served as a member of the "Funeral Honors Mission" and rendered final honors to 25 veterans, achieving the highest grade of excellence from all 25 families and funeral directors. Representing the United States Army, please welcome Spirit of Service Award recipient, Specialist Virginia A. Constable. (Applause)

SPECIALIST VIRGINIA A. CONSTABLE: Good morning, Legionnaires, brothers and sisters in arms, distinguished guests, and family and friends. Thank you for being here today in support of the incredible people and programs that are represented. It is impossible
to put into words how honored I am to be here today receiving this award, but I'll do my best.

First off, I have to thank Sergeant Terpaso for introducing me to this program that I work with and that I fell in love with. Sergeant Prescott put together a program where medics could go to universities and teach the students basic medical school. These students were incredible. They're pre-med students who knew all the book knowledge but didn't have any hands-on experience. And the medics had all this hands-on experience down to muscle memory. But in order to teach, they had to break it down to the very basics and had this unique opportunity to learn to teach. It is truly an incredible learning opportunity for both sides, and also it is an opportunity to introduce these students to a friendly face to the uniform and the opportunities that the military has to offer.

I wish I could thank each individual person who helped me on the way to this incredible accomplishment and who has helped me in the progression of my career. But if I did that, we'd be here all day. I know y'all don't want to listen to me talk that long. But I will simply thank The American Legion for this incredible opportunity to come out here and all the experiences I've had and the honor of being here.

I also have to thank Sergeant Veralas, Sergeant Wright and my command team at the USN MEDEVAC at Fort Knox for thinking of me when the opportunity for this award arose. I'd also like to thank my friends and family for supporting me along the way and continuing to support me in all of my endeavors. Thank you and God bless. (Applause)

ANNOUNCER: Our next 2017 Spirit of Service Award recipient displayed outstanding leadership and a devotion to aid others. In 2016, she provided 624 hours as a volunteer EMT for Virginia Beach Medical Services. As a Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Victim Advocate, she volunteers to aid and support victims of sexual assault in the Hampton Roads area. Her selfless dedication has earned her two Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medals as well as the Military Outstanding Volunteer Service Medal. Please welcome United States Navy Petty Officer Second Class Robin Stephens. (Applause)

PETTY OFFICER SECOND CLASS ROBIN STEPHENS: Good morning. I want to start off by thanking everyone that thanked me for my service on the way here. That was incredible. So many people that stopped me, and that was just amazing. So thank you to all of those that stopped me. Thank you for your service as well because it's extremely important to be here today. There's so many people that I have met that are just incredible, and I've heard so many amazing stories. And for that I'll always be grateful. Also just the few that recognized that I was in my white uniform today. So thank you for recognizing that it's very easy to stain this up, you just breathe the wrong way and something jumps on you. So thank you for recognizing that.

First and foremost, I want to thank The American Legion for such an unforgettable opportunity and the privilege to represent the Navy in accepting the Spirit of Service Award. To every single member of this organization, thank you for allowing me to become a part of this family. I'm so excited to share the same passion, to strive towards a better tomorrow for past, present and future military servicemembers.

I want to thank my command. In no way would this have been possible without their unconditional support. More specifically, my CO, XO, CMC, Warrant Officer Haner, Mr. Sloan. Thank you for always having my back and unknowingly showing me the qualities it requires to be not just a good leader but a great one.

I would also like to thank my family. They are the ones who truly deserve this award. Their spirit of service has yet to falter even though challenged by time and distance. Y'all are my heroes, and I love y'all very much. To my wonderful, handsome husband, who is down in the front, thank you from the bottom of my heart for willingly going down this amazing, crazy, difficult path with me. I love you so much and thank you for being here today. (Applause)
Thank you again for allowing me to become a fellow Legionnaire. It means so much more now that I’ve gotten to meet many of you and see for myself what The American Legion is truly about. Thank you again for everything you do for us. We are forever grateful. (Applause)

ANNOUNCER: Our next Spirit of Service Award is given to a Marine for his outstanding volunteer service and unselfish devotion to local community activities. He provided over 430 hours of community service to a multitude of meaningful organizations while also receiving the Presidential Volunteer Service Award with Silver Distinction. His outstanding willingness to serve has made him an exemplary role model to other Marines across the Corps. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome Corporal Justin Ahasteen, United States Marine Corps. (Applause)

CORPORAL JUSTIN AHASTEEN: Good morning. Ladies, gentlemen, fellow servicemembers, veterans, distinguished guests and retirees, it is with great honor to receive this award as a representative of the United States Marine Corps. As servicemembers, we have a duty and commitment not only to the best interests of our national security, but to the people of the United States.

Hunger, poverty and inequality have plagued our nation, but organizations such as The American Legion, Red Cross, Salvation Army and the willpower of others are able to impact the lives of many and make a difference one action at a time.

I thank The American Legion, my fellow servicemembers and the grace of God for setting the example and to provide aid to those who are unable to provide for themselves. Semper fidelis, and thank you for having me. (Applause)

ANNOUNCER: Our Coast Guard Spirit of Service Award recipient is a servicewoman with a contagious desire for volunteerism. Serving as the Base Elizabeth City's Volunteer Captain, she has planned, organized, and served as the Coast Guard leader in many community service events. Recently, she was awarded the Coast Guard Military Outstanding Volunteer Service medal for her 355 hours of community service. She was also nominated for the Greater Elizabeth City Area Chamber of Commerce "Women of Excellence" Program. Due to her military duties, U.S. Coast Guard Petty Officer Second Class Jordan Suchon is unable to attend. Please give her a warm round of applause. (Applause)

ANNOUNCER: Our next recipient, in addition to serving her country, works as a school nurse in the historic Northeast Kansas City Public School District. While there, she has coordinated with the Kansas City Health Department to help more than 100 students meet compliance standards. She has worked with several organizations to provide free hygiene products and dental care to students. She has also taken up the volunteer task as coach of three sports, providing structure and a safe environment. Representing the Air National Guard, Senior Airman Allanesha Smith. (Applause)

SENIOR AIRMAN ALLANESHA SMITH: Well, good morning. I don't think I've been this nervous since the first day of basic training. (Laughter)

I would first like to thank The American Legion and all you distinguished guests for being here. I'd like to thank the Legion for rewarding me and recognizing my service to my community. I'd like to thank my leadership, Colonel Fries, Medical Group Commander 131st Bomb Wing, Whiteman Air Force Base, Missouri. I'd like to thank my parents for their unwavering support and their awful "Chair Force" jokes, as they are two retired Army. Growing up an Army brat from a family of a nursing corps officer mom, combat engineer dad and IT specialist brother, it's hard to get out of those "Chair Force" jokes. I'd also like to thank my better half and soon-to-be husband, Michael. Thank you for being here. Down there, I see you. (Applause)
I love you very much and I'd like to thank you for supporting my service.

The last thing I'd like to leave you with today is a special shout-out to Post 331 outside of Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, where I grew up. That post offers a specific scholarship to nursing students. I wouldn't be the nurse that I am without that post. You see, 14 years ago, a Legionnaire named Richard gave my mom a scholarship to become a nurse. She went from green to gold in the Army. She received the 40&8 Scholarship. Fourteen years later I would follow in her footsteps, go to the same nursing school and receive the same scholarship from an American Legion Legionnaire named Richard. (Applause)

So, you see, the story is about impact. If 14 years ago my mother hadn't received that scholarship, she wouldn't be the director of the Hamlet VA serving thousands of veterans after she retired from the Army. (Applause)

She wouldn't be the nurse she is today serving in prisons inside the great state of North Carolina, and I wouldn't be the nurse that I am serving in the great state of Missouri, with thousands of children, helping many homeless people and lots of their families in my community. So I'd like to thank the Legion because you don't realize that one impact can change someone's entire life. I challenge you all to continue to do that each and every day. Thank you. (Applause)

ANNOUNCER: Our final Spirit of Service award goes to a member of the U.S. Air Force who has dedicated her time and efforts to many charitable organizations within the Tucson community. Ever the humanitarian, she dedicated 144 hours comforting and engaging seniors without family at a local hospice center. She's assisted with numerous food drives for the Tucson homeless while also participating as a storyteller in the children's ward intensive care unit. Please welcome U.S. Air Force Spirit of Service recipient, Senior Airman Kalynn Mitchell. (Applause)

SENIOR AIRMAN KALYN L. MITCHELL: Good morning, everyone. I would first like to start out and say how gracious and humbled I am to be here. It's been a wonderful and amazing opportunity.

I've suffered with depression for many years, been diagnosed for about three and a half. Now, on the worst days, where falling asleep and staying asleep was hard but actually waking up and going through the day was the hardest, I looked to volunteering. Volunteering actually gave me a purpose. It made me see that one person can mean so much. No matter how hopeless or awful or out of luck I felt, volunteering was always there to remind me that no matter who you are, no matter what gender, what race, sexuality, you did matter and you can make a difference. Thank you. (Applause)

NEAL MCCOY: Where's the person playing that organ at? I love that. Thank you. Nice job! All right. Great job! (Applause)

Well, as your master of ceremonies, at least for this early portion of the presentation, I thank you for having me here. What an honor to be up here with all these folks who received these awards, the young folks, our military folks. It's a big deal, again, for me to be here and finding out from the general that I'm eligible to be a Son of The American Legion. I'm going to start the paperwork on that, and I look forward to being with you guys and girls maybe somewhere else down the road. Thank you for having me. Enjoy the rest of your show. Please come to our show tonight, if you get a chance. Thank you for letting me be your master of ceremonies. Thank you. (Applause)

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: Ladies and gentlemen, please show your appreciation once again for Neal McCoy. (Applause)

Congratulations once again to our American Legion Youth Champions and to our Spirit of Award recipients. Don't those men and women in uniform make you proud? And don't our Youth Champions make you proud? (Cheers and applause)

Those Youth Champions are the fruits of your labor, out in your posts, units or squadrons, of giving youth an opportunity in The American Legion programs. Thank you
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all. By the way, all of our Spirit of Service recipients are now members of The American Legion. (Applause)

I also have a feeling that some of our Youth Champions will someday be Legionnaires. (Applause)

I would like to make some important announcements, if you would please note. Those individuals receiving membership awards should start making their way to the area behind the stage now in order to form up for the presentations at 10:50 a.m.

Secondly, the president of the United States will speak at our national convention tomorrow, Wednesday, at approximately 11:00 a.m. Regardless of your political views, we always treat our guests with the utmost courtesy. That means no booing, no chanting, no demonstrations. Polite applause when appropriate.

On Wednesday, shuttles start at 6:00 a.m. All pickup and drop-off for shuttles, on Wednesday only, will be at the north entrance of the convention center. If you are not on the shuttle by 9:30 a.m., you probably will not make it into the hall or even into the vicinity. Reno Police Department will have all streets closed around the convention center by 9:30 a.m. If you have been driving to the Reno-Sparks Convention Center, we recommend arriving at the parking lot off Coliseum Way, back of the Atlantis, no later than 9:30 a.m. If not, you will not get into the parking area. The convention center's only entrance will be the north entrance at the Atlantis Skywalk. If you go to any other door, it will be locked. Doors will be for exiting only. If you leave the center for any reason through those doors, you will have to walk all the way around to the north entrance. In order to enter the convention center, you will need to have your name badge and/or distinguished guest badge. Entrance is via the Atlantis Skywalk and the north entrance near the bottom of the escalators. The convention center will open at 6:00 a.m. Hall 4, where you now are, will open at 7:00 a.m. Magnetometers will be in place outside Hall 4. Once you go through the mags, if you leave, you must reenter through the mags again. Most likely the Secret Service will restrict movement around 10:30. If you have not passed through the mags by 10:30, it is highly probable that you will not be granted access to Hall 4. Don't bring backpacks or large purses because it slows down entry through the mags. Also, knives, weapons, guns are not allowed. You bring them, you won't receive them back, ever. You may bring in water bottles, soda, etcetera. Also, there's no department media seating this year due to the seats being preempted by media for the president's visit. This will be a historic event because the president will be signing the Claims Modernization Act on our convention stage, a first. And you don't want to miss it. (Applause)

If any organization understands the importance of a strong corps of volunteers, it's The American Legion. Our next speaker is the Deputy Commanding General of Operations for the U.S. Army Recruiting Command. It has a vitally important mission of finding the best men and women to defend our America. He deployed with the 42nd Military Police Brigade under Operation Iraqi Freedom from 2008 to 2009. He is a graduate of the U.S. Army Airborne and Air Assault schools. He has earned master's degrees at the U.S. Army War College and Troy State University. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome Brigadier General Kevin Vereen. (Applause)

Address: Brigadier General Kevin Vereen
Deputy Commanding General, Operations, U.S. Army Recruiting Command

Okay. Good morning, American Legion! And I'll end it with "hooah" for all you Army. I just want to clarify the last name is Vereen. I'm from the great state of North Carolina, born at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. And that's what I call home. So for you North Carolina folks, I am just proud and honored to be able to represent the state of North Carolina. Hooah!

So I'm going to talk real quick. I'm not going to be here long. I will tell you, it is an honor for me to stand before you and speak to some great Americans who I have had the honor and privilege of knowing pretty much all of my life. Having being raised as a kid in
a military family, both of my siblings have served in the military and have since retired, so we are truly a military family. And so I'm just honored to be able to speak to you just real briefly about what it means for our Army and for our military as we go into the next couple of decades and the future of service.

So I will just tell you that The American Legion has been just a proud organization who has done great work since 1919, and I am just honored for what you do for our retirees, for our current servicemembers serving on active duty, and our youth. I will tell you that, speaking on behalf of the Army, and I can almost say for all the other services, our military is built on people. As we continue to do those things that our nation has required us to do at home and abroad, it's all about our future generation of servicemembers.

We've got a tremendous military that's been active, pretty active, over the last 16, 17 years. You all know it. You see it on the news. There's no surprise. We have been in continuous conflict since 9/11. And it's not going down. It is not diminishing. As our Army and as our military continue to serve our nation and to protect and defend those who enjoy the liberties and the freedoms that we all enjoy in this great nation, we will need a future generation that can step up and serve their country.

So for the Army, I will tell you, we're going to need your help. I don't care if you're a retired Army veteran, a retired Marine, Coast Guard, Navy, doesn't matter. We need your help because our military is going to be called to continue to do what it's designed to do, it's on the backs of our future generation. I know you're going to ask probably: Well, how can I help? Well, I will tell you that I want you to be an ambassador for our military. I want you to be an ambassador for our Army. The best way you can do that is really tell your story, tell your story of your service to your nation, so that our young generation will want to be a part of something bigger than themselves, and that's the U.S. military.

I will also tell you that I will grant you access to our recruiters all across the world. We have over 9,000 Army recruiters alone over the United States and some overseas. Wherever there is a school, a high school, there's a recruiter close to that location. I just want to tell you, you have an open invitation to be a recruiter for us, to talk to our recruiters and ask them how can you help. But I will tell you, it starts with telling your story. We want you to tell your story. You have access in some cases where we don't have access. You have friends who may not even know what the military's all about, and they may have grandkids and kids who want to be a part of something bigger than themselves, and that's the U.S. military.

I would ask that you visit our recruiting centers. They're all over the world. They're all over the United States. They are in storefronts. They are in office buildings. Find one in your local area. I would ask that you go and talk to our recruiters and ask them how you can help. We need your help. I'll also tell you that our Army and our military is built on professionals. We are a professional institution. We have served on the backs of you all. I will tell you, there is no greater service than service to your nation wearing the uniform. I'm proud to be able to do that. (Applause)

I will hope that in your contact and your interaction with our servicemembers wearing the uniform that they're professionals and that they treat you with dignity and respect, the respect that you deserve as former servicemembers wearing the uniforms defending our country. I would hope that that's the case. I will also hope that they're doing the right thing, in your presence and out of your presence, because we expect them to do the right thing all the time. In the absence of supervision, in the absence of leadership, they are the ambassadors of our country, and we expect them to act accordingly and to represent our nation and our military in a positive light.

So what does the Army have to offer? And I'll speak just real quickly about the Army. There's over 150 career fields that we have now in the Army. I will tell you, there is about any job occupation that any young 17 to 24 year-old would want to do. But they may not know what's available to them. There's also credentialing programs and certifications where they can be certified in a certain field. Then when they decide to hang up their uniform, they have a certification or a credential that they can take back in the community.
and they can work in the civilian sector and service the civilian sector using those skills they learned in our military. But they will not know it unless we tell them. So I ask that you know about our Army, know about our military so that you can be advocates for our profession, a true profession of arms.

We also have tuition assistance. I know most of you know what that is. The Army GI Bill, all those great educational benefits that our Army and our military offer to servicemembers, we offer that to those who entered the service, regardless of how long they served, if they served honorably. That will allow them, of course, to fund a college education that they may not be able to afford otherwise.

I will just tell you that those are a few things we offer, it's not only the Army, but it's the military, it's all services, for our young generation so they can be equipped with the skills and the knowledge, the education, so they can be viable and vital members of our society. So let me just tell you, it's no surprise, it may be a surprise to you, but most of our youth are disconnected to the military. About 50 percent of our youth have no clue what the service is all about. They can't tell you the difference between the Army, the Navy. They may. They see ships, and they understand that's probably the Navy. The Marine Corps, probably the uniforms. I know the Army takes heat about not being as well dressed as the Marine Corps. So thank you, Marines. We appreciate it. (Laughter)

But they don't know about the military. In substance, true substance. Most of them, if you don't know, really don't even meet the qualifications to serve in the military. 71 percent of our youth, 17 to 24, don't even meet the qualifications to serve in the military. Why is that? I will tell you the number one thing is obesity. So we've got to work with our youth and we've got to tell them that we want them to be fit to fight. We want them to be ready to win. The only way that they can win is they've got to be ready to don the uniform and do things that they may have never dreamed that they could do. We talk about the triad, and that's sleep, diet, and exercise. So that's what we want our young generation to understand and to acquire and pick up those good habits, because it will pay dividends in the long run. They don't understand that you can't serve in the military if you're overweight. They don't understand that you've got to get six to eight hours of sleep at night. The Army only gets six. All the other services, I think you get eight. (Laughter)

They don't understand that. We've got to teach them that. They don't understand that growing up on hamburgers and hot dogs and everything else without balanced exercise is not good for you. We've got to educate them on that. I will also tell you that only 1 percent of Americans are currently serving in the military, and only 7 percent of the U.S. population has ever served in the military. I'll tell you, we've got our work cut out because we've got to knock down doors to make sure folks understand that our military can't survive unless it's got people.

I'm asking that you do your job, I will do mine, to make sure that we are ambassadors for our military. Because we want to make sure that at some point in time, as I'm going to transition and sit in those same seats that you're sitting in, don the same uniforms that you're donning today, that I want to have comfort in knowing that our Army and our military is in good hands. So we all have a role to play.

So I want to thank you for your service. I want to thank you for all that you have done for this great nation that we serve and this great nation that we live in. I will tell you from all of our senior leadership, all of our soldiers, our servicemembers across the globe, we don't take freedom for granted because we have to ensure freedom.

Thank you for your service, and thank you for being a part of this great military. May God bless you. May God bless you, bless The American Legion. May God bless the United States of America. Thank you. (Applause)

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: The newest member of The American Legion! (Applause) Somebody knows how to recruit.

... At this time, the delegation viewed a video.
**NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT:** A member of American Legion Post 626 in Missouri, our next speaker was awarded the Medal of Honor for the amazing bravery and valor of his actions during an attack at a helicopter pad in Quang Tri Province, Vietnam. A Navy Corpsman attached to Company M, 3rd Battalion, 4th Marines, our guest was treating two Marines suffering from heat exhaustion when they came under attack on May 16, 1968. Under fire, he continued to direct aid to other Marines and then smothered an enemy grenade with his body to protect the wounded. The grenade failed to explode, and he threw it away, where it detonated harmlessly. He continued to treat the wounded and received the nation's highest award for his actions by President Nixon and General Westmoreland. He transferred to the U.S. Army and retired as a colonel in the Kansas National Guard. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome a true American hero, Donald E. Ballard. *(Applause)*

**Address: Donald E. Ballard**  
**Medal of Honor Recipient**

I am standing up. *(Laughter)* Please sit down. I treat life with humor because I suffer from post-traumatic stress and I avoid post-traumatic stress disorder by understanding what all that entails and how to avoid it. I'm thinking that I've successfully blended back into our population and successfully lived my life to honor the guys that I served with. I wear this Medal of Honor for all the guys that's ever served. I wear it especially for the guys on the hill with me that died that day. I wear it for all the corpsmen out there. Without the corpsmen, the Marines wouldn't even be able to put a flag on top of the hill. *(Applause)*

The Marines are always looking for a few good men. They found them: Hospital corpsmen. *(Laughter)*

Actually, I'm honored to be here today to speak to such a group of Americans. As a matter of fact, I talk about you wherever I go because I do believe in what the general said and all our honorees have done for this great country. But we are kind of missing the boat, as I said, is that we need to reach the common people. Now, these people excelled. They were champions. They were selected because their skill sets were such that they were superior to their peers. But I want to reach the little guys, because, first, I believe the military is a family-owned business. Think about that. We've all handed it from generation to generation. Hardly ever do we get other people that want to join because they have, as the general said, have no clue as to the benefits of joining or the responsibility to this great country. It's up to us to lead the way, to teach these kids and expose these kids to a different core value. Let me ask you this: If we don't do it, who in the hell is going to do it? You know? Take that home with you.

I've only got two like points I want to make. There will be a test afterwards, so pay attention. I'm the treasurer of the Medal of Honor Society. We have spent millions of dollars designing a character development program. They modeled it after me because I'm a character. *(Laughter)*

I would like and challenge each of you to go to the website, Medal of Honor Society, and look at the education opportunities and help us get that into the schools in your local towns. It's free. It started out as a course curriculum, and we teach anything and everything about core values and situational awareness. We found that didn't work because schoolteachers are already inundated with all their requirements. So we came back to the drawing board and we broke it up into little vignettes to where they can pick and choose what subject matter they want to talk from and use our vignettes as a training tool or adjunct to their objectives.

So my first request for you is when you go home, look at the Medal of Honor Society educational program. Get involved. There's no money involved on your part or the schools' part. We just want to get the word out because not all of us are champions and we do need to reach the less fortunate, the less skilled, and they become an opportunity for them then to become great Americans, just as we've all done. That's my first request for you.
My second is I took off the colonel hat and I put back on my doc hat because I'm sitting out here thinking there's a lot of good speakers here and they all talk about patriotism, Americanism, everything else, which we need to continually hear and we need to spread that word to the youth. I'm going to mention one thing that I want to take home with you, especially the women. Pay attention. How many of you in this room think that the government is going to take care of you when you die? They don't care about us when we're alive. They care even less when we are dead. At the age of 60, I went back to school to become a licensed funeral director. I shook a lot of hands in here checking for pulses. Some of you I have a question about. (Laughter)

But I retired three different times and went back to college to get that license because I found a void. Every veteran I've ever talked to, with the exception of very few, believe that the government somehow is going to pay for their funerals. That is a misstatement. They will not pay one penny for my funeral even though I have the Medal. They'll not pay one penny for your funeral. They will not pay a penny for the returning Afghan that died in combat. Not one penny. That's why you got SGLI insurance.

So if you think for one second that the government is going to be there for you, you're wrong. I'm giving you some advice that I've learned. I got my corpsman hat on again. The thing to do is to go home, think about it, and learn all you can about the process, because an educated consumer will benefit your family after you're dead or if your wife would die. I couldn't see if you raised your hands, anyway, but the attitude is most of you don't know about funerals. The government will give you everything once you step into that cemetery. But how do you get from the deathbed to the cemetery? You have to go through a licensed funeral practitioner. Okay. That's why I went back to school, because in our post, in our town, Kansas City, we had no assets to help the indigent.

I do over a hundred funerals free. I take no salary now, and my wife takes no salary, because we care and that's our passion, is to take care of the veterans that don't qualify for benefits. And, by the way, that's you. (Applause)

I'm going to try to get ads in your magazine with a website that will allow you to go to my website that says "Things you should know about funerals." I know this is not a subject that anybody wants to talk about, but that's what corpsmen do. We look at things differently than most of you. You know, you might see somebody get shot, but it's the corpsmen that has to go over there and stick his hand in his chest and try to control the hemorrhage and treat for shock. The rest of you are too busy doing whatever you're doing. You know, when I was in the Marine Corps, I was wounded eight times. Thank you very much, Marines. (Laughter)

But there is no greater love than the corpsmen and the Marines. Hooyah. The Army says "hoorah." The Marines says "Hoohah." I don't know what the Navy says. I was only in there a short time. In the Air Force, what do they say? "Nice putt." (Laughter)

Okay. I have your attention now. It is a great country because we made it a great country. Come on. Take credit. Take credit. (Applause)

We took an oath to defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic. We elect those domestic bastards every year. (Laughter)

Now, there's some good politicians. You can tell, they die early. You can always tell when they are lying: Their lips are moving. There may be some politicians in here, if you want to raise your hand. I wouldn't blame you not to. Nobody does. (Laughter)

But we do need to represent our country in a different manner. We represented it at the time of need. We were there when our country was challenged. We were there when we were called to duty. I'm calling you to duty now to educate the youth. As the general said, less than 1 percent of our population has ever served in the military. Less than 1 percent. How pathetic. As I said in my video, I was raised under a different attitude; that I was required to serve in the military, required to serve the country somehow. There's plenty of jobs out there that does provide service to our country that doesn't require you to be in the uniform.
Take that message home. Go to the Medal of Honor Society website and encourage your schools to adopt that program. Take it. It's free. And also follow up with that because the kids today are thirsty and hungry for your attention. They're thirsty to know about what the veterans are all about. Who teaches them? Nobody. It has to be you. You have to teach the youth our core values of what the military stands for. It's up to you. Please help me spread the core values so our grandkids can live the life that we lived and we can take care of the country in a way that's respectful and we can all hold our heads up and be proud.

I will put out a website to anybody that has any information. I'm in Kansas City. So don't think that you're going to drive to Kansas City after you're dead to be buried. That ain't going to happen. I want to give you free information that you will be armed and you will have the knowledge then to go to your local funeral parlor or funeral home or funeral director and do it with honor, dignity and respect and knowledge that you don't have to spend the money that you normally would if you didn't have the education.

Just know your rights, know your benefits. That's all I'm asking. It's up to you. Just as I told the Marines, Change your socks. If they don't, it's up to you, you know? It's all about your decisions. Life's about choices, and it's better to be knowledgeable about what answers you can select, or you'll just fall to the fate of whatever else somebody else is going to tell you. There's a whole list of things that you do not understand, you do not know about next of kin. Everything about this was a learning curve for me. I had no knowledge. Most of my Marines said I was such a bad corpsman that I had to become a funeral director. (Laughter)

It's okay. I'm still giving. I take no salary. I'm here to help you. If all the things that you take out of this convention, do something for yourself. Look at what I've told you.

The test will come when our country is older: Did we really educate our youth? Did we really make a difference? The second test is when we die, is our family taken care of? Do we get the honor and respects? I do, like I said, over a hundred a year that get no flag, they get no attention, they get no final respect. I'm there to give them their final salute and thank them for their service.

You can set up a program just like that in your hometown to take care of the people that you do not even know it's happening in your communities. I don't expect you to know that. I just expect you to be a little bit more aware of how to take care of your own family. And maybe, if you'll start some initiatives in your own community, you can take care of the veterans that's under the bridge or fall in the way of hard times.

So I'm going to close my comments. We all love America, we all respect the good Lord, we all want to be here and thank The American Legion for all they're doing. But the issues are simple. The test is coming. Will you be prepared? Thank you. (Applause)

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: Thank you, Colonel Ballard, for those words. I would like to give you the national commander coin and a diamond-studded Legion pin and also The American Legion medallion. Thank you so much.

I just told Colonel Ballard not all of us Air Force guys are golfers. I'd like to share with you an announcement before I introduce the next guest. My fellow veterans, if you would today take ten minutes of your time to help your fellow veterans by contributing to the VA's MVP, that's the Million Veteran Program. The MVP is a VA initiative to improve and modernize health care through genetics and health research. With over 595,000 veterans already enrolled, MVP is the largest initiative in promoting precision medicine. Stop by the MVP booth located in the exhibit hall. Just look for the balloons and the friendly faces to welcome you on board to the MVP family. Keep in mind that the exhibit hall today will close at 2:00 p.m. That's 1400 hours. So you don't want to miss this opportunity, so you need to act real soon.

The American Legion is proud to bestow its highest honor on our next guest. The Distinguished Service Medal recognizes outstanding service to the nation and programs of The American Legion. This year's recipient studied medicine and physiology at the University of Athens in Greece. He was trained in neurophysiology at Johns Hopkins, and in 1991 accepted The American Legion Brain Sciences Chair at the University of
Minnesota. This chair was created by the Minnesota American Legion Family, which raised over $1 million to endow this position to promote research, teaching and training to promote brain diseases and disorders. Our honored guest has also served as director of the Brain Science Center at the Minneapolis VA Medical Center and is responsible for research involving post-traumatic stress disorder, Gulf War illnesses, Alzheimer's disease, schizophrenia, alcohol abuse, and other areas. Ladies and gentlemen, it is my pleasure to present The American Legion Distinguished Service Medal to Dr. Apostolos P. Georgopoulos. Please welcome him. (Applause)

Presentation: The American Legion Distinguished Service Medal
Dr. Apostolos P. Georgopoulos
Director, Brain Sciences Center, Minnesota VA Health Care System

I'm tremendously honored to receive this award for many reasons. The main one is that, after all, I hold The American Legion Family Brain Sciences chair. So it's only natural, I think, to receive the award. I want to recognize past commander of the great state of Minnesota and Past National Commander Dan Ludwig, who is here and who actually spearheaded the raising of the funds in the mid '80s to create this endowed chair.

So 26 years later I moved to Minnesota, 1991, from Johns Hopkins Medical School. I am here to really raise a hope for successfully if not treating entirely but stopping in its tracks the Gulf War illness, a very complex and debilitating disease that affected one-third of the veterans that served in the Persian Gulf war of 1990-1991.

I could not have done that without you. We have studied along those lines hundreds of veterans in Minnesota and actually Wisconsin, Dakotas, Nebraska, the network, VISN 23 network. And without them, we could not have had any insight into the brain disorders, the brain mechanisms that are changing in post-traumatic stress disorder and especially more lately the Gulf War illness.

Number two, I could not have done any of that and I could not have been here without my collaborators and colleagues at the Minneapolis VA Medical Center, more specifically Dr. Brian Engdahl and Lisa James, who are really spearheading the research on Gulf War illness, as a closely knit team. Nevertheless, with all of this, nothing could have been achieved without the unfailing support from the leadership of the Minneapolis VA Medical Center. I'm very grateful for that, 26 years of unfailing support. Well, my trick is I don't ask for anything, but I'm given without asking. I think we deliver what we're supposed to do and help the veterans' cause.

Last but not least, I want to thank my family. My wife, Lily, who is a physician. I'm a doctor, but I never practiced medicine. She was an endocrinologist at the VA Medical Center for 26 years and director of the Women's Comprehensive Medical Health Center. Is now retired, but served the veterans with pride and good cause, and very successfully. Without her and our two daughters really standing next to me in the long hours that I was absent and all the ups and downs of personal life, as you can imagine, again, this award belongs to all of them, not just to me. Most of it belongs to you, because without you, it would not have been a success. Thank you very much. (Applause)

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: The woman elected to lead The American Legion Auxiliary has worked many years for veterans and their families and has held numerous offices at every level of her organization. An accredited VA service officer and a member of Pat Tillman Memorial Unit 53 in Dupont, Washington, she has spent more than four decades working for veterans and their families. Eligible for Auxiliary membership through her two World War II veteran parents, father R. Garnett Boots and mother Helen Babb Boots; her husband, Dale; her son, Robert. She has served The American Legion Auxiliary at every level. She is currently a strategy captain on the Centennial Strategic Plan and is a designated director of the ALA Foundation board of

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Directors. Please welcome the leader of the nation's largest patriotic women's organization, The American Legion Auxiliary National President Mary E. Davis. (Applause)

Greetings: Mary E. Davis  
National President, American Legion Auxiliary

Thank you all. National Commander Charlie, officers, past national commanders, distinguished guests and Legionnaires, this year has been awesome. I had the opportunity to travel to the Far East and Europe with your commander. We found we had similar experiences with American Legion posts when we arrived in Europe.

So, in tandem, we were able to approach the deficiencies that we found. I talked with unit members, requesting they make greater effort to recruit military spouses. We interfaced with the USO at several installations, discovering missed opportunities to spread the word about what Legion Family stands for and how important it is for our troops to join. In the future, I know Auxiliary magazines will be placed in USO offices and in the USO at the major airport hub for transport of military and their families throughout Europe.

Another large gap I found was that the national president's scholarships, which usually are sent through department headquarters, had no place to be processed for overseas DoDDS students. Now those applications will be sent to the state which is declared the home of record. Finally the voices of overseas military kids will join with those living in CONUS.

Membership has been on the minds of all leaders in the Legion Family this year. The ALA didn't meet its goal, but our secondary goal was to slow the bleed of lost members, those that did not renew. And we have done that. It saddens me to see how many lost members we have and yet know that there are members among your ranks with women eligible but have not yet joined The American Legion Auxiliary.

You would have been proud to see your national commander interact with World War II veterans in Hawaii or Normandy. You would have been proud if you had seen your national commander shake the hands and share a story or two with those who were in the Landstuhl hospital or those who came to town hall meetings.

Yes, Legionnaires, we made a difference. We had a great year, and you had a great dedicated commander in Charles Schmidt. Thank you. (Applause)

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: President Mary, we did have a great year. I thank the Department of Washington and also The American Legion Auxiliary to give me an opportunity to not only serve but travel with you, serving veterans, serving their families, and also representing our great organization, our American Legion Family and also representing America. On behalf of our Convention, let me give you the medallion.

The man who led the Sons of The American Legion through another successful year is a member of Squadron 27 in Apache Junction, Arizona. He is eligible through the service of his Korean War veteran father and Vietnam War veteran stepfather. He has travelled to Pearl Harbor for the 75th anniversary observances of the attack and to the Department of France, where we paid respect for those who landed at Normandy on June 6. At this time, please welcome the national commander of the Sons of The American Legion, Jeff Frain. (Applause)

Greetings: Jeff C. Frain, Arizona  
National Commander, Sons of The American Legion

Good morning. Greeting, Legionnaires, and salutations from 366,000 Sons of The American Legion. On behalf of the Sons, I thank you for your continued service to our
country, your commitment to our communities, and your dedication to The American Legion Family.

I wish to thank each and every one of you for the opportunity we have as Sons of The American Legion to serve and support our veterans and our family. It's been a very busy year, yet productive, as the national commander of the largest program, your program, Sons of The American Legion. This June I had the privilege to go on the trip to Normandy, honoring the indebtedness we have to those who gave the ultimate sacrifice, to guarantee the everyday freedoms we sometimes take for granted.

My aide, Chuck Treat, and I, with corporate support, created a distinguished book, the Book of Knowledge, which will continue to be a useful tool for the squadrons for years to come. This book, along with the successful "Knowledge is Power Tour," created greater understanding of The American Legion programs, on how to best support our veterans.

This year we soared in the sky with our theme, "Be a superhero, sign up three American heroes today," which will recruit three new Legionnaires and help our American Legion Family grow. In Cincinnati, I asked the Sons of The American Legion to raise money for your program, the Child Welfare Foundation, and they responded: $594,000 by the Sons of The American Legion. (Applause)

In one year. This accomplishment demonstrates the Sons of The American Legion's commitment to support the veterans and their families. Commander Schmidt, will you please approach the podium. Commander, since the Sons of the American Legion have overwhelmingly reached their goals for the Child Welfare Foundation, we feel it is time to help support your program, the Temporary Financial Assistance program. So with this check I'd like to present to you for $300,000 to help you with your program. (Applause)

Together, as Charlie's theme is, we will carry the legacy forward. Thank you, God bless, and thank you for allowing me to be your Sons of The American Legion national commander. (Applause)

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: Aren't those Sons of The American Legion awesome? (Applause)

You know, that Temporary Financial Assistance program is a program that helps children of veterans. In 2016, The American Legion Family disbursed over $830,000 to more than 600 veteran families to ensure that 1,400 children will have the necessities of life: food, shelter, clothing, and in some cases emergency medical care. That's what we do. We serve veterans, and we serve families. I'm sure every penny of that will be well spent. Thank you, Sons of The American Legion. (Applause)

Presentation: Department Membership Awards

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: It is now time for the membership awards. The departments and individuals who will be joining me onstage are being recognized today for their membership efforts in 2017.

We are now beginning the fifth year of executing The American Legion's Strategic Plan for Sustained Membership Growth. It is imperative for us to continue working and building on the five priorities within the plan to reverse our current membership trend of declining membership, to build our legacy, so as we grow our new members will not only continue the Legion's legacy to our next generation of veterans, but promote and encourage a culture of growth throughout The American Legion.

Keep in mind those priorities are: First, create brand awareness; secondly, communications; third, increase training, education and leadership development; fourth, post creation, development and revitalization; and, most importantly, number five, membership recruiting and retention. The fifth priority in the strategic plan focuses on recruiting and retention. Long-term growth comes with signing up new members and retaining the members we have. If we stick with the basics and implement the strategic plan at every level, we can grow the organization. We need every member to embrace and
foster a culture of growth if we want to consistently increase membership within our organization.

We realize the Legion's legacy is their own and something they will be remembered for by generations to come. A legacy that will continue to flourish with every new member that joins The American Legion. We want The American Legion not only to remain a household name, but be something that is recognized for the good work and dedication to our veterans and their families. We can accomplish this with the resources that The American Legion provides. With the policy authorized three years ago by the secretary of defense allowing The American Legion greater access to military installations, it has allowed us to offer support service and expand our outreach with the active-duty military, reserves, and the National Guard.

We need to build relationships at all levels, but specifically at the local level. American Legion posts are community-based organizations, just like the Guard and reserve components. Posts must reach out to those local Guard and reserve components through their Family Readiness Groups and other organizations that help support our servicemembers while they are deployed or in reserve status.

Through our Reconnect visits and programs such as Access Granted, Operation Comfort Warriors, the Family Support Network, Soldier's Wish, Temporary Financial Assistance, the American Legion Riders and our benefit town halls, we have expanded the opportunity for The American Legion to fulfill the promise of our Four Pillars.

Priority four places an emphasis on building new posts and revitalizing existing posts. Over 2,500 posts received support through revitalizations for the 2016-17 membership year. This has enabled thousands of veterans to receive access to veterans service officers provided by The American Legion and provided to local posts in their communities. We also need to plan on starting new posts anywhere a considerable amount of veterans live, work or go to school. From your local hometown to the big city, The American Legion should have a presence in as many communities as possible.

Through our posts' hard work, we have continued our commitment of service to veterans, their families and our communities. You can clearly see why The American Legion's growth potential is unlimited. Today we want to recognize a few departments and individuals for their efforts in membership, but before we do, I call upon Membership & Post Activities Committee Chairman Randy Goodman, for remarks. (Applause)

Remarks: Randy Goodman
Chairman, Membership & Post Activities Committee

Good morning, Team American Legion! Thank you, commander. The recipients of today's awards are proof that when we commit ourselves to the five priorities within the strategic plan, it works. As leaders of this great organization, it is important that we continue to get buy-in from each Legionnaire so we continue the legacy.

We have seven departments this year whose legacy has improved and are ahead of last year's membership totals traditionally. I would like for you, each of you, each of those departments to stand when your department is called and make some noise! The Department of France; The Department of Hawaii; Department of Idaho; Department of Mexico; Department of Montana; The Department of the Philippines; and the Department of South Carolina. (Cheers and applause) My home state. With that, Mr. Commander, I yield my time.

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I now ask National Vice Commander Doug Boldt of Nebraska assume duties at the podium and that the national vice commander assigned to each department join the chairman and I as we congratulate departments from their areas.

... At this time, National Vice Commander Boldt assumed the Chair.
NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER BOLDT: We had one department commander who exceeded his target membership goal this year by May. This year's recipient is Ronald Gregory Abbe, Department of Mexico. Congratulations, commander, on a job well done! (Applause)

This next award is earned by the departments meeting every target date this year. Commander Ronald Abbe, Department of Mexico, please accept the All Target Dates Award Plaque. Thank you for a job well done! (Applause)

Our next presentation will be to our 100 percent targets. Three departments have exceeded their 2016-2017 membership goal utilizing traditional methods. This is a testament to the motivation of their members and their ability to implement their strategic plan. A shadowbox is being presented to the following departments: Robert L. Skinner, Department Commander of Idaho; Ronald G. Abbe, Department of Mexico; Lawrence Wade, NECman from the Department of the Philippines. (Applause)

It should be noted that Mexico exceeded this goal four years in a row and the Philippines has met this goal two years in a row as well. Congratulations, gentlemen, for your hard work. (Applause)

This next series of awards are being presented to each of the seven departments previously recognized by the membership chairman for their hard work and dedication to establishing a culture of growth in their departments. The first three departments went above their goal by obtaining over 100 percent. By implementing and working the five priorities within the strategic plan, the Department of Idaho, Department of Mexico, and the Department of the Philippines have built a foundation in which their membership saw growth. Three shadowboxes are being awarded to: Commander Robert L. Skinner, Department of Idaho; Commander Ronald G. Abbe, Department of Mexico; and NECman Lawrence E. Wade, Department of the Philippines. Thank you, gentlemen, on a job well done. (Applause)

The following departments also saw growth this year and are being awarded a plaque for their performances: John Shanahan, Department of France; Michael Soucie, Department of Hawaii; Peter "Hal" Rice, Department of Montana; and Robert Scherer, Department of South Carolina. (Applause)

This year we are presenting a special award to two individuals who have propelled leadership within their departments all while still recruiting new members into The American Legion. These two NECmen have consistently met the challenge of recruiting eligible veterans: Francis J. MacDonald, Jr., NECman from the Department of Massachusetts and William R. Roy, NECman from New Hampshire. (Applause)

Our next award is the most prestigious award a district commander can earn. The American Legion Race to the Top award is given to the district commanders who attained at least 100 percent of the district's assigned membership objective by March 31. These three district commanders' leadership helped their districts exceed their membership goal this year. These three district commanders are receiving a new cap, polo shirt and a shadowbox plaque for their efforts. The winners are: Roger L. Archibald, Department of Utah - Category 1, District 4; John W. Griffin, Georgia - Category 2, District 6; and Edwin B. Long, Jr., from the Department of Ohio - Category 5, District 10. (Applause)

Gentlemen, thank you for your leadership and dedication in motivating your districts to achieve this goal.

Presentation: National Recruiter of the Year

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER BOLDT: Finally, ladies and gentlemen, we are going to present the National Recruiter of the Year. This award is given to the individual certified with the highest number of new members recruited from among all of the departments. For a second year in a row this individual is being honored for her outstanding commitment to The American Legion and specifically her dedication to membership. In 2016 she amazed us with 818 new members. This year she went above and beyond and
brought 841 new members into The American Legion Family. Please join me in recognizing the 2017 Recruiter of the Year. From Post 333, Department of Georgia, Patricia Liddell. (Applause)

PATRICIA E. LIDDELL: Good morning. First of all, I want to thank my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Protocol already being established, to National Commander Charles Schmidt; to National Auxiliary President Mary Davis; and all the distinguished guests; to my brothers and sisters in The American Legion and the rest of my family members in the Auxiliary, the Sons, and the Riders; to my department, my Department of Georgia; and to my post, American Legion Post 333, triple threat, the fastest growing post in the nation: I want to thank my mentors; my commander, Vickie Dikes; my senior vice commander, Edgar Johnson, who is not here; my adjutant, Hazel Taylor; my department junior vice commander, Mark Shreve; my traveling buddies, Louise Grinich and Sara Anderson. They’ve all been very supportive. The first year I know everybody was probably saying, "She was just lucky." But I want to tell you, the second year I worked my behind off. I went from a size 14 to a 10. (Laughter)

And what I also want to tell you, if you all let me, I'm going to be a three-peat, still serving veterans, our nation's heroes. Excellence is contagious. Accept nothing less. Failure is not an option. For God and country. May God bless The American Legion, and may God bless the United States of America. (Applause)

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER BOLDT: Congratulations, Patricia, on a job well done. …National Commander Schmidt resumed the Chair.

Presentation: Consolidated Post Reporting 2016-2017

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: The Consolidated Post Report is a summary of what American Legion posts have accomplished in their communities. It’s an opportunity to tell the story of your post on an easy-to-fill-out form either on hard copy or online. When I testified before Congress last fall, I used the data from this annual report as part of my testimony. For the 2016-2017 reporting year, August 1 through July 31, 8,880 posts reported out of 12,982. This is a response rate of 68 percent. In July I had Internal Affairs send out a letter to all Legion leadership to continue to send their Consolidated Post Reports. With that extra month of reporting, we received an additional 364 Consolidated Post Reports. I want to thank you.

By your efforts Congress now knows what 9,244 posts are doing in our communities, and that is important when it comes to influencing Congress to support us in our work for our veterans and communities. Moreover, this is information that is important to pass on to our statehouses at home. How are we going to tell our legislators about the important role The American Legion plays at home if we don't and if they don't know?

But there is so much more we can be doing to get our posts to report. We have almost 30 percent of our posts, 3,739 posts, that aren't reporting what they are doing. I want to call upon all of your department commanders, department adjutants, district and county commanders and adjutants to do all they can next reporting year to get these posts to report their activities, because all posts are doing something, at least one thing, in their communities.

This report needs to be engrained with our leadership from national to our posts. During leadership visits to posts, the questions must be: "How are you doing in filling out your Consolidated Post Report? Do you need any help? Are you filling it out on mylegion.org? If not, why not?"

Imagine the impact and influence on Congress if we had 100 percent reporting of all posts. As it stands now, this annual report is not truly showing Congress what we are doing in our communities. It isn't showing our statehouses what we are doing at home. We are proud of what our posts are doing, and our posts are so critical. We need for them to report what they are doing each and every day in communities across this great country. I implore you to do all you can next year to increase our posts reporting.
At this time, I wish to recognize those departments who worked on submitting these reports. A certificate was mailed to the departments who met the challenge of a 95 percent response rate this year. Those departments are Arkansas, Kentucky, Maryland, West Virginia and Wyoming. They deserve a round of applause. *(Applause)*

Now, I have asked the departments that exceeded the challenge and had the response rate of 95 percent or higher to join me onstage today for special recognition. At this time, we will present their plaques to the department commander. Will National Vice Commander Paul Martel of Florida assume the duties at the podium for the reading of the winners? ... *At this time, National Vice Commander Martel assumed the Chair.*

**NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER PAUL MARTEL:** Thank you, sir. Jeffrey K. Crouser, Department of Delaware; Joseph R. Magee, Department of Florida; Carmen M. Streit-Smith, Department of Georgia; Robert L. Skinner, Department of Idaho; Elizabeth A. Gonzales, Department of Missouri; Peter "Hal" Rice, Department of Montana; Beth L. Linn, Department of Nebraska; Thomas E. Wiley, Department of New Hampshire; Ronald L. Chapman, Department of Ohio; Donald Kuntze, Department of Oklahoma; Nancy B. Harper, Department of Tennessee; David M. Stein, Department of Virginia; and Reverend Daniel J. Seahafer, Department of Wisconsin. *(Applause)*

... *National Commander Schmidt resumed the Chair.*

**Presentation: National Emergency Fund Awards**

**NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT:** I want to thank each and every post that submitted a report. Every report is important but we still have a way to go before we can correctly represent before Congress all the good work that all of our posts are doing in our communities. Before we announce our National Emergency Fund award winners, I ask that those who plan to present NEF donations, please gather in the backstage area.

Our National Emergency Fund is one of the most visible ways we demonstrate our "devotion to mutual helpfulness." But I can't tell you how many times I have heard longtime Legionnaires mention that they had just now heard of the National Emergency Fund.

We need to have disaster assistance teams in our departments that will respond after the crisis hits and search out our Legion Family members who have been displaced from their homes and assist them in getting back on their feet. I want to encourage departments to assign or, better yet, seek volunteers to be department NEF coordinators who will travel and assist fellow Legion members in the processing and submission of National Emergency Fund applications. In this way, we can help ensure that our Legion Family members are assisted during a most troubling and challenging time.

Since the Fund’s establishment in 1989, we have given out over $9 million to our family members. Individuals can receive up to $3,000 and posts can receive up to $10,000. When a disaster strikes, Legion posts and members are usually well placed and able to assist, as we have done in the past, our members in need. I am now thankful to know that, when there is a need, legionnaires don't hesitate to respond. When a disaster strikes we open our hearts and pockets to embrace our members and communities with the care and assistance they need to get back on their feet. We are a big family, and a family helps each other when the need is there. Remember that each and every dollar donated to the National Emergency Fund is used for this purpose. We take care of our own when they need help. I think we will all deserve a round of applause. *(Applause)*

We have six departments being recognized today, one for each of the Big Twelve categories. At this time, we will present their plaques. Will National Vice Commander Vince Troiola of New York assume the duties at the podium for the reading of the winners. ... *At this time, National Vice Commander Troiola assumed the Chair.*

**NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER TROIOLA:** At this time, we will present the plaques to the department commander. The departments that have donated the highest dollar amount to the National Emergency Fund in their respective categories are: Category
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I - Ronald L. Chapman, the Department of Ohio. Category II - James B. May, the Department of Indiana. Category III - Patricia A. McCoy, the Department of Maryland. Category IV - David S. Shore, the Department of North Carolina. Category V - Rudolph A. Bourg, Sr., the Department of Louisiana. And Category VI - Robert J. Terhune, the Department of Nevada.

Congratulations. Thank you for your hard work in ensuring Legion Family members in local communities know where to turn during a natural disaster. So please continue your fundraising efforts because we never know when and where the next natural disaster will strike and interrupt someone's daily life. At this time, I would like to ask those departments that would like to present checks for the National Emergency Fund to come forward and make your presentations now.

Donations to the National Emergency Fund

DEPARTMENT COMMANDER HOLMES (SD): From the Department of South Dakota, I'm Hugh Holmes, department commander. With me is Past Commander Charemon Dunham. We are the home of American Legion Baseball. We are donating $825 today.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (NM): Commander, during Vice Commander Paul Espinoza's homecoming at Post 13, Albuquerque, New Mexico, we raised $1,276 for the NEF fund.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (ND): North Dakota is the home of the Peace Gardens, and we were happy to have the commander come visit us there. We gave a check to NEF fund of $593.50.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (PA): From the great state of Pennsylvania, home of Past National Commanders Dominic DiFrancesco and Ron Conley, along with what we have already donated, we would like to donate $6,605.25. Along with me is my adjutant, Kit Watson, and my two NECmen, Dennis Haas and Edward Stelacio.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN WILLIS (OR): I'm Jim Willis, delegation chair and past commander of the Department of Oregon. We bring to our commander $1,260 for the NEF fund. And I'm joined this morning by our department commander, Gene Hellickson.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (AZ): The Department of Arizona has $4,500 for the NEF fund.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (OH): The proud Department of Ohio and The American Legion Family of the great Buckeye State would like to donate $20,465 to the NEF fund.

DELEGATE ROCHHOLZ (IA): Ken Rochholz, Department of Iowa, $1,000, Hawkeye State.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (MI): From the Department of Michigan, we’d like to donate $2,000 to the NEF.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (NJ): Commander, the Department of New Jersey is proud to donate to the fund $1,500. Joined here today by our NEC, Chuck Robbins, and our department adjutant, John Baker.


DELEGATE STEIN (VA): Dave Stein, immediate past commander, Department of Virginia, $1,050 to the NEF.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN MILTON (MN): Hi, delegate chair Denise Milton from the great state of Minnesota, home of Past National Commander Ludwig, donates $1,000 to national commander's project NEF.

DELEGATE FARRELL (TN): Bobby Farrell, Department of Tennessee, $450 donation to the NEF with me is Past Commander Nancy Harper.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (FL): Florida, the Sunshine State, $1,600.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (FR): China Post 1, which is under the Department of France, is thrilled to give $500.
UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE: Check for $250 from the Department of France, and a second check for $250 from the Paris Post No. 1, Paris, France.

DELEGATE STEPHENSON (UT): Chuck Stephenson, Department of Utah, we are very proud to present a check for $750 for the National Emergency Fund.

DELEGATE MEANEY (NH): Dave Meaney, commander of the Department of New Hampshire, the Granite State, is proud to contribute $1000 to the NEF.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN SAMPSON (NY): Mr. Commander, John Sampson, chairman of the delegation of the great Department of New York, along with our newly elected department commander, Rena Nessler, and Department Adjutant James Casey, in addition to previous funds donated to the NEF, I present you with a check for $59,630.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (WI): Commander, my friend, the Department of Wisconsin donates $757.15 to the NEF.

DELEGATE ROBINSON (CT): Louie Robinson, outgoing commander, Department of Connecticut, home of the Huskies, donates $605 to the NEF.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (MT): The Department of Montana, $400.27 to the NEF.

... At this time, National Commander Schmidt resumed the Chair.

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: Thank you all for your donations to a great program of The American Legion. Again, veterans serving veterans. (Applause)

... At this time, the delegation viewed a video. (Applause)

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: I now present to you a Legionnaire who has dedicated his life to the Legion and our nation's young people. You saw in the video where the Boys Nation says: We love you, Bob. Well, Past National Commander Bob Turner, we all love you, too. Please welcome Past National Commander Bob Turner. (Applause)

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER TURNER: Mr. Commander, and delegates to this convention, to say that I'm shocked is a minor word to say. I had no earthly idea this was going to happen.

I've spent 35 years on the staff of Boys Nation. I thank my department for allowing me to be away so much to do this. I certainly thank the members of the Boys Nation staff for their support, for their love and their concern. But, more importantly, I thank God above for His giving me the time and the ability to do this job. I only wish that she could have been with me this morning to share in this excitement. But I know she's looking down and she approves of what I'm doing.

Thank you all so very much. Thirty-five years is a long time. But I'm leaving Boys Nation as a staffer, but I'm not leaving The American Legion. (Applause)

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: Our next speaker is unable to be with us but would like to address us by video. She served two terms as Nevada's attorney general before being elected to the United States Senate. She was also an assistant county manager for Clark County and served as a federal criminal prosecutor for the U.S. Attorney's Office in Washington, D.C. Please turn your attention to the video monitors for a message from Senator Catherine Cortez Masto.

Welcome: Honorable Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senate

Hello, Legionnaires. I'm so sorry that I can't be there with you today, but I want to extend my deepest thanks and gratitude for your service to our country. Your service and sacrifices have kept our nation safe. As the granddaughter and daughter of veterans, I understand the toll these sacrifices take on servicemembers and their families.

One of my top priorities as United States Senator is to ensure that veterans receive the support they need to recover from their injuries, visible and invisible, and thrive in civilian life. Since I was sworn in, I have been outspoken in calling on the Trump administration to uphold its responsibilities to veterans. I've taken steps to prevent veterans from being
exploited by for-profit colleges and have called on my colleagues in the Senate to appropriate funding for state veterans homes.

Most recently, in July, I partnered with the University of Nevada in Las Vegas to host my first semi-annual career fair and workshop geared towards veterans and their families. I know that there is no better ally in our efforts to support veterans than The American Legion. Your work helps veterans engage with their communities and achieve their educational goals. And through the Girls State and Boys State programs, you help our kids learn the problem solving skills they need to become the next generation of leaders.

I look forward to partnering with you to tackle the challenges that remain as we work to resolve the staffing shortages in the VA, improve accountability, end veteran homelessness, and empower veterans to succeed in their careers. Thank you, again, for everything you've done for our country. I hope you enjoy the rest of your time in Reno, and have a wonderful time at this year's convention.

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: Our next speaker was elected as the 30th governor of Nevada in 2010 and was reelected in 2014. He was previously a U.S. district judge and Nevada attorney general. Please turn your attention to the video monitors for a message from Nevada's governor, Brian Sandoval.

Welcome: Honorable Brian Sandoval
Governor of the State of Nevada

Hello, I'm Brian Sandoval, governor of the great state of Nevada. It is an honor to welcome you to the 99th National Convention of The American Legion. Thank you for joining in the celebration and for selflessly serving those who have served our country. With a commitment to mentoring youth, advocating for our servicemembers and veterans, and promoting patriotism, honor, and national security, this organization has improved the lives of millions of Americans.

For nearly 100 years, you have worked on behalf of communities, and I'm proud to express my sincere gratitude for your dedication to our nation's heroes and our future leaders. This gathering is an opportunity to come together as a national organization, and I hope you enjoy this time of camaraderie. I'm honored to thank you for your service to our country, and please enjoy your time in Northern Nevada.

Thank you for choosing the Silver State for your convention, God bless The American Legion, and God bless the United States of America, the greatest nation on earth.

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: Our donations thus far for the National Emergency Fund are $107,727.17. Thank you all! (Applause)

Our next speaker is a retired correctional officer at Ely State Prison and a past commander of White Pine American Legion Post 3 and District 5. He has been in The American Legion for more than 30 years. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome the 2016-17 past department commander of Nevada, Bob Terhune. (Applause)

Welcome: Robert J. Terhune
Past Department Commander, Department of Nevada

After that, I kind of feel like I'm in a lineup up here with all these lights. From the Legionnaires of the Battle Born State to those that have borne the battle, I offer a heartfelt welcome to the Biggest Little City in Nevada, Reno.

It's been ten years since our last convention here in the state of Nevada. Since the Nevada Legionnaires have had the privilege to host an American Legion convention, and we're glad you're back. Our goal is that this will be an enjoyable and most memorable convention for all of you. Some of it, I'm sure, probably already has with the slot machines.
The American Legion National Convention Corporation of Nevada and Nevada's Legionnaires have worked hard planning and preparing for the 99th American Legion National Convention and are here to assist you. So don't hesitate to ask any of us for assistance. Enjoy your stay here.

Again, welcome to Reno and to Nevada, and God bless America. (Applause)

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: A past department commander of Nevada, our next guest is a Marine veteran of the Vietnam War and the current alternate National Executive Committee member for his department. He has held many positions at every level in The American Legion. He belongs to American Legion Capitol Post 4 in Carson City, Nevada. Please welcome the president of The American Legion National Convention Corporation of Nevada, John F. Warden. (Applause)

Welcome: John Warden
President, National Convention Corporation of Nevada

Good morning! Commander, on behalf of the Department of Nevada and the City of Reno, the biggest city in the world, I would like to welcome all our Legionnaires and guests to Nevada. I see most of you have survived the parade, and hopefully you had a great time. As you can see, Nevada is one of the most veteran-friendly states in the union. Besides enjoying the sights, sounds, lights, glitter, and the wonderful restaurants of this great city, I hope you have had time to go back to the Silver State's mining days and visit Virginia City, a National Historic District, and our state capital of Carson City with its Railroad and State Museums.

The State Museum holds relics of the USS Nevada, the battle ship that got underway during the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor. And, yes, the portrait of Abraham Lincoln that hangs in the Assembly chambers does have three bullet holes in it. Yes, this is the wild, wild west. Besides our battle-born history, Nevada's Great Basin has 314 named mountain ranges and some of the most awe-inspiring national scenery that you'll ever see in our snow-capped mountains, known as the Sierra Nevada. And, of course, Lake Tahoe, one of the largest alpine lakes in the world. A ride on the gondola at Heavenly will give you an inspiring view of the lake.

Have a wonderful 99th Annual Convention. Come again, come often, and thank you for coming. Semper fi for God, country, and The American Legion. Thank you.

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: Thank you, John. It's great to be back in Nevada after a ten-year absence for our National Convention. For our next presentation, I draw your attention to the video monitors.

Welcome: Honorable Hillary Schieve
Mayor of Reno

Hi, I'm Mayor Hillary Schieve, and welcome to Reno, Nevada, the Biggest Little City in the World. I'm so excited that you're here with us, and I'm excited to be hosting you and your 10,000 American Legion members and their spouses.

I know you're going to love our city. And I'm so proud of our city. I can't wait for you to get to experience it and enjoy all the things that we have to offer. You will get to see incredible landscapes, certainly if you visit Lake Tahoe and you just look around you, the beautiful mountains, all the way to our fine dining.

We have so much for you to do. Just take a walk along our riverwalk and see how beautiful the river is that runs right through our city. We have incredible shopping. Certainly there are a lot of historical places to visit. But when it comes to shopping, we have some of the best antique malls that you could ask for. We hope that you'll enjoy midtown and downtown, because really they are unique places. We have a vibrant 24-hour
nightlife, and you can game all night long and find great food, great entertainment. And there's so much to do. So we're very excited for you to experience what the Biggest Little City has to offer.

I would like to thank you so much for your service. I have great respect for our veterans. And so I want you to know that thank you so much for all that you have done for our country. And, truly, I have a heart of gratitude. So, again, we're so excited to have you here and so thankful for all your service.

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: Our next speaker has represented Nevada's Second Congressional District since 2011. A graduate of the University of Nevada, he received a law degree from the University of the Pacific's McGeorge Law School. He served with an artillery unit in the U.S. Army until joining the Army JAG Corps. In Congress he is a member of the Army Caucus, the USO Caucus, and the Veterans Jobs Caucus. He is also a member of American Legion Post 4 in Carson City, Nevada. Ladies and gentlemen, please give a warm welcome to United States Representative Mark Amodei. (Applause)

Welcome: Honorable Mark Amodei
United States House of Representatives

Thank you, Legionnaires. You know, I would like to, first of all, thank you specifically for coming back to Reno. Now, as a person who represents a district in Nevada, and many people say, well, you're from Las Vegas, I say, well, you know, actually, if you are looking for high altitude in Nevada, you really ought to come north a little bit up by Lake Tahoe and those sorts of things. So I want to start out by saying American Legion Convention for 2017, welcome to Nevada's original congressional district. (Applause)

We know in this area that you folks with this organization and with your membership can go anywhere you want. The fact that you have multiple times chosen Western Nevada and the Truckee Meadows is something that I want you to know doesn't go unnoticed and is not taken for granted.

So as you sit there and get ready to go through, and it's quite a crossroads time here in Western Nevada in terms of you're going to have the president come in tomorrow, sign some legislation specific to veterans' issues and claims, other things like that, you've got the secretary of labor here, you've got the Veterans Affairs secretary, vice president is in town at the end of the week, it's kind of a palmy time for the federal government and veterans in Western Nevada, and we owe that to you.

So as you sit here at high altitude, and I know that some of you, many of you did not have the privilege of serving in the Army, as I did. I know that some of you that served in the Navy, as my daughter did, think that your football team is doing pretty good these days. What was it one of you said to me? Well, you guys can win one game every decade and a half or something like that. Thank you for that.

Anyhow, we couldn't be happier you are here. I couldn't be prouder to be a small part of your program. For a guy who grew up in Carson City, Nevada, ended up serving during the Reagan administration, which now seems like a long time ago, as we go into this section of our history now in a very dangerous world, and now as many of you sitting out there have served in the Middle East to complement your brothers and sisters in Vietnam, Korea, World War II and other conflicts over the course of our time, I couldn't be prouder to call you folks special people.

Thank you for the leadership roles that you've played in your units. Thank you for the leadership roles that you continue to play in your communities, your states, your regions, and your organizations. We're a stronger place and a better nation because of organizations like this and you people that are the members. Enjoy northern Nevada, and have a great day. (Applause)
NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: Next I would like to call the chairman of the American Legion Riders Advisory Committee, Bob Sussan, to the podium so he can help lead the presentation of Legacy Scholarship Fund donations. Those presenting checks, will you please proceed to the microphone, announce the amount and donor, and go to the front on the floor for a photograph. While the photographs are being taken, I will ask National Vice Commander Paul Espinoza of New Mexico to assume the duties at the lectern.

... At this time, National Vice Commander Espinoza assumed the Chair and the delegation viewed a video.

Presentation: The American Legion Riders

Bob Sussan, Chairman, American Legion Riders Advisory Committee

National Commander Schmidt, national vice commanders, national officers, my fellow Legionnaires and guests, my name is Bob Sussan, and I have the distinct honor and privilege of being the chairman of the American Legion Riders Advisory Committee and the chief road captain and planner for the Legacy Run.

This year was bittersweet in that one week before our departure on August 12th, my best friend and co-planner, Verlin Abbott, was tragically killed in a motorcycle accident in Indianapolis while on a funeral escort.

With over 2,000 chapters and membership in the six figures, the American Legion Riders is the only program comprised of the whole American Legion Family. A far-flung motto used by the Riders is "Legion First." A few years ago we consciously attempted to make the Legacy Runs very veteran centric.

We focused on this Legacy Run six days, 1,400 miles. A first for our Legacy Run, we dedicated a town's veterans memorial in Green River, Utah, six wreath laying's and three Operation Comfort Warriors grants, touching lives in the communities through which we traveled. We traveled from the Soldiers' Home in Fort Dodge, Kansas, home to 106 veterans, almost exclusively on Route 50, America's loneliest highway. Here are some memorable encounters I would like to share with you:

The Border Inn, named as such as it's on the border of Utah and Nevada. Locally owned Mom & Pop restaurant. They needed to hire extra help to prepare our 400 boxed lunches. Once the temporary staff learned who we were and what we were doing, they donated their paychecks to the Legacy Scholarship Fund, and so did the owner of the restaurant. (Applause)

Eureka, Nevada. In Eureka, Nevada, a small town, population of 660, we needed to gas up. Unfortunately there were only two very small gas stations. The problem with small gas stations is also small toilet facilities. We contacted the Superintendent of Schools who contacted the high school, and they opened their school for cooling off and use of the facilities. That's the Riders parked next to the school. It gets better. While at the school, the teachers and administrators mingled with the Riders. They wanted to know what we were doing and why we did it. After we left, the principal prepared a letter and sent it to us. I'm going to read it to you. I'm putting it up on the screen; you probably can't read it.

"Legacy Riders, first off, thank you for riding for a great cause. What you are doing for the kids is memorable, honorable.

"Second, thank you for your service to our great country. For those of you who have served overseas in combat, I have no words other than my gratitude. The sacrifices you and your families have made are great and are greatly respected by me and my family.

"I spoke with a number of you and told you I feel as if you are riding for me. I was one of those kids that you serve. My dad was in KIA in Vietnam, November 24, 1970. I was 2-1/2 years old. My uncle, dad's brother, was KIA in Vietnam October of 1968. My brother served two tours in Iraq and died after being injured on his second tour.
"So thank you for riding for me and for all the children who will never know what it's like to grow up without a parent. It was an honor to have you at our school today. God bless you all." (Applause)

As we pulled into Ely, Nevada, that was one of our wreath laying's next to the courthouse. One of the advanced team members, a woman placed a rose on his motorcycle with that note. I'm going to read you the note.

"Hello. My name is Raelynn, and today would have been my Dave and my 18th wedding anniversary. We used to ride a yellow Gold Wing like yours. When I saw it, I had an idea. I was hoping you would take this rose along with you on your journey for me as a way of wishing for one last ride with my late husband. I would appreciate it very much."

In the video, one of the riders from Indiana, I don't know if she's still here, Legionnaire Debbie Bickel, an assistant road captain, said in the video you were just shown that we ride for a cause. Many departments have in-state Legacy rides to raise funds for the scholarship. Several years ago the American Legion Riders in the Department of Florida while on their in-state Legacy Run noticed a sign on a wall while pulling into a parking lot of the Cherry Lake post. This is the expression that was on their wall. Author is unknown, and many Riders chapters have adopted this saying: "For the cause, not the applause."

This was Verlin's ride. This photo was taken a few years ago on our Legacy Run at the Missouri Veterans Home. Verlin was unassuming, compassionate, and truly interested in interacting with the residents at that time. He was my best friend, my right hand, and I feel as though I have lost a part of me. He is gone, but never forgotten. He will always ride with us. Thank you for your attention. We will now accept donations. (Applause)

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (IL): From Galva, Illinois we present this check to you for the Legacy Foundation from a Gold Star father in New York.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (NY): Gold Star dad from Commack, Long Island, $1,000.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (IL): On behalf of our Naperville Post 43, Department of Illinois, I'm honored to present two checks: one from our post for $400 and the second one is from our Legion Riders for $4,000. Thank you.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (IL): Louisville Post 914 in Illinois, $500; detachment of Illinois, $2,062; Canton Post 16, $700. Illinois Legion Family, $25,897, with a grand total of over $35,000.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (AZ): From the great state of Arizona, we've got a check for $3,000. From Fountain Hills Post 58 we have another $500, and our Riders.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (AZ): The Riders from Arizona brought $14,593.19 today. They sent me another check for $700. And $1,500 donated by ALR to the commander during the Legacy Run for a total from Arizona of $16,793.19.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (ID): On behalf of the Legion Riders from Post 26 and 101, from Mountain Home in the great state of Idaho, we have a check for $2,000.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (NJ): On behalf of the Department of New Jersey, we'd like to present a $1,000 check. Presenting this with me today is our department ANEC, Berley Hanna, and Department Adjutant John Baker.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE: New Jersey. Hudson County Committee, $500; Bayonne Post 19, $500.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (PA): The great state of Pennsylvania, along with our previous donations, donate $1,102.44.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (NY): From the great Department of New York, in addition to previous funds donated to the Legacy Fund, Mr. Commander, please accept these two checks totaling $10,610.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (NY): From the American Legion Riders from the great state of New York, we donate $16,111.93.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (OK): The Department of Oklahoma American Legion Riders, Post 1340, we donate $500.
UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (MA): From the Department of Massachusetts, home state of Past National Commanders Paul Morin, Jake Comer and the current 2017 National Oratorical champion, Andrew Steinberg, present a check for $8,300 to the Legacy Fund.

DELEGATE STARKS (MA): Past Department Commander Ken Starks, Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Oxford Post No. 58, $1,100.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (MA): From Chapter 224 in Easthampton, Massachusetts, a check for $2,500, giving our total, $11,900 from the Department of Massachusetts.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (MO): On behalf of the Show-Me State, birthplace of Harry S. Truman and our national commander, Charles Schmidt, we are giving $78,241.13.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (SC): South Carolina, on behalf of its 392 American Legion Riders, will have our ranking ALR member present a check.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (SC): On behalf of the American Legion Riders of South Carolina, we present $67,056.78. Thank you.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (FR): I have a check for $250 from the Department of France and another check for $250 from Paris Post 1, Paris, France. Total of $500.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (FR): From the China Post 1, the only post operating in exile, we give to The American Legion $1,630. Thank you.

DELEGATE PARISAN (DE): Hello, everybody. I'm with the Department of Delaware. My name is Charles Parisan. I'm the Kent County commander and also the Department of Delaware Riders director. I have with me here the Department of Delaware commander, MaryAnna Moderhak. We are here to turn in checks totaling $17,006.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (MI): Department of Michigan, the proud home of the Legacy Ride founding chapter, Garden City, is proud to donate $20,555.77.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (TN): Department of Tennessee, we added to our previous donation $1,187.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (KS): From the Department of Kansas. And we're proud to have sponsored and been the starting point of this year's Legacy Run in Fort Dodge, Kansas, and we look forward to seeing you in Salina, Kansas, next year. From the Department of Kansas, $24,111.55.

DELEGATE TONEY (MS): From the Legion Riders, Commander Murray Toney and what's known as the land between Alabama and Louisiana by the weather folks, state of Mississippi, $6,700.

DELEGATE HEREDIA (MD): I'm David Heredia from the Department of Maryland. On behalf of the department and our Legion Family, I'd like to present our final four checks totaling $1,000, bringing our grand total for the Department of Maryland of over $35,000.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (NV): On behalf of Las Vegas Paradise Post 149 family, Sons of The Legion, ladies Auxiliary and the Riders program, we would like to donate a check for $10,000 to the Legacy Scholarship Fund.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (HI): On behalf of the Legion Riders Chapter 17, Department of Hawaii, I'd like to present two checks totaling $2,300.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (NM): On behalf of the enchanted Department of New Mexico, I'm proud to provide donations from Chapters 19, 18, 4, 26, and Post 69 totaling $4,450.

DELEGATE BERENOTTO (AL): My name is Tony Berenotto. I'm the second division commander and the state adjutant for the Riders. On behalf of the Department of Alabama, I present a check from Post 107, Leeds, Alabama, of $1,823; for our winning the Royal Legion Riders Vest Auction this year, an additional $1,000; Post 133, Millbrook, Alabama, $15,133; and our first organized in-state Legacy Run, an additional $4,381.62, to bring Department of Alabama's contribution this year to $31,405.62.

DELEGATE JAMES: Tony James. For people eating with their covers on, I have $16 for fines, and thank you for letting me ride with the American Legion Riders.
UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (ND): On behalf of Commander Christensen, Bergman-Evenson Post 215 in Rutland, North Dakota, population 163, the Pride of the Prairie, home of the world's largest hamburger, we are proud to present $200.

DELEGATE BREW (ND): Department of North Dakota, Matthew Brew, Chapter 3, Dickinson, North Dakota, $1,300.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (PA): On behalf of World War I Post 109 in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania, I have a donation of $2,500. In addition to that, I have a $100 check from my wife and I for memory of Verlin Abbott. Thank you.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (ME): Department Commander for Maine. The Maine Legion Riders continue to make noise, and it is a privilege to represent them for a $3,600 check.

DEPARTMENT COMMANDER SHUGA (FL): From the Department of Florida and the Florida ALR, Department Commander, Florida, Steve Shuga. I just got a check thrown at me in the back by American Legion Post 110, Port Charlotte, Florida, for $2,180. This increases our number to $44,836.85.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (NE): Again this year it's an honor to represent the great state of Nebraska. Along with me is Past State Commander Beth Linn, and we have money totaling $13,843.30. Of that, the ALR post of Central Plains donated $1,200; Columbus, $1,500; Hartman, $300; and Geneva, $520. Go Big Red!

DELEGATE PISA (AK): From the Land of the Midnight Sun, the Alaska Legion Riders proudly donate $14,629.25.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE: On behalf of the American Legion Riders from Stevens-Christian Memorial Post 557, I'm really proud to present a check for $13,500 for the Legacy Fund.

DEPARTMENT COMMANDER PIZZO (GA): John Pizzo, commander, Department of Georgia, we proudly donate $10,150.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (CO): From the great Rocky Mountain state of Colorado, the home of founder of the Legacy Run and Past National Commander Tom Bock, we would like to donate $9,100 to the Legacy Scholarship Fund.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (KY): On behalf of Post 113, Elizabethtown, Kentucky, Chapter 113, $500.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (IA): On behalf of Chapter 29 from Washington, Iowa, the Tall Corn State, a check for $500. And for the ride, there were people that wore their hat and ate or their phone went off, an additional $45.

DELEGATE HAGGAN (FR): FODPAL, which stands for Foreign and Outlying Departments and Posts of The American Legion, proudly donates $500.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (PR): Department of Puerto Rico, on behalf of Post 82 Legion Riders, a check for $120.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (WY): From the great state of Wyoming, Post 13, Powder River, we would like to donate $2,000. And my fellow partners are with me, and we rode all the way from Wyoming.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (AR): On behalf of Riders Unit 64, Department of Arkansas, $150.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (OH): On behalf of the great state of Ohio, we make a donation of $5,000 to the Legacy Scholarship Fund.

DELEGATE RALSTON (CA): AC Ralston, Post 82, San Mateo, California, we donate $1,500. And our Riders Chapter 82, $1,340.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (CA): Also from the state of California, on behalf of Chapter 509, $200.

DELEGATE SEEHAFER (WI): Commander, on behalf of the great Department of Wisconsin family, we held a 900-mile state run called the Rev's Run, which we open wide our hearts to present you this day with $67,627.67.

DELEGATE MOORE (FR): I'm Ron Moore from the Department of France. 2007 was my run here, and I'm still running. Unfortunately I lost my delegation. They've already
passed on money, so I'm just bringing in a couple of checks: $510 from The American Legion Family at Rhein Main Post 5, and another $100. That's only $610, but we're still going. God bless you.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (NC): From the great state of North Carolina, adding to the previously already sent, $2,994.27.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (MN): The great Department of Minnesota American Legion Family donates $200,000 to the Legacy Scholarship Fund. (Cheers and applause)

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER ESPINOZA: Before our next segment, I ask donors who have collected for the national commander's TFA charity fund and service officers to please gather behind the curtain to my right and line up for check presentations.

The Royal Canadian Legion is committed to securing adequate pensions and benefits for veterans and their families by dealing directly with the federal government. Our next guest hails from Labrador City, Canada, and was awarded the Legion Meritorious Service Medal, the Queens Golden Jubilee and the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome the Royal Canadian Legion Dominion President, Dave Flannigan. (Applause)

Greetings: David Flannigan
Dominion President, The Royal Canadian Legion

Good afternoon. To steal the words of our honored recipient of the medal, I am standing up. Yes, I am. Comrade Schmidt, special guests, friends, on behalf of the Royal Canadian Legion, I'm honored and privileged to have been invited to this terrific conference today. It is a great privilege for me as president of the Royal Canadian Legion to speak at this session.

Our two organizations have much in common. Like you, we have a strong sense of obligation to our communities and to our nations. Like you, we focus on advocating for our veterans, especially in our main goal: To ensure that our veterans receive the life-long support they have earned and deserve. We do, of course, have differences, and one is in size. While you are 2 million strong; our membership is a mere 275,000. Then again, we are a much smaller country, less than 37 million; and yours, 326 million. We are a little younger than you as well. We were formed by the special act of Congress at Parliament in 1926, seven years after you came into being.

Despite our differences, though, we share a mission to serve and support our veterans and to contribute to all our communities. We both have jobs to do, big jobs, and to do them right, we need to hold steady on our numbers so we have the members and volunteers needed to carry out our mission. Over the past few decades, it's been a bit of a struggle for us as we continue to lose our largest cohort, veterans of the First and Second World War and the Korean Conflict. Although our brave veterans continue to serve their countries with equal valor and distinction, there simply aren't enough of them to keep our numbers strong. This has led us to take a different approach to Legion membership. While you are a veterans-only organization, we have extended our membership to serving and retired RCMP personnel and veterans' family members. In fact, all who support our aims and objects are welcome to join the Royal Canadian Legion.

And we've stepped up our efforts to reach out to all of them. We are relying more and more on public relations' initiatives, targeted marketing, and cutting-edge social media strategies such as Facebook. We've streamlined our website and have added a member portal to help our branches process membership and renewals online.

We are partnering in the upcoming Invictus Games in Toronto this September as a way to help dispel the stigma sometimes associated with veterans with physical and mental injuries. These games are a great way to showcase role models of the ill and injured veterans. As the Canadian Man in Motion, Rick Hansen, once said: If you believe in a dream and have the courage to try, anything is possible.
That certainly is true for our wounded servicemen and women. Like The American Legion, we contribute to our communities, to seniors, youth groups, and help health institutions. For example, we just gave $1 million to the Royal Ottawa for a brain imaging machine dedicated exclusively to mental health research. This will help with the diagnosis and development of new treatment options for PTSD and other medical issues that challenge our veterans.

At the end of the day, however, we are especially proud of our role as our nation’s guardian to remembrance. Each year we distribute tens of thousands of iconic poppies that symbolize our gratitude and respect for our veterans. We organize Canada's November 11th Remembrance Day ceremonies on our National War Memorial in Ottawa. Over 1,400 branches hold local services and wreath-laying ceremonies across the country. Last year we distributed over 21 million poppies across Canada and disbursed over $18 million back to our veterans.

That ties between our two legions are strong, from cross-border commemorations between branches and posts to a shared culture created by those who came before us. Like your founders, they passed on to us their convictions that nothing is more noble or fulfilling than serving and supporting our veterans and our communities. I hope that goodwill and friendship forged here in this great city of Reno today and this week stimulates many more conversations going forward. I look forward to continuing cooperation between the two legions, the Royal Canadian Legion and The American Legion, for many years to come. As always, in comradeship, thank you very much. (Applause)

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER ESPINOZA: It's our honor to award you with The American Legion National Commander's Medallion. Now I call on Past National Commander Jake Comer for a presentation.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER COMER: Thank you, commander. Ladies and gentlemen, I am sorry that I was late when they were making the presentation of checks to the Legacy Fund, but I had a few fires to put out in another room. So you'll understand. With me today is Department Commander Mike Davis, and we would like to make a presentation, to add to all those received, from the Cecil W. Fogg-Thomas J. Roberts Post. My post in Hyde Park, Massachusetts, over ten years has donated over $100,000. We have The Legion and the Auxiliary, but it's primarily the Sons of The American Legion that did the work on this. This was a one-day barbecue at our post, and I'd like to turn over a check to the tune of $9,000. (Applause)

I have another wonderful responsibility to present to you, and as the president of ANAVICUS, which so many of you belong and enjoy, as we did, the breakfast on Sunday, and was privileged to listen to this gentleman, but I am honored, as the president of ANAVICUS, to present to you, Ronald G. Smith, the acting Dominion president, the Army, Navy and Air Force Veterans in Canada. (Applause)

... At this time, National Commander Schmidt resumed the Chair.

Greetings: Ronald G. Smith
Acting Dominion President, Army, Navy and Air Force Veterans in Canada

Good afternoon. Commander Schmidt, National Adjutant Wheeler, special guests, comrades, all. It gives me great pleasure to join you at this time, your 99th Annual Convention, and bring warm greetings on behalf of the executives and members of the Army, Navy, Air Force Veterans in Canada.

We have, as close allies and neighbors, fought shoulder to shoulder many times together in operations around the globe. Our sailors, soldiers and air crew have shared operations, experiences and hardships. Our mutual concern for our troops, our veterans and their families continue to join us together. Therefore, we are pleased to see Canada's Minister of Veterans Affairs and your secretary of Veterans Affairs come together in late June to discuss partnerships in how the two nations can work together to better serve our
veterans and their families. Sharing information and best practices on health care, research, benefits, support programs will allow both countries who struggle with similar challenges to learn from one another and to better serve those who protect us.

The Canadian Institute of Military and Veterans Health Research continues to grow, now bringing together researchers from 42 Canadian universities and collaborating on new and innovative projects to better protect and serve military communities during and after their service. Couple that with the research being done in America, both with your mental illness research, education and clinical centers and centers of excellence in mental health across the great country. We can hopefully make strides in suicide prevention, reducing veterans homelessness and mental health treatments.

By sharing our data, promising treatments and successful programs, we can hopefully improve the lives of our veterans and their families on both sides of our border. Programs like your cutting-edge Million Veterans Project that is down in Hall 2 is building the largest genomics database in the world specifically around veterans. It will assist future research to help veteran populations in many areas of health. If you have not yet gone to see what this program is about and its potential uses, I encourage you to do so.

I would also like to congratulate National Commander Schmidt and all the Legionnaires that worked on having the Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2017 passed by your Congress and signed into law less than one week ago. Canada has itself just announced an education benefit based on your GI Bill, and you can be assured that, along with my comrades from the Royal Canadian Legion, we will be bringing your improvements to our government even before our program is set to roll out.

Thank you for having me here with you this week and for all the wonderful hospitality. God bless. (Applause)

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: Taiwan is a nation that is always vigilant. Because of its close proximity to communist China, the Taiwanese military is prepared for an attack that could come at any time. The Taiwanese people also know that taking care of veterans is an important priority when fielding a strong defense. We are fortunate to have with us the vice minister of the Veterans Affairs Council of the Republic of China. Please welcome Vice Minister Chia-Kai Lu to our stage. (Applause)

Greetings: Chia-Kai Lu
Vice Minister, Veterans Affairs Council, Republic of China

National Commander Schmidt, distinguished guests and, most of all, the extraordinary veterans and your families, good afternoon. It is such a great honor of mine to be here, especially to address the veterans who have selflessly served the country. On behalf of the Veterans Affairs Council of the Republic of China, I hereby extend our sincerest respect and regards to all the American patriots and heroes.

The Veterans Affairs Council and The American Legion have bonded in close friendship for decades. The reason that we have established the long-lasting friendship is because we share the same values and beliefs in freedom, democracy, human rights and global justice and peace. Also, we are both committed to striving for the dignity and welfare for those who have served and sacrificed for the country, at home and abroad. They deserve this glory. That's the reason why we are here to support, honor and appreciate those veterans, servicemembers and their families by providing substantial benefits for them.

Taiwan and the U.S. have maintained relevant relations no matter in political, economic and security. In other words, Taiwan's development is closely tied to U.S. interests in the Asia-Pacific region. Therefore, assisting Taiwan to continuously undergo military transformation to gain adequate capability of national defense and to join economic and trade pacts as well as other international organizations, it's crucial for our mutual interests.
Taiwan is situated in the center of the first island chain in the Western Pacific defense line. Our strategic value is important and irreplaceable to the U.S. Hence, as a partner of the U.S., Taiwan will continue to promote the regional peace and security as well as economic development in the Pacific Rim. Meanwhile, Taiwan will also continue the humanitarian aid and the disaster relief service to carry out our responsibility as part of the global village.

Dear fellows, we truly appreciate your continued support in the defense of the rights of Taiwanese people. In particular, submitting the resolution to Congress each year. By supporting Taiwan regarding national defense, arms procurement, political and economic issues and so on, such an act means a lot for us. Your valuable friendship will always be kept in our minds and will be treasured for good. Thank you so much, and I wish you a successful convention as well as wish you good health and happiness. (Applause)

Finally, I would like to present National Commander Schmidt, with a Medal of Honor with Cravat of Veterans Affairs Council, first-class, in recognition of his dedication to promoting the partnership between our two countries. Ms. Wong, please recite citation.

MS. WONG: Certificate of award to accompany the presentation of the Medal of Honor of the Veterans Affairs Council: To Mr. Charles E. Schmidt, National Commander, The American Legion, in recognition of his dedication in upholding international justice, in-safeguarding international status of the Republic of China and in improving the welfare of the veterans: A Medal of Honor of Veterans Affairs Council first-class, is hereby awarded on the date of the 22nd day of August in the year of 2017. (Applause)

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: A paid-up-for-life Legionnaire from Post 140 in Georgia, this Navy veteran served three years on the aircraft carrier USS Independence. He was self-employed in the insurance claims handling business for 40 years and now leads an organization that is composed entirely of the descendants of patriots who served in the American Revolution. Please welcome the president general of the National Society of the Sons of the American Revolution, Larry T. Guzy. (Applause)

Greetings: Larry T. Guzy
President General, National Society of the Sons of the American Revolution

Patriotism, the love and loyal support of one's own country: That describes you, our veterans and members of The American Legion. This is a small token, but it bears repeating often. Thank you for your service and sacrifices.

The Sons of the American Revolution are dedicated to promoting patriotism, as you are. Our focus on this country's founding is honoring our first patriots: Veterans of the American Revolution. Their rallying cry for the first taste of national unity was the Declaration of Independence, which will celebrate its 250th anniversary in just nine short years. They would be proud to know that our country can still rely on men and women like you who stand and are counted when the need arises.

We are all descendants of the ideals that the heroes of the American Revolution established through their eight years of war. These veterans, men, women, children, black, white, immigrants of many nationalities and citizens, rose to the occasion as you did. They did so because they believed in a cause larger than themselves.

Although we often recall the commanders of the Army, Navy and Marines, sorry, there was no Air Force yet, it was the common people who sacrificed, fought against enormous odds, and eventually won to secure our freedom. Ben Franklin remarked, after the Constitutional Convention, "We have a republic if you can keep it."

We descendents of these heroes are honored to be in your presence, our contemporary patriots and heroes, because we see our country is safe in your hands who keep our country protected.

Thank you again for your service and have a great convention. Thank you. (Applause)

... At this time, National Vice Commander Casper assumed the Chair.
Donations to National Commander's Charity Fund

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER CASPER: At this time, I would like to ask those departments that would like to present checks for the National Commander's Charity Fund to come forward and make your presentations.

DELEGATE STEPHENSON (UT): Past Department Commander Chuck Stephenson and Past Department Commander Randy Edwards and donation chairman from the Department of Utah, home of the 50-year National Executive Committeeman Bill Kristofferson, is proud to present a check to the National Commander's Charity for $1,077.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (WY): From The Equality State, the Department of Wyoming, on behalf of Don Stough Post 33, presents $200 to Temporary Financial Assistance and $200 to the Service Officer Training Fund.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (TX): American Legion Travis Post 76, Austin, Texas, is proud to contribute $5,000 to the National Commander's Charity and Temporary Financial Assistance.

DELEGATE HELLICKSON (OR): Commander Gene Hellickson, Department of Oregon, donation of $932 for the Commander's Charity Fund.

DELEGATE GOTH (MO): I'm Kenny Goth, NEC from the great state of Missouri and proud home of Past National Commander Joe Frank. On behalf of the Past Post Commander's Club, we'd like to donate $2,719.

DELEGATE GONZALES (MO): I'm Betty Gonzales, immediate past department commander, and on behalf of the Department of Missouri, I have $2,635.85 for TFA and $568.85 for the VSO. It's a total of $3,204.70. (Applause)

DELEGATE TERHUNE (NV): On behalf of the Department of Nevada, junior Past Commander Bob Terhune and Commander Yvette Weigold, we are donating $10,000 to the National Commander's charities. Thank you.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (MA): On behalf of the Department of Massachusetts and Department Commander Mike Davis, home of Past National Commanders Jake Comer and Paul Morin, I would like to present a check from Milwauk, the western part of the state of Massachusetts, for $2,000. Also we'd like to present a check for $2,500 to the TFA Fund, along with $2,500 to the service officer training to go along with that, with a grand total of $7,000. (Applause)

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (ID): Great state of Idaho, home of past national commander, the Honorable Al Lance, I'd like to contribute to the Commander's TFA Fund $1,124.85.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (NJ): On behalf of the Department of New Jersey, I'd like to present a check for $1,500. With me here today is Department Commander Darryl Reid, Department Vice Commander Larry Bishop, and Department Adjutant John Baker.

DELEGATE CHAN (OR): I'm William Chan from the great state of Oregon, and I'm the president of the National American Legion College Alumni Association. We have a check for $500 from our general fund; and additionally we had funds raised Saturday night at our banquet: $1,101 was raised by the classes of 2014 and 2016, and 2015 raised a total of $1,678, for a total of $3,279. (Applause)

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE: Department of Oregon has an additional $6,600 for the commander's charity.

DELEGATE JACKSON (CT): Joe Jackson, NEC, Department of Connecticut, got a couple checks here for the national commander's project. Maybe he'll take flying lessons. $200.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (OK): From the Department of Oklahoma, pleased to present a donation of $500 to the National Commander's Charity Fund.

...At this time, National Commander Schmidt resumed the Chair.

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: Thank you for those donations to the commander's charity, Temporary Financial Assistance, and also for service officer training. Earlier we had the Legacy Fund Scholarship donations. This morning, on this stage,
$667,800 was collected this morning. Thus far, this year, to The American Legion Legacy Fund, $1,224,653.55! (Applause)

... At this time, National Vice Commander Troiola assumed the Chair.

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER TROIOLA: I now call on National Adjutant Daniel S. Wheeler of the Department of Virginia to issue the Call for Convention.

Call for Convention
Daniel S. Wheeler, Virginia, National Adjutant

By the authority of the National Executive Committee, the 99th Annual National Convention of The American Legion is hereby called to meet in Reno, Nevada, August 18-24, 2017. The convention business sessions will be held in the Reno-Sparks Convention Center, Hall 4, August 22-24.

Purpose
The Annual National Convention is the legislative body of The American Legion. The convention is called for the purpose of setting the programs of The American Legion for the ensuing year, amending the National Constitution and Bylaws, and transacting such other business as may be brought before it.

On Thursday, August 24, 2017, at twelve o'clock (noon) of the final session, or at the conclusion of all other business of the National Convention, whichever first occurs, officers for the ensuing year will be elected, these being the National Commander and five National Vice Commanders, in that sequence.

Representation
Representation in the convention shall be by department, and in accordance with the provisions of the National Constitution (sec. 3, art. V):

"... each department shall be entitled to five delegates and one additional delegate for each thousand members, or major fraction thereof, whose current dues have been received by the national treasurer 30 days prior to the meeting of said convention (July 24, 2017) and whose registration fees, as fixed by the National Executive Committee, for its total authorized delegate strength, have been paid; and to one alternate for each delegate."

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 their respective departments except that the vote of the National Commander shall be exercised only in his capacity as Chairman of the National Convention. (sec. 3, art. VII)

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

Delegates to the National Convention shall be accredited in writing to the National Adjutant in the number and manner prescribed by article V, VI and VII, of the National Constitution.

The rights of departments to make and accredit substitutes for absentee delegates or alternate delegates shall be recognized by the National Adjutant, provided that such substitution shall be officially certified by the Department Commander and Department Adjutant at the time of the certification required by the National Constitution or at any time prior to adjournment of the first session of the National Convention.

Alternate Delegates
Alternates shall have the power to vote only in the absence of the regular delegates.

The selection of alternates to represent absent delegates is a matter for decision within the respective delegations.

The vote of any registered delegates absent and not represented by an alternate shall be cast by the majority of the registered delegates present from his/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 bylaws.

Department Officials

Department officials, unless elected as delegates or alternates to the National Convention, have no privileges in the convention except as the guests of their respective delegations.

Convention Committees

Americanism Convention Committee
Americanism Convention Subcommittee - One Delegate
Children & Youth Convention Subcommittee - One Delegate

Constitutional Amendments Convention Committee - One Delegate
Credentials & Rules Convention Committee - One Delegate
Finance Convention Committee - One Delegate
Internal Affairs Convention Committee
Membership Convention Subcommittee - One Delegate
Other Internal Matters Convention Subcommittee - One Delegate
Legislation Convention Committee - One Delegate

National Security Convention Committee
Aerospace Convention Subcommittee - One Delegate
Conventional Armed Forces Convention Subcommittee - One Delegate
Foreign Relations Convention Subcommittee - One Delegate
Law and Order & Homeland Security Convention Subcommittee - One Delegate
Military Benefits & Quality of Life Convention Subcommittee - One Delegate
National Guard & Reserve Forces Convention Subcommittee - One Delegate
Unconventional Forces & Intelligence Convention Subcommittee - One Delegate

Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Convention Committee
Health Administration Convention Subcommittee - One Delegate
National Cemetery Convention Subcommittee - One Delegate
Veterans Benefits Convention Subcommittee - One Delegate

Veterans Employment & Education Convention Committee
Employment & Veterans Preference Convention Subcommittee - One Delegate
Veterans Education, Other Benefits & Homelessness Convention Subcommittee - One Delegate

Signed by Charles E. Schmidt, National Commander; attested by Daniel S. Wheeler, National Adjutant

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WHEELER: Mr. Commander, that completes the Call for Convention.

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER TROIOLA: Thank you very much, Mr. Adjutant.
I now declare the 99th Annual National Convention of The American Legion to be regularly convened. The Chair recognizes George West, chairman of the National Convention Committee on Credentials and Rules, for the purpose of making a report.

Report: Convention Committee on Credentials & Rules
George West, New Hampshire, Chairman

Thirty nine delegates to the Committee on Credentials and Rules met at 8:30 a.m., August 20, 2017, in the Atlantis Resort, Grand Ballroom, Sections 1 & 2.
George West (NH) was elected Chairman, and Timothy Collmer (NY) was elected Secretary.

The Committee proceeded to the business agenda by considering the Rules of the Convention. A motion was unanimously approved by the Committee to adopt the Standing Rules of the Convention as they appear in the revised Uniform Code of Procedures for Organizing National Conventions of The American Legion as approved by the National Executive Committee in May 10-11, 2017. Each Department Delegation Secretary was provided a copy of the Uniform Code at this Convention.

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 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 Convention (July 24, 2017); 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 his capacity as Chairman of the National Convention, and five (5) National Vice Commanders are delegates to the National Convention. For a total of 2,316 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 in their respective Departments.

In accordance with the membership report certified to the Convention Committee on Credentials and Rules by the National Adjutant on July 24, 2017, and in accordance with Article V of the National Constitution, the voting strength of the 55 Departments is 2,315 plus the National Commander allocated as follows:

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<th>State</th>
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The Credentials and Rules Committee did not receive any resolutions for consideration or action.

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

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN WEST: Mr. Commander, as a duly elected and registered delegate from the Department of New Hampshire, I move that the report of the Convention Committee on Credential and Rules, to include the aforementioned Delegate Strength 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 be approved.

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER TROIOLA: Do I hear a second? ...Second. Is there any discussion? All in favor say aye. All opposed say nay. The report of Credentials and Rules is adopted. I'll now entertain a motion to adopt the Rules of Convention.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE: So moved.

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER TROIOLA: Do I hear a second? ...Second. Is there any discussion? All those in favor signify by saying aye. Opposed? The Rules of Convention are adopted. The Chair recognizes Gaither Keener of North Carolina, chairman of the national Convention Committee on Finance, for the purpose of making a report.

Report: Convention Committee on Finance
Gaither M. Kenner, Jr., North Carolina, Chairman

Forty six members met at the Reno-Sparks Convention Center in the meeting room D1 at 9 a.m. on Sunday, August 20, 2017, in Reno, Nevada. Shawn Long, CPA (Indiana), National Finance Director, opened the meeting as staff liaison and informed the committee that nominations were in order for Chairman and Secretary. Gaither M. Keener, Jr. (North Carolina) was elected chairman, and Carl E. Levi (Tennessee) was elected secretary, by unanimous vote.

Preston Herald III (District of Columbia) made a motion to empower the secretary to deliver the report if the chairman was unable. The motion was seconded by David Warnken (Kansas) and passed by unanimous vote.

Reports were received from Kenneth Danilson (Iowa) Chairman of the Marketing Commission and Walter Ivie (Texas) Chairman of the Media and Communications Commission.

Chairman Keener reported that the 2016 consolidated financial statements were audited by Crowe Horwath, LLP who issued an unqualified opinion. .

The Chairman then introduced the National Treasurer, George A. Buskirk, Jr. (Indiana), who updated the committee on the economy. Treasurer Buskirk completed his report with a recommendation for national per capita to remain $18.50. John D. Monahan (Connecticut) made a motion to keep dues at $18.50. The motion was seconded by Paul Morin (Massachusetts) and adopted by unanimous vote. Chairman Keener finally introduced Shawn Long, CPA (Indiana) to report on the financial position and activities of the National organization.

Alan Lennox (California) moved to empower the Chairman and Secretary to write and/or amend the report on behalf of the Convention Committee on Finance. Paul Morin (Massachusetts) seconded the motion, which was adopted by unanimous vote.

As being no further business, the meeting recessed at 9:45 a.m.

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN KEENER: Commander, I hereby move that the report be adopted and accepted as written.
NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER TROIOLA: Do I hear a second? ...Second. Is there any discussion? All those in favor signify by saying aye. Opposed? The report of Finance is adopted. The Chair recognizes the Honorable Vincent Gaughan of Illinois, chairman of the Convention Committee on Constitutional Amendments, for the purpose of making a report.

Report: Convention Committee on Constitutional Amendments
Hon. Vincent M. Gaughan, Illinois, Chairman


The Committee on Constitutional Amendments met at 9:00 a.m., Sunday, August 20, 2017, in the Grand Ballroom, Section 3, 2nd Floor of the Atlantis Hotel, Reno, Nevada. Committee Liaison Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr. (MD) called the roll and announced that 42 members of the Constitutional Amendments Committee were present. The following report was authorized by the members and is hereby 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 chairman and secretary.

Vincent M. Gaughan (IL) was elected Chairman and Cathy J. Gorst (WI) was duly elected Secretary. Thereupon they assumed their respective places.

Copies of the Resolutions, the Report of the Standing Committee, the Charter of The American Legion, National Constitution and By-Laws and the Uniform Code of Procedure for the Organization of National Conventions of The American Legion, which include the Standing Rules of Convention, were made available to all members of the Committee.

The Chair called upon Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., National Judge Advocate, to give a summary background report on the resolutions assigned to the Committee, which was done.

A motion was made by Charles G. Mills (NY) and seconded by Gerald E. Lakey (OK) that all members of the Standing Committee on Constitution and By-Laws who were present at the meeting, but not actual delegates to the Convention Committee be seated with voice but no vote. The motion was carried.

The Chair then announced that he was in agreement with the Report of the Standing Committee on the Constitution and By-laws.

Resolution No. 30 (OH) was considered. The Chair announced this resolution is out of order. It does not provide the complete text to be voted on for The American Legion, the American Legion Auxiliary and the American Legion Corporate Charter and it also does not provide that the change cannot take effect until Congress changes the charter. It would also end the right of The American Legion, the American Legion Auxiliary and American Legion Charities to accept tax deductible donations. In addition, it would require The American Legion to incur the expense of returning donations to the donors.

James R. Johnson (LA) made a motion, seconded by Frank A. Porter (MD) to reject Resolution No. 30 (OH). Motion carried unanimously.

Resolution No. 31 (OH) was considered. The Chair announced this resolution is out of order. It does not provide the complete text to be voted on for The American Legion, the American Legion Auxiliary and the American Legion Corporate Charter and it also does not provide that the change cannot take effect until Congress changes the charter. It would also end the right of The American Legion, the American Legion Auxiliary and American Legion Charities to accept tax deductible donations. In addition, it would require The American Legion to incur the expense of returning donations to the donors.

Joe Sims (GA) made a motion to reject Resolution No. 31 (OH), which was seconded by J. W. Smith (AR). Motion carried unanimously.

Resolution No. 32 (OH) was considered. The Chair announced this resolution is out of order. It does not provide the complete text to be voted on for The American Legion,
the American Legion Auxiliary and the American Legion Corporate Charter and it also
does not provide that the change cannot take effect until Congress changes the charter. It
would also end the right of The American Legion, the American Legion Auxiliary and
American Legion Charities to accept tax deductible donations. In addition, it would require
The American Legion to incur the expense of returning donations to the donors.

Frank A. Porter (MD) made a motion seconded by James R. Johnson (LA) to reject
Resolution No. 32 (OH). Motion carried unanimously.

Resolution No. 33 (CO) was considered. The Chair announced this resolution is out
of order. It does not provide the complete text to be voted on for The American Legion,
the American Legion Auxiliary, and it also does not provide that the change cannot take
effect until Congress changes the charter. It would also end the right of The American
Legion, the American Legion Auxiliary and American Legion Charities to accept tax
deductible donations. In addition, it would require The American Legion to incur the
expense of returning donations to the donors.

Charlie Arkwell (NH) made a motion to reject Resolution No. 33 (CO), seconded by
Todd Rikki (ND). Motion carried with one no vote.

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 Convention Committee.
James R. Johnson (LA) made the motion and it was seconded by Bill Stevens (ID). The
motion carried unanimously.

Charles Mills (NY) made the motion, seconded by Frank A. Porter (MD) to attach the
Report of the Constitution and By-laws Committee to this report as an exhibit. The motion
was carried unanimously.

Gerald E. Lakey (OK) made a motion to recess, subject to the call of the Chairman.
The motion was seconded by LeRoy Madsen (SD). The motion carried unanimously.

The Chairman then thanked the Committee for its cooperation and productive
meeting. The meeting was declared in recess pending a call from the Chairman of the
Committee.

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN GAUGHAN: Mr. Commander, as a delegate to the 99th
National Convention of The American Legion, I move the adoption of this report.

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER TROIOLA: Do I hear a second? Second. Is
there any discussion? All those in favor signify by saying aye. Opposed? The report on
Constitutional Amendments is adopted. Please give your attention to the screens while we
provide some videos while we set up for our next speaker.

... At this time, the delegation viewed a series of videos. (Applause)

Report: National Commander’s Report to Convention
Charles E. Schmidt, Oregon, National Commander

My fellow Legionnaires, Legion Family members and friends, I am going to ask you
the same question that George Jones asked. And, no, I’m not speaking about the legends of
country music, but instead the legends of The American Legion. Who is going to fill their
shoes? Who is going to advocate for veterans, just as the doughboys returning from World
War I did, when they formed an organization that pledged to leave no American
service member behind and to ensure their widows and orphans would receive the
compassion and assistance of a grateful nation? Who?

Who is going to instill the values of great citizenship to the young people by
conducting programs like American Legion Baseball, Boys State and Nation, oratoricals,
Shooting Sports, Scouting and so many activities? Who? Who is going to educate the
public about flag etiquette and champion a constitutional amendment to protect Old Glory
from those who desecrate it? Who? Who is going to lobby Congress, encourage the White
House and convince the media that freedom is not free and America must maintain a strong
national defense in order to protect our way of life? Who?
For the past 98 years, it has been our American Legion that has been doing these things, and I pray to God that we will continue to be the leader on these vital pillars for the next century and beyond. You don't have to be a famous national leader like Past National Commander Harry Colmery or the founding father, the father of American Legion as he may be known, Teddy Roosevelt, Jr., to be a legend in your own communities. In fact, most of the great work by The American Legion Family is performed by unsung heroes, people whose names we don't know and probably will never know.

Who is going to fill the shoes of American Legion volunteers who contributed more than 645,000 hours at the VA last year and saved the government more than $14 million? Who? Who is going to conduct the blood drives in your departments, cities, and communities? Who is going to gather and deliver donations for Operation Comfort Warriors to ensure that our nation's wounded, injured, and ill heroes know that within a grateful nation resides an especially grateful American Legion Family? Who? Who is going to ensure that the accountability that was promised to us at the Department of Veterans Affairs is delivered in such a way that nobody would be able to make a career within that agency if they are not properly serving veterans? Who? Who?

My friends, who is going to fill your shoes, the people in this great convention hall, leaders in your communities and departments? Only time prevents me from citing your individual accomplishments, but The American Legion is better off because of what you have put into it.

My fellow Legionnaires, I'll be frank with you. I'm very concerned. I was cautiously optimistic back in February when we had 45 of our 55 departments meet their 85 percent membership target goal. The caution was because of the tendency of many of our posts and departments to run out of gas early. Sure enough, only Mexico, Idaho, and the Department of the Philippines met their 2017 membership goals. Three out of 55 is simply not enough. Do you know where your department ended up in the membership standings? I know where mine ended up. Our total membership numbers are now below 2 million. We need your help if this organization we all love is going to remain relevant as we prepare to enter our second century of service, serving veterans, serving families, and standing up for America.

I know the challenges that some of you face in your communities. I know what my community faces. I understand that people join Post Everlasting. I think we all get that. But look at all of the Guard and reserve units that have been activated since August 2, 1990. Look at the fact that the current membership window has been open for 27 years, by far the longest window in history of The American Legion. Instead of focusing on those deceased or ineligible veterans who cannot join The American Legion, let's put our efforts toward the more than 18 million who can. A 15 percent penetration of this population would give us 2.7 million members. If over the last 25 years we had replaced all of our deceased members with new ones and renewed those who let their memberships lapse, we would have another 22 million in our national budget every year. I am certain that your departments and posts could benefit from the millions in additional revenue that you would also have if you had just been able to maintain the numbers that we had in the early 1990s.

I'm going to speak to you briefly about another challenge, a challenge that an Iraq War veteran faced when he returned home in Cripple Creek, Colorado. You saw the video this morning. A 100 percent disabled Marine, this single father had an eight-year-old son with special needs. He was forced to vacate his home when it was determined to be uninhabitable due to mold and other severe problems. But American Legion Post 171 in Cripple Creek and the Department of Colorado stepped up. Boy, did they step up. Big time. The post led a 10-month-long renovation of the home. Donations came from around the country, including the Home Depot Foundation. At least 65 members, volunteers combined for more than 2,500 hours. On Father's Day of this year, Andrew Smith and his son were able to move back home.

The American Legion saw a challenge, and our family stepped up. Now, who is going to fill their shoes and help the many other Andrew Smiths that are out there? Who?
Membership determines our ability to implement and execute our Four Pillar programs. It also determines our ability to effectively advocate, since numbers matter to Congress, the White House, governors and state legislatures. The numbers in our communities can also make the difference between mayors and city councils supporting American Legion programs or ignoring us. Everywhere I go, I tell Legionnaires that if each of them would just recruit one new member, we would double our membership. Yet, in 2017, we had only 64,267 new traditional members, according to our report as of July 17.

Keep in mind, that doesn't mean we had anywhere close to 64,267 different recruiters. Some of the recruiters, especially our Gold and Silver Brigade recruiters, carried the weight for the rest of us, and they are doing more than their share. In fact, 7,965 of these new members were recruited by just 107 Gold Brigadiers. Another 1,637 new members were recruited by 54 Silver Brigadiers. And bear in mind that while we may have 64,000 new members, we lost 66,000 members to Post Everlasting during the same year.

When someone recruited three new members this past year, I called or either emailed each of them. One recruiter from Post 29 in the Department of Washington emailed me back: "I'm honored to have served this great nation," she wrote. "I look forward to reinvesting my efforts to garner younger veterans into volunteerism. If I could rejoin the military and serve again, I would. I feel my experience to serve and mentor younger staff could be an asset to our country. Thank you for the encouragement, and I appreciate that you took the time to have an email sent to me. Kind regards, Monica J. Trujillo."

And one morning I picked up the phone and called Richard Greene in North Dakota. I said, "Good morning, Richard. This is your national commander." He said, "Who?" I said, "This is your national commander. I just want to call and thank you for signing up three new members, Richard. I appreciate your efforts." And he said, "But, Mr. Commander, I'm not done. I have approximately six more potential new members lined up."

I'm glad that out there, there are Legionnaires like Richard and Monica working to get new members and also to mentor younger ones to someday fill our shoes. But what about the rest of us? Are we doing all that we can to reach out to active-duty, reserve and Guard members and say, "Join us. We're The American Legion, and we are your friends"? Are we bringing membership applications and brochures to our American Legion programs such as American Legion Baseball games and recruiting eligible parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles and friends into our organization? Are we fighting every day to bring The American Legion back above the highly significant 2 million mark? If we are going to do that, we need to keep recruiting and recruiting all year, from the very beginning until the very end. In 2018 we should not settle for 100 percent. We need departments to achieve 105 percent or, even better, 110 percent of their goals if we are going to turn this around.

The reason Congress pays attention to us is because we are large, we are principled, and we are altruistic. While I see no diminishment of our principles and our good works, our voice will get proportionally smaller as our numbers go down and so will our ability to run the programs that so many people and their communities benefit from. Don't believe for one second that other revenue sources can save us. A smaller magazine circulation lessens our ability to attract advertising. Fewer Legionnaires means fewer customers for Emblem Sales. It's a vicious cycle.

Would you like to be on a national commission to decide which of our outstanding programs to cut? After seeing this morning's champs, I think not. Do you want to attend a national convention where there are fewer Youth Champions to recognize? I don't think so. Do we want fewer accredited service officers to assist veterans with their claims and appeals? I think not. Would you like to consider a dues increase, knowing that it will often result in fewer members because of the dues increase? I think not.

We have a great tool called mylegion.org. Hopefully, many of you are already familiar with it. This is a great resource. MyLegion can provide a county-by-county list of those who have not renewed their membership in The American Legion. Unless a Legionnaire has joined Post Everlasting, make sure that every one of those former members within your post, district and department receives a personal contact, not just a form letter, from
someone who cares. Sometimes a phone number is not included in the contact information. If that is the case, Google the information that you have or else call directory assistance for a phone number. But a personal visit works even better. Find out why they left the fold, and find a way to fix it. If people feel wanted and appreciated, they will renew.

We all believe in leadership by example, and this is your opportunity to do so throughout your communities. By being at this National Convention, your presence indicates to me that you have an even greater interest in our organization than the typical member. Delegates and other Conventioneers, you are all leaders in The American Legion Family. Since we are counting on you to reach out to past members of your posts, squadrons and units, expect other Legion leaders that you know to do the same. Every post has a commander. Expect no less from them.

The military has an ethos: "Leave no man or woman behind." We shall do the same and make sure that our post members are not left behind and not forgotten. Stay up on and follow through on all of our good ideas that you hear discussed during your time here in Reno. Information and communications are crucial. If you don't already subscribe to The American Legion Dispatch newsletter, please do so. Visit legion.org regularly.

We are about to make history as we approach our 100th anniversary of still serving America. Our next national commander, whomever she may be, will testify before Congress next spring. Wouldn't it be great if our next national commander could begin by saying, "Mr. Chairman, on behalf of more than 2 million American Legion members"? Wouldn't it? I am hopeful that we all, with all your help, we will stop the membership slide. I'd like to say to you, once again, turn your attention to the video monitors.

... At this time, the delegation viewed a video.

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: George Jones found someone to fill his shoes. My fellow Legionnaires, do you know who's going to fill your shoes? (Applause)

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: The son of Cuban refugees, our next guest is a native of Miami who earned undergraduate and law degrees at Harvard University. He clerked for current U.S. Supreme Court Justice Samuel Alito while at the Third Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals. He worked at a law firm and went on to teach law at George Mason University's Antonin Scalia School of Law. He was nominated by President Trump to lead the Department of Labor and was sworn in on April 28, 2017. Please welcome Secretary of Labor Alex Acosta. (Applause)

Address: Honorable R. Alexander Acosta
Secretary, United States Department of Labor

Good afternoon! Thank you for the kind introduction and the warm welcome, and thank you for your service and your ongoing commitment to our nation. Before I begin my remarks, I would like to ask that you join me in a moment of silence for those aboard the USS John McCain, for those injured, still missing, and for those whose remains have not been found.

I am honored to be among so many who have served with such distinction. Your devotion to our nation during your tours of duty is clear to all. Your patriotism did not end, however, with your tours of duty. It continues to this day. My challenge today is how to express my respect for what you have done and what you continue to do. Sometimes the word "hero" is used to describe those who served our nation. Hero. It is a small word. It is often used to describe the smallest act of kindness nowadays.

How many times do you hear, "You are my hero," for volunteering to baby sit a neighbor's child or for bringing an extra cup of coffee to the office in the morning? It is a phrase that has lost its meaning. When I think of a hero, I think of the young men who sacrificed on the beaches of Normandy. I think of George Washington and his soldiers crossing the Delaware, loudly declaring that Americans ought to be free. I think of the men
and women of all races who serve each day to defeat the terrorists who despise our American way of life. (Applause)

I think of the men and women who have given so much, so much for our freedom. What distinguishes each of these individuals and what is shared by all of you in this room is something very important. It is service. When someone says, "Thank you for your service," what they mean is thank you for laying your life on the line in service to your nation. When someone says, "You are my hero," what they mean is thank you for risking your blood on behalf of my freedom. What you have done and what you continue to do through The American Legion is place your nation, our nation, above your personal well-being. That is what a hero does. (Applause)

Our nation was founded by the blood of those who served. Every generation renews that sacrifice. Our military might is unparalleled in the world, yet the greatness of the American military and of America itself is not in our tanks or our ships, it is in our people and our ideals. Later this week I have the privilege of visiting the Reagan Library. I was a young child when Ronald Reagan was elected. I remember his vision of America: our nation as a shining city upon a hill. I later learned he was not the first to apply this image, this wonderful image, to this land. Puritan leader John Winthrop, sailing to freedom upon the Arbella, challenged his parishioners to be a light to the world. Winthrop said: "We shall be as a city upon a hill, the eyes of all people are upon us." This land that we now call the United States, was then, has been, is, and will be a beacon of freedom. (Applause)

It is a freedom earned at great price. As Ronald Reagan reminded us: "Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction. We didn't pass it to our children in the bloodstream. It must be fought for, protected, and handed on for them to do the same."

I know this well. My parents were born in Cuba. As children, they witnessed the rise of the Castro regime. They came to these shores in search of freedom and opportunity. It is hard to believe that a place so close, a mere 90 miles off our shores, can be so different. A place where even the most basic human rights, the right to speak your mind, the right to worship, the right to own property, are denied. Because he understood the value of freedom, my father enlisted in the Army. My parents appreciated the freedoms offered by this nation and worked every day of their lives to provide me opportunity. They are my heroes. (Applause)

They, like so many in this room, risked life, offered sweat, and in doing so created opportunities for the next generation. I am here because of them. (Applause)

President Trump's focus is on providing opportunities for all Americans. That is why his top three priorities with respect to labor are fairly straightforward: Jobs, more jobs, and even more jobs. (Applause)

For the individual seeking a career or a new start, a job can come from an apprenticeship. For a servicemember returning to civilian life, a job can come from recognition and credit for the skills they learned in the military. (Applause)

For the military spouse, near to the hearts of all in this room, this issue of giving credit and skills and licensing is particularly important. (Applause)

There are many great job opportunities for Americans right now. Currently, there are more than 6 million open jobs in the United States, a record high since we started keeping this statistic. To unlock these job opportunities, American workers need the opportunity to learn the skills those jobs demand. Let me be clear. The American workforce is and always has been the best in the world. Americans are hard working. (Applause)

Americans are dedicated. Americans, however, need an education system that focuses on the skills required by the modern workplace. Today only 60 percent of Americans who enter college graduate within six years. And this statistic is not much different for veterans enrolled in college. This is unacceptable. Millions of American students leave college with no degree, yet take with them tens of thousands of dollars in debt. Veterans use up their GI Bill benefits, yet fail to earn degrees that lead to family-sustaining jobs. Our nation's education system must focus on what we call demand-driven education.
Demand-driven education empowers students with the skills demanded by the modern workplace. Demand-driven education leads to family-sustaining jobs, offering students clear reason to complete their education. Apprenticeships are an important form of demand-driven education. Apprenticeships combine a paid-work component with an educational component. Apprentices earn while they learn. Apprentices avoid the burden of student debt. And studies show apprentices enjoy better job prospects. The average apprentice starting salary is nearly $60,000, substantially higher than the average college graduate.

Let me give you an example. Earlier this summer, I met two veterans who discovered great opportunity through an apprenticeship program. Both veterans were named Chris. After leaving military service, the Chrises were recruited into Mercuria's intensive one-year apprenticeship program. I like telling their story because Mercuria's apprenticeship program is in commodities trading operations. When people hear "apprenticeship," they immediately think of the successful apprenticeship programs found in the building trades. The story of the two Chrises reminds us that apprenticeship programs work well across all industries. Mercuria wants individuals with the right experience and the right attitude. They see veterans as an untapped pool of incredible talents. (Applause)

It's so true. Both Chris's graduated from the apprenticeship program and now work full-time at Mercuria. And they have family-sustaining jobs. (Applause)

President Trump knows the success of apprenticeships from his background in the building trades. That is why the President Trump issued an Executive Order calling on the Labor Department to expand apprenticeships broadly across all industries. The order requires the Labor Department to work closely with the Department of Defense to promote apprenticeship opportunities for members of the armed services and for veterans. I am proud of this partnership with the Department of Defense. It is important. (Applause)

It is the least we can do for those who served. (Applause)

Apprenticeships create new opportunities. It is just as important, however, to remove regulatory barriers to existing opportunities. (Applause)

Eliminating excessive occupational licensing is an important way to remove obstacle to opportunity. Not long ago, fewer than 1 in 20 Americans required a license to work. Today, more than 1 in 4 Americans require a license to do something very simple, to work. 1 in 2 need a license to work. Think about that. More than 1,100 careers are licensed in at least one state. Certainly, some licenses satisfy valid health and safety needs, yet most licenses simply limit competition, bar entry, or create a privileged class. Our veterans and their families are some of the hardest hit by these licensing requirements. Servicemembers learn important skills in the military. Veterans have a proven ability to lead under pressure and to deliver results. These are valuable skills. (Applause)

Yet, when servicemen and women transition to civilian life, states often fail to recognize the credentials and skills gained while in service to this, our nation. Military spouses also suffer. When a servicemember enlists in the Armed Forces, his or her family enlists as well. The servicemember's spouse understands that they, too, may need to move from assignment to assignment in support of the servicemember's obligation to our nation. Yet, the requirement of obtaining a new license to work in each state hinders many military spouses' career opportunities. A teacher in one state should not be prohibited from teaching in another simply because they moved in support of their nation. (Applause)

A spouse should not have to give up his or her career or choose not to move with his or her family each time the family is reassigned. This administration is working with governors across the nation to address this issue. If licenses are unnecessary, eliminate them. If licenses are needed, streamline them. And if they are honored in one state, honor them in all states. And, finally, credit the skills and credentials earned by the men and women in service to their nation. (Applause)

It will happen. I want to conclude with two words: Thank you. (Applause)

Our world is dangerous; you know that more than most. We ask our servicemen and women to risk their lives to protect us. Our military doesn't fight for land or for treasure.
Our military fights for our liberty and for our opportunity. The least we can do is ensure that our men and women in uniform serve, confident in the knowledge that great opportunities await them. (Applause)

From the bottom of my heart, thank you. Thank you for serving our nation in uniform. Thank you for continuing to serve through The American Legion. Thank you for inviting me to join you today. It is an honor to be here in this roomful of true heroes. Thank you very much. (Applause)

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: Thank you, Mr. Secretary. Tomorrow the Child Welfare Foundation donations will follow the Children & Youth Awards, and Operation Comfort Warriors donations will occur Thursday morning after the National Security report. We will also have the president of the United States with us tomorrow. We are a non-partisan organization, and we treat all of our guests with dignity and respect. That includes visiting media. I know that I can count on all of you to represent our organization well, which means that we will show every speaker the utmost courtesy. The magnetometers will be in place, and long lines are expected, so get here early. I now call on the national adjutant for announcements.

Announcements

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WHEELER: The shuttles will begin running at 6:00 a.m. tomorrow. The convention center proper will open at 6:00 a.m. tomorrow. You will only be able to enter through the north doors or the Atlantis Skywalk. The hall in which you are in will open at 7:00 a.m. They will have magnetometers. You must go through the magnetometers in order to enter. If you leave, you must re-go through the magnetometers. It is expected that Secret Service will stop all movement around 10:15 a.m., which means if you have not gone through the magnetometers and are not in your seat, you probably will not be able to enter the hall. So just be early, as the commander said, be patient, and we’ll all get in here and hear the president of the United States. Thank you. (Applause)

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: Legionnaires, please join me in a salute to the flag of our United States of America. By the numbers. One!

... At this time, the delegation rose and rendered a salute to the Colors.

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: Two! The time now is 2:23 p.m. The Convention will stand in recess until 9:00 a.m. tomorrow morning.

... At 2:23 p.m., the Convention was recessed to reconvene the following day, August 23, 2017, at 9:00 a.m.
PROCEEDINGS
SECOND DAY

Wednesday, August 23, 2017

... At 9:00 a.m., the Delegates assembled for the second day of the 99th Annual National Convention, and the following proceedings were had:

Call to Order
Charles E. Schmidt, Oregon, National Commander

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: The Convention will come to order. Sergeant-at-Arms.

NATIONAL SERGEANT-AT-ARMS OWENS: With the flag of our nation in place, hand salute.

... At this time, the delegation rose and rendered a salute to the Colors.

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: Two! For the invocation, I call on National Chaplain Harvey Klee of Texas. Ladies and gentlemen, please uncover.

Invocation
Harvey H. Klee, Texas, National Chaplain

Almighty God, we thank You for the grace of another precious day, precious in the life it brings forth and the opportunities it presents and the challenges that lie ahead. May we be ever mindful of Your presence among us, and may You accompany us along the way, ever guiding us along righteous paths. As we consider the many presentations made at convention, the meetings held, workshops presented and the numerous activities planned, we thank those in the shadows who have made this convention possible. And may Your blessing be upon them, The American Legion Family, staff, the sponsors, and those many others serving this convention.

Compassionate Lord, in a world seemingly without a moral compass, may we return to our spiritual roots to rescue us from chaos and anarchy. In Your great mercy may You again stir hearts, awaken dead souls, and transform lives, young and old. We beseech You to heal our land, not because we are deserving, but because You are merciful. Creator of all things good, let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with those here today. Let peace run rampant across all the countries of the world. And while the storm clouds gather far across the sea, let us swear allegiance to a land that is free. Let us all be grateful for a land so fair as we raise our voices in a solemn prayer. God bless America. This is our prayer. Amen.

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: Thank you, Chaplain Klee. Ladies and gentlemen, please remain uncovered, and I call on Sergeant-at-Arms Kevin J. Owens of Oregon to lead us in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Pledge of Allegiance
Kevin J. Owens, Oregon, National Sergeant-at-Arms

... At this time, the delegation recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: You may cover. The Convention is now in session. You know, The American Legion Family continues to amaze me. You know, this past year we've had fundraisers for our American Legion charities, and yesterday we received more funds from those who raised for those charities. As of today, The American Legion charities, the funds that you have raised to serve veterans and families total now over $8 million. (Cheers and applause)
You make me proud. Be proud yourself for what you do and especially for whom you serve, our veterans and their families.

**Presentation: Certificate of Appreciation**

Harvey H. Klee, Texas, National Chaplain

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: The man who has served as our national chaplain this year is a truly dedicated man of God. He is also a licensed attorney to practice in Texas, California, and before the United States Supreme Court. He is the founder of the Texas Chaplains Association and a Korean War veteran of the United States Navy. He and his wife, Suzanne Klee, have a blended family of 11 children, 15 grandchildren, and four great-grandchildren. Chaplain, your words have given us peace, inspiration, and hope. And also confidence into whom we know who you pray to. It is an honor for me to present a certificate of appreciation marking his year of service as national chaplain to Harvey H. Klee of Texas. Chaplain. *(Applause)*


NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: Our next guest is a man who epitomizes public service. He served his country, first as an Air Force officer during the Vietnam War and later as one of our most respected national leaders. In 2007, Time Magazine listed him as one of that year's most influential people. The following year he was named as one of America's best leaders by U.S. News & World Report. A Washington Post book review said he is, "Widely considered the best Defense Secretary of the post-World War II era."

As you are about to hear from his award citation, that is just one of the many jobs he excelled at. He has earned a Presidential Medal of Freedom, and I am proud to say he is also a member of American Legion Post 110 in Lacey, Washington. It is my distinct pleasure to present the 2017 American Legion Patriot Award to Dr. Robert M. Gates, former U.S. secretary of defense. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: The American Legion Patriot Award presented to Dr. Robert M. Gates for stalwart service and leadership to America as an officer in the U.S. Air Force, as director of the Central Intelligence Agency, as President of Texas A&M University, as the 22nd U.S. Secretary of Defense, as President of the Boy Scouts of America, and as Chancellor of the College of William & Mary, you have demonstrated the highest level of integrity and excellence throughout your career. Your service to both Republican and Democratic administrations demonstrated a commitment that transcends partisan politics. Your reminder to European allies that they have a responsibility to live up to the defense requirements as members of NATO struck a chord that still resonates today. You maintain a seat as a valued member of The American Legion 100th Anniversary Honorary Committee. Your advocacy for and service to U.S. military, veterans, public servants, and the young people of America epitomize the Four Pillars upon which The American Legion was founded. On behalf of the 2 million members of The American Legion, we thank you for your patriotism and service to America. *(Applause)*

**Presentation: The American Legion Patriot Award**

Dr. Robert M. Gates, Former Secretary of Defense

Thank you very much for this honor. It is humbling to be recognized with this Patriot Award by The American Legion. I last stood before you on August 31, 2010, when as secretary of defense I spoke at your National Convention in Milwaukee. I told you then
that it was a real pleasure to be with you, but that it was a real pleasure to be anywhere but Washington, D.C. Much has happened in the last seven years, but that hasn't changed.

First of all, I want to thank you for all The American Legion has done for our nation and for our military, and especially for those returning from the battlefield. When I was asked in October of 2006 if I would be willing to serve as secretary of defense, I said that because all those kids were out there doing their duty, I had no choice but to do mine. The troops were the reason I took the job, and they were the reason I stayed. Being called the soldier's secretary because I cared so much about them was the highest compliment imaginable. *(Applause)*

The tone for my tenure as secretary of defense was unexpectedly set in an encounter in Washington, D.C. prior to my confirmation hearings. I was having dinner alone in a hotel dining room when a middle-aged woman came up to my table and asked if I were Mr. Gates, the new secretary of defense. I said I was. She congratulated me, and then, with tears in her eyes, said, "I have two sons serving in Iraq. For God's sake, bring them home alive."

Our wars suddenly became very real to me along with the responsibility I was taking on for all those in the fight. It only took a few visits to the frontline troops in Iraq and Afghanistan before I began to feel a deep emotional attachment to them, a growing feeling that I personally was responsible for each of them. I soon was telling the troops on the front lines that I had come to regard them as though they were my own sons and daughters and that I would do everything in my power to get them the equipment they needed to accomplish their mission and to come home safely and, if wounded, to ensure they got the best care in the world.

What I didn't expect was that I would have to fight the Pentagon bureaucracy itself to fulfill my pledge to those amazing young people whose selfless service and sacrifice contrasted so vividly with so many self-serving elected and non-elected officials back home. There will always be a special place in my heart for all those who served on the front lines in Iraq and Afghanistan, most in their 20s, some in their teens.

During World War II General George Marshall once told his wife, "I cannot afford the luxury of sentiment. Mine must be cold logic. Sentiment is for others." Such icy detachment was never an option for me. Because of the nature of the wars I oversaw, I could afford the luxury of sentiment, and at times it nearly overwhelmed me. It wasn't long before I had signed the orders deploying every single person in an American uniform to Iraq and Afghanistan. Every single soldier, Marine, airman, and sailor who was wounded or killed was in harm's way because I sent him there.

Determined never to let the fallen become statistics for me, I asked that every condolence letter I had to write be accompanied by a photo of the individual, along with hometown news stories so I could read what his parents and brothers and sisters or spouse or coaches or friends had to say. So I could know whether he had been an athlete, an honor student, or had been aimless and found direction in life through military service. I wanted to know each of them as I handwrote the condolence letter.

I came to believe, as so many of you have long known from personal experience, that no one who had actually been in combat could walk away without scars, some measure of post-traumatic stress. And while the wounded troops I visited in the hospitals put on a brave front for me, in my mind's eye, I could see them lying awake alone in the hours before dawn, confronting their pain, their broken dreams, and their shattered lives.

I would wake in the night and think back to a Marine or a soldier I had seen at Landstuhl or Bethesda or Walter Reed, and in my imagination I would put myself in his hospital room, and I would hold him to my chest and comfort him. And so my answer to a young soldier's question in Afghanistan about what kept me awake at night: He did.

My wars are over, but for all of you who have served and fought, for the wounded and their families, for the families of the fallen, our nation's wars will continue for the rest of their lives. Thanks to The American Legion we will never forget what they did and what
they sacrificed, and we will never forget what you did and what you sacrificed. Thank you again for this honor. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: Our next guest is dedicated to the causes of economic growth and job expansion. His own résumé includes occupations such as opera singer, actor, salesman, and, most famously, television host. His Eagle Scout service project involved reading to students at the Maryland School for the Blind. In 2012, he was awarded the Distinguished Eagle Scout Award by the Boy Scouts of America. His message is simple: Work hard, you can achieve the American dream. A graduate of Towson University, he has a degree in communications studies. His wit and his passion for workers of every economic class comes through in all of his productions and multimedia platforms. It is my pleasure to present our 2017 Media & Communications Award to Mike Rowe, founder of mikeroweWORKS. *(Applause)*

ANNOUNCER: National Commander's 2017 Media & Communications Award presented to Mike Rowe for your inspirational message about the value of work, the greatness of America, and the importance of accomplishment. You have been one of our nation's leading advocates of blue-collar trades, employment opportunities for veterans, and the Second Amendment. You have been able to use your platforms as host of shows such as Dirty Jobs and Somebody's Gotta Do It to advance values that were demonstrated during your service as an Eagle Scout. The mikeroweWORKS website and mikeroweWORKS Foundation reward people with a passion to get trained for skilled jobs that actually exist. Through your scholarship programs, you have provided financial assistance to individuals with a desire to learn skills that are in demand. On behalf of the 2 million members of The American Legion, we thank you for your patriotism and service to America. *(Applause)*

Presentation: National Commander’s Media & Communications Award
Mike Rowe, American Television Host and Actor

Thank you very much. Hi and good morning. In no way does my gratitude and my humility for what was just said, in no way is that reflected in my lack of a tie or my blue jeans. I apologize for my dress. I have a whole series of excuses. I won't bore you with them. Most of my suits are rubber anyway. *(Laughter)*

So I just really didn't think, all things considered. Although, if anybody could understand the value of a rubber suit, surely the men and women assembled here do. Such an honor and such a privilege. Dirty Jobs was a TV show that I assume some of you might have a passing familiarity with. *(Cheers and applause)* Oh, no, no. I really wasn't looking for cheap applause, but I will always take it. *(Laughter)*

That show, like so much of the rest of my misspent career, happened by accident. It was a tribute to my grandfather who some of you might know, not by name. His name was Carl Noble. I grew up next to him in Baltimore County. My grandfather was one of those guys who could build a house without a blueprint, which he actually did from time to time. He only went to the seventh grade, but by the time he was 30, he was a master electrician, a plumber, a steamfitter, pipefitter, welder, mechanic. He had the chip, you know, in the back of his head. He just knew how to fix things. I wanted to do a TV show that honored people who knew how to fix things and weren't afraid to roll their sleeves up and get dirty. We did a one-hour pilot and it went on the air, and I got 10,000 letters very quickly from people saying: You should meet my brother, my uncle, my cousin, my mom, my aunt, my niece, my nephew. Wait until you see what they do.

It was so interesting the number of people who wrote to me who that show struck a chord with who were in the military, who understood intuitively what a dirty job meant, what it meant to go to work every day, not just with the competence and the courage and the willingness to do whatever had to be done, but with a smile on their face.
That's what my show became. It became an attempt to find people who understood that hard work and humor weren't mutually exclusive. Once again, the U.S. Armed Forces were right there in spades. We did 300 dirty jobs. If I made a list of the people who we profiled who served, more than half would be on there. In fact, for our 130th dirty job, where did we go? In Carolina, Fort Jackson. Right? (Cheers)

187th Fixed Wheel Battalion wanted to honor the most bad-ass, pardon me, most bad-ass mechanics in the world. And those guys were incredible. They were just incredible. And the viewers loved it. And after that I said to the network: Look, every season we've got to go somewhere. We've got to highlight the military. They said, look, do whatever you want to do. At that point the show was a hit; nobody was going to tell me no. So went with the Coast Guard out in San Francisco to do a little buoy tending. The buoy tenders. This is a phenomenal job, bringing those giant buoys out of the bay. Then they shoot the tube. They crawl up inside of this thing and they hack the barnacles off, and they laugh and they whistle while they work. These coasties were crazy. I loved them.

Went over to Fort McConnell season after that, KC-135, the Stratotanker, they let me swap out a fuel bladder. You know? When you see that in your inbox, "Mike, we'd like to invite you down to do some work with our bladders," you say, well maybe we should do that. And so we did.

The Seabees. The Seabees nearly killed me down in Hattiesburg a couple years ago, building a bridge in the mud. Those guys are out of their minds. And the Army Corps of Engineers. Really. Everybody but the Marines called me. I can't figure that out. (Laughter)

What's going on with the Marines? No, actually, the Marines called every year. They were like: Come on down to Quantico. We got a little something you're going to love. I'm like, Nah, I'll put them on the list.

Anyway, 300 dirty jobs. 300 hardworking men and women who do the kinds of jobs that make civilized life possible for the rest of us. It was far more than a TV show; it was a legacy. I hope it's going to be a legacy.

But more importantly it was a platform. It was a platform for me to shine a little light in my little slice of cable television on the people I thought were worth knowing and very slowly and somewhat subversively get my world view into that show, and I couldn't have done it without the men and women of the U.S. Armed Forces.

I can also tell you that the reason I believe I'm here today, I'm not entirely sure. I Googled the earlier recipients of this award, and I still think there may have been some mistake. I'm not sure that I've lived up to their company yet. It's some pretty high cotton. But in 2008 when the economy tanked, an interesting thing happened. The headlines made Dirty Jobs relevant in ways that the network never anticipated, nor I, and suddenly the whole country was having a conversation about the definition of a good job. And it was interesting because everywhere I went on the show, this is really 2009, the headlines were constantly talking about record numbers of people who were unemployed. Everywhere I went, you know what I saw? "Help Wanted" signs. It was the craziest thing.

There was this alternative narrative, I think, going on in the country. And the people who ran the small businesses that we typically profiled on the show were struggling mightily to find people who were willing to learn a skill that was actually in demand, show up early, stay late and do all the stuff that we all know is ultimately the key to every success story worth telling.

So I thought maybe there was a way to give something back to the industries that had allowed my little show to prosper, a way to do something that might make my grandfather proud. So we started a modest foundation. We raised money. We give it through a Work Ethic Scholarship program to people who are willing to learn a skill that's in demand. And wouldn't you know it, as soon as we started doing it, you know who stepped up first? It was the men and women of the U.S. Armed Forces. (Applause)

There they were. Not just helping the foundation, but coming to it to say: Listen, I get it. My soft skills are already in order. I show up early. I stay late. You don't have to train me to do that. What you can train me to do is weld or plumbing or electric. Right now, as
I stand here talking to you, there's 6 million jobs in this country that don't require a four-year degree. And they're available right now. *(Applause)*

The skills gap is real. It's getting wider, and our best hope of filling it is with people who are coming back, transitioning back into society, looking to apply the skills that they already have. So there's nothing I can tell this crowd that you haven't heard before in terms of building vet-friendly onramps into these industries. I know a lot of people are doing it. But we have to do more of it. We have to do more because the unemployment rate for recently returning servicemembers is just too damn high. And there's no reason for it because the opportunities are still here.

So in my own little small way with my TV shows and my five million friends on Facebook and my little foundation, I'm going to do what I can to continue to be a jagged little pill, tell the story about opportunities that actually exist, reward work ethic where I can find it, and most importantly thank each and every one of you for being a choir that is so much fun to preach to. You guys get it. It's always fun to be in a roomful of people who get it. Thank you for this. Thank you for this. *(Hold up gavel)* I'm taking it with me. I've been looking at it the whole time. It's very, very difficult to stand in the presence of a gavel and not want to pick it up and do something with it. But I'm afraid what would happen. I would just adjourn everything, wouldn't I? *(Laughter)*

...Mike Rowe raps gavel three times and the delegation stands.

Oh my, what did I do? *(Laughter)* What did I do? You guys are the best. Thank you so much. That's the easiest standing ovation I ever got. I love it. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: I call on Past National Commander Dale Barnett of Georgia to present the Plaque of Appreciation to the president of the National Convention Corporation of Ohio, James C. Morris, for the outstanding job that the Ohio American Legion Family did in hosting the 2016 Convention in Cincinnati. A city that I kind of like.

**Presentation: Plaque of Appreciation to the City of Cincinnati**

**Host City of the 2016 National Convention**

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER BARNETT: As past national commander during the Cincinnati convention, I think we all owe a deep gratitude to the hospitality that was shown to us by the convention division of the Department of Ohio. And at this time, if you were at Cincinnati and you had a good time, let's give them a big round of applause for the hospitality that was shown us last year. *(Applause)*

James, if you would like to say anything? Because we put some real curve balls on him. Not only did he have one, but he had two presidential candidates that came to the city, and they did it superbly. James, if you would like to address.

DELEGATE MORRIS (OH): Thank you very much. All that I want to say is I want to say a special thank you to all my chairmen that served on my committees, all the many volunteers that helped, and a special thank you to the City of Cincinnati, the police department and the fire department. They were the most friendliest people and they were there to help you anytime you needed help. Again, we really appreciated everybody coming to Cincinnati, and we're going to have another convention one of these years in Cincinnati or Cleveland, so you will have to come back again. Thank you very much. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: America is blessed to have so many amazing and dedicated police officers and firefighters. These are the men and women who are willing to sacrifice their lives to keep us safe. Their split-second decisions can mean life or death and often invite intense scrutiny. One statement that every American should agree with is this: Police officer lives matter! *(Cheers and applause)*

Our 2017 Law Enforcement Officer of the Year has been a member of the Michigan State Police for 17 years and currently serves at the state's Tri-City Post. As an
accomplished investigator, his work led to the discovery of key evidence in a credit card fraud and sex trafficking operation. He was a tireless fundraiser to help the father of a fellow trooper who lost all of his possessions in a house fire. He coordinated his district's participation in a Fallen Trooper Memorial and volunteers at Camp Quality, a recreational escape for children with cancer. His leadership abilities were demonstrated once again in his organization of a Memorial Basketball Tournament for a fallen trooper, and he has recognized the Gladwin Little League organization for their support of a fallen officer. Ladies and gentlemen, please give a warm round of applause to our Law Enforcement Officer of the Year, Trooper Joseph Rowley. (Applause)

ANNOUNCER: This is to certify that The American Legion has bestowed the title of National Law Enforcement Officer of the Year upon Joseph Rowley for outstanding selfless service over and above normal duties through heroic acts, community service, and professional achievement, thereby exemplifying the meaning of the phrase "America's Finest." You reflect great credit upon yourself, Michigan State Police Tri-City Post, and law enforcement officers everywhere.

Presentation: 2017 National Law Enforcement Officer of the Year
Joseph Rowley, Michigan State Police, Tri-City Post, Freeland, Michigan

Thank you, commander, and thank you for the personal invite to the banquet last night. We had a wonderful time, and this has been an honor. Thank you to all Legion members. There's a lot here. I had no idea what The American Legion was all about until this award started back in Michigan. Special shout-out to my Michigan folks back there. (Cheers)

So many people to thank. But I'd like to start with my parents who taught me about work ethic, about morals, values, things like that that ultimately led me into this career. They also took me to a rock church, a stone church every Sunday morning, quite often kicking and screaming. That's where I met my Lord, my Savior, and I know all good things come from Him. So I'm going to give all the glory of this award to Him today. (Applause)

I in no way want this national award to shadow the great work that's being done by thousands of officers across the state every day. So many do exactly what I do, and so much more, for their communities. I was just fortunate enough to have a sergeant from my post, Jim Lang, put a nice write-up together, submit it to my Michigan folks, and several months later we are.

There's one accomplishment in that write-up, though, that is missed. I have a beautiful young lady here somewhere Face-Timing this or Facebook-Living. There she is. This next part is directed to my son, Javen. He's 15 years old. He's in driver's training today. He couldn't be here. He's got football all week, and his first game is Thursday night. But I consider him my greatest accomplishment. He is truly the reason I get out of bed every day, the reason I go to work, try to do the right thing so he hopefully learns from that. I can't wait to see what you're going to do with the world, buddy, and can't wait to see you Thursday night at the football game. We will be back for it. (Applause)

I am so grateful for everybody here, the way you have made me feel welcomed as a police officer. As you know, this world we live in today isn't always as welcoming to law enforcement, and you have truly made us feel like guests, appreciated. I don't believe I'm deserving of that from you folks because of your service, not just past service, but currently what you are doing for our veterans, their families. I had no idea what the Legion was all about until this happened, other than my nephew playing Legion ball. Now that I'm aware, I'm a fan. I'm a big fan. I'm a huge supporter. I cannot say thank you enough. Again, this is very flattering, very humbling. Thank you. (Applause)

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: Trooper Rowley is a member of the Sons of The American Legion. (Applause)
When I spoke to him earlier, I told him that regardless of what people say around certain parts of the United States of America, The American Legion believes and appreciates what our law enforcement folks do for us 24/7, 365. The American Legion is standing beside them. (Applause)

Our first responders are never off duty. On April 20, 2016, our Firefighter of the Year was driving home from a funeral of a fallen firefighter. On the road, he witnessed a vehicle fire. Inside he discovered an unresponsive female. Her doors were locked. With the help of two other bystanders, he attempted entry as the fire was getting more serious. While attempting entry, the victim inadvertently stepped on the gas pedal, and the vehicle drove down a slope off the shoulder of the road. The driver's side of the burning vehicle was now inaccessible. Using a construction tool to break a window, our award winner reached over the passenger side and lifted the driver from the vehicle. Shortly afterwards, the vehicle was fully engulfed, but due to the firefighter's actions, the victim was successfully transported to a hospital for treatment. And, yes, firefighters lives matter also. Please welcome a 21-year member of the Prince George's County Maryland Fire and Emergency Medical Services Department and our 2017 American Legion Firefighter of the Year, Assistant Fire Chief Darren O. Ware. (Applause)

ANNOUNCER: This is to certify that The American Legion has bestowed the title of National Firefighter of the Year upon Darren O. Ware for outstanding selfless service over and above normal duties through community service and professional achievement, thereby exemplifying the meaning of the phrase "America's Bravest." You reflect great credit upon yourself, Prince George's Fire/EMS Department, and firefighters everywhere.

Presentation: 2017 National Firefighter of the Year
Darren O. Ware, Prince George's Fire/EMS Department, Waldorf, Maryland

Good morning, and thank you. I'd first like to thank the national commander, The American Legion, the Maryland delegation, and also a special thanks to Mr. Gessner. Throughout this process he has been my point of contact, and he has been nothing short of amazing. (Applause)

I'm honored and humbled to receive this award. As I reflect back on this award, I reflect back on my life up to this point. I would first just like to take a minute to acknowledge my parents. Unfortunately they could not be here today, but I would like to thank them for instilling the values in me that have helped me in my life up to this point. (Applause)

The next thing is I have my son and my daughter in the audience. My son who now has a family of his own, but he took time away from his work to come here to support me. And my daughter, she took time away from college to be here. So I would like to thank them. (Applause)

And before I move on, I would just like to say: They make me the true definition of a proud father. (Applause)

Out of all the thank yous, I have to save my most important thank you for last, and that's to my wife, Roxanna. She has been with me for the last 25 years, starting during my time in the military. She's been nothing short of amazing. I could not have survived without her. Even sometimes I think about what I would have done without her, and I cannot come up with a good answer. So, once again, thank you, and I love you. (Applause)

As I accept this award, I think about all the good work that's being done in the fire service and public safety throughout the country. There's more good work being done than there are awards for the good work. So as I accept this award individually, I would also like to accept it on behalf of the entire fire service from the state of Maryland, throughout the country, and I just consider myself to be the representative of this prestigious award. (Applause.)
In closing, I would like to, once again, thank The American Legion. As a son of a veteran and as a brother of a veteran who just retired with twenty-two and a half years of service, I, once again, want to thank The American Legion, and I would like to say that with a prestigious award like this comes a lot of responsibility. So I will do my best to never bring any dishonor to this award and live up to the high standards of The American Legion and public safety. Thank you. (Applause)

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: It gives me great pleasure to introduce our next speaker. He was confirmed by the U.S. Senate as secretary of Veterans Affairs on February 13, 2017. Unanimously. How often do you ever hear of the Senate agreeing on anything? 100-0 votes. It tells you something. Prior to confirmation, our guest served as VA's under secretary for health, leading the nation's largest integrated health-care system with more than 1,700 sites, serving almost nine million veterans. A physician himself, he has held numerous chief executive roles at Morristown Medical Center, the Atlantic Health System Accountable Care Organization, and president and CEO of Beth Israel Medical Center in New York City. He has been named as one of the 50 most influential physician executives in the country by Modern Health Care. His commitment to bringing accountability to VA was proven when he supported legislation that was signed by President Trump earlier this year. Please give a warm American Legion Family welcome to Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. David J. Shulkin. (Applause)

Address: Hon. David J. Shulkin
Secretary, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Well, thank you. It's great to see you all, and thank you for that very warm introduction. But I know I'm just the warm-up act for my boss. I know we're all excited. It's a great day, and I'm so glad that you'll have a chance to hear directly from him. I want to thank all of you for your service to the nation and also thank you for your service to your fellow veterans and to families. The American Legion just does fantastic work.

You should feel so proud of your leadership. Your national commander, Charles Schmidt, of course, you know how great he is. You have great leadership in Verna Jones and Lou Celli and Dan Wheeler. It's just an amazing organization, and I love working with The American Legion.

What I always like to do is I like to start with our mission, because really that's why I'm here and that's why the people in VA are here, and I know you share this goal as well. But as President Lincoln said, we really have an obligation as a country to do right by those who have stood up to serve our country. We take this mission very seriously.

We couldn't do this without our veteran service organizations. The American Legion has just been such a terrific partner in everything that we do. This year we've had five pieces of major legislation. Of course, the fifth is going to be witnessed by all of you in about an hour as the president signs that piece of legislation on appeals modernization. But thanks to The American Legion and our other veteran service organizations, we've been able to get things done that haven't been done in a long time. The GI Bill which we did last week, the Accountability Act, the Choice legislation, and just so many important things. So we're really excited and want to thank all of you for being there every step along the way to support us.

One of the first things that I did as secretary was to come out and to talk about what the problems are in the VA. I think everybody knows the VA has gone through some difficult times in the past couple years. If you don't talk about the problems, I don't know how you can begin to start finding solutions and how you can actually ask people for help to help you find those solutions.

So I went to the White House from the White House briefing room and gave a State of the VA, and in the State of the VA I talked about 13 areas that if we don't address the
problems and we don't begin to fix these types of issues, that we're not really going to have the type of VA that we all know and believe needs to be there for our veterans.

So I'm not going to go through all these 13 areas, but I want you to understand that this is our strategy. When there are problems, we're going to talk about them and we're going to keep talking about them until we find solutions and to work together to do that. I do believe that we are moving in the right direction in the VA. While we have a lot of work to do and there are some serious problems that we have to address, we are making progress.

We're scheduling more appointments now than ever before at any point in time in the VA history. We've seen over a 40 percent increase in the amount of veterans that we're able to get out into the community to be able to make sure that they're not waiting for their care. Our wait times have been reduced significantly. I'll talk a little bit more about that.

We've seen improvement in the quality of care. Eighty-two percent of our VAs made significant improvements in quality from this time to when we saw that a year ago. When we asked veterans whether we're doing better, they're actually saying that we're doing better and they're beginning to trust us much more than just even a few years ago. If you ask veterans directly and you don't go through all these formal surveys, but you actually just see what people are saying, we're seeing some evidence that people are saying that we're doing a better job. Here on Yelp, which, as you know, veterans go right online and rate their experience. You can see that veterans rate their experience in VA hospitals actually higher than patients rate their experience in the private sector. While we have a long way to go till we're going to be satisfied, this is an indication that we're doing some things better and that we're moving in the right direction.

What I'd like to do in a very brief period of time is talk to you about the five priorities that I have to really transform the VA, to get it to be the type of organization that we all know that it can be. These are the five things that I believe we have to focus on to get us there. So I'm going to take you through it.

The very first is to give you, veterans, greater choice in your decision-making. I think that's fundamentally important. It's our primary strategy on how we're going to make the VA a better place, by making it more competitive. When people want to get services from you, that makes you perform better and it makes you stay on top of your game.

So our major legislative requirement going forward that we're going to work on this fall is to get the Choice Program working in a way that works better for you, takes out the red tape, takes out the complexity, and changes it from a system based on administrative roles to a system that functions in a clinical way, the way health systems should function. So that will give veterans greater choice over their care. We're going to eliminate the 40-mile, 30-day requirement. That just doesn't make sense for people who want to get health care. (Applause)

We're going to add a new benefit for walk-in clinics so that people who live a distance away from the VAs don't have to drive 50 miles or a hundred miles to get a flu shot or a chest x-ray or a lab test. (Applause)

So this is all about giving veterans more choice in their decision-making and making the VA work better for them by working with a stronger VA and with community partners.

The second of our priorities is to really modernize the VA. For too long I think we've neglected modernizing the VA. You're going to see a number of decisions that I'm going to be announcing to modernize this system because I believe veterans deserve the very best that this country can offer.

The first of those decisions that you may have seen is I've announced that we're going to be replacing our information technology system, our electronic medical record, with the same system that the Department of Defense uses. (Applause)

This is a commercial, top-notch, off-the-shelf system. It just makes sense. We know where all of our customers are going to come from, one place, the Department of Defense. Why should we lose all the information that we have on veterans when they come over to the VA? So we're working hard to get that implemented and working with Congress to get the funds appropriated.
We also are going to be updating our facilities. Too many of our facilities are getting old and in disrepair. So I've announced that we're going to be disposing of 1,100 facilities that are vacant or underutilized and reinvesting those resources that we're spending back into facilities that veterans are being cared for in right now. That will allow us to rebuild and to modernize our VA. If you take a look at some of our facilities, we actually have over 400 facilities from the Civil War and the Revolutionary War. These are old buildings. On the other hand, we have some of the best facilities in the country. This is our Palo Alto VA, all single rooms, places where families can stay with the veterans, really beautiful. I want all of our facilities to be able to look like that. So we're now heading in that direction.

(Applause)

The third of our priorities is to improve the timeliness of our services. We all know about the wait-time crisis that happened in Phoenix in 2014. That can never happen again. We're working hard to make sure no veteran with an urgent clinical need ever has to wait for care, and we are improving our wait times. We're going to talk about that.

We have to also improve our timeliness of appeals. You're going to see that today when the president signs this bill. This is legislation that was last updated in the 1930s. If we don't fix this, and that's why the president's going to sign this today, we won't be able to get faster decisions to veterans on their appeals. We just have to do that, and we have to do better. And our disability claims, I'm going to talk about how we have to do better on our timeliness of disability decisions as well.

So on our wait times, what you may now know is that the VA is the only health system in the country that publishes its wait times in a public way for everyone to see. So if you want to see what your wait time is at your local VA, it's available on our website. By doing that, we're showing people where our problems are, where we fix the problems, and how we're going to continue to make progress because we update it every week. We're focused on this and we're going to continue to share our results as we make progress with you and the areas where we continue to struggle.

So this is an example of how you can put in your ZIP code, what type of medical care you're looking to get, and you can see your wait time for new appointments and for return appointments. We've also worked hard to get same-day services in every one of our 168 major VA medical centers for primary care and mental health. So if you have an urgent clinical need, you will get it taken care of that day in our medical centers. We're going to be working to expand to every one of our outpatient centers by the end of this year as well.

In areas that we don't have enough health-care professionals or the expertise, we are using telehealth. No other system in the country uses telehealth the way that the VA does. Over 700,000 veterans last year got their care through telehealth. You'll see here the president and I demonstrating new capabilities that we're introducing to allow telehealth to be available to you on your home computers, on your mobile phones. We're continuing to push technology in a way that we believe will serve our veterans better and make care more accessible.

I talked about disability claims. You may remember a couple years ago we had 611,000 disability claims that were waiting greater than 125 days for decisions. Today we're at about 90,000, and that's still too many. Next month, this September, we're going to be announcing a new way of using our disability system, called the Decision Ready Claim, to get veterans a decision in 30 days or less. (Applause)

This is part of our commitment to you to improve the timeliness of our services. And there we have our Decision Ready Claims. And appeals modernization, you can see over 400,000 appeals pending. Today it will take a veteran, if they filed a claim, six years to get a decision. That's unacceptable. That's why you're going to see the president sign this new law today so we can fix that as well. (Applause)

Now, the fourth of the priorities is to actually focus our resources on things that matter more for veterans, to really double down on the things that you rely on that make a difference. So when we talk about strengthening foundational services, there are things that if there wasn't a VA, they just don't exist in the private sector in the way that they need to
for veterans. We're talking about care for PTSD, for traumatic brain injury, for blind rehabilitation, for spinal cord injury, for prosthetics and orthotics, for military exposures, environmental exposures, and the list goes on about things that we know really make a difference the VA has the expertise in that doesn't exist in the private sector. So we're actually moving more money into those programs. We're doubling down on those strategies to really build world-class services across the country for things that matter to our veterans.

You're also going to see we're going to work much closer with the Department of Defense. I talked about the IT systems coming together. Secretary Mattis and I have a commitment to really making sure that we're using our resources together in a way that makes sense for taxpayers, veterans, and active servicemembers. We have a lot more opportunity to work closer together. So stay tuned for some announcements that we're going to make about that. And, last, we have to focus our resources by making sure we have the right people in the VA that need to be in the VA. (Applause)

What I wanted to talk about was something that we've been hearing from all of you: Making difficult decisions about who gets to work in the VA is tough. So as it says here: Dealing with issues, employee issues can be difficult, but not dealing with them can be worse. And we have experienced that over the past number of years. So we know longer are going to tolerate employees that don't share the values that we all share, who believe it's an honor and privilege to be able to serve our veterans. We're moving those people out of the VA because they've lost their right to be able to work in the VA. (Applause)

Now, once again, we're committed to sharing our progress. We're the only federal agency that publishes their disciplinary actions, who they fired, on a public website that we update every week. Since January 20 of this year when the president took over, we have removed over 500 employees from the VA who have lost the right to be able to serve our veterans. (Applause)

We will continue to make sure that everybody understands that we're taking this very seriously and that we're also looking to hire the very best that are out there to be able to come into the VA and to be able to serve the country.

The fifth and final priority, and the only priority that I talk about that's a clinical priority, is to reduce veteran suicides. This is really a public health crisis. Now, this is a crisis across America. Suicides in the general population have been increasing at alarming rates, but among veterans, even more concerning and even more serious. So you can see that while civilian suicides have gone up in the last 14 years by 23.9 percent, among veterans it's gone up 31 percent. You can see at the bottom line that for females, that this has really gone up even more considerably. So that's of significant concern.

Now, what we can see here is, is that if veterans are connected with the right care and getting help, that it makes a difference. It saves lives. For veterans that have been seen in the VA or getting their care in the VA, while suicide rates have gone up by 5.4 percent over the last 14 years, for veterans that did not get their care in the VA, it went up 38.4 percent. Take a look for women veterans, the very bottom line. Women that were getting care in the VA actually saw a decrease of 2.4 percent over the last 14 years, but women that were not getting care in the VA, up 81.6 percent.

So we recognize that not everybody's going to be able to get care in the VA, so we're working with community partners to make sure they understand how we can help get connected with veterans and the community. But for all of you who are out there and if you see somebody who's isolated and needs help, please know that's why we're here. We want you to connect them with the VA. This is really going to make a difference and save lives.

We've developed new tools called predictive modeling where we can actually predict those that may be at highest risk. We're not waiting until people take action. We're actually contacting them ahead of time and bringing them in and seeing if there's a way that we can help. This is a tool that no one else in the country is using but VA, and we are working with the Department of Defense.

Our Veterans Crisis Line. Earlier this year, so many people were calling, we weren't getting the 30 percent of the calls. That's unacceptable. We've hired 280 new Veterans
Crisis Line responders. We've opened up new centers across the country. Today, less than 1 percent of people aren't getting through. So the Veterans Crisis Line, which is open 365 days a year, 24 hours a day, is available. (Applause)

One of the first decisions I made knowing that veteran suicide reduction is a priority is I used my authority to make sure that those that were other than honorably discharged, not dishonorably discharged, other than honorably discharged, as you know, many times for behavioral health issues, aren't out there without a place to get care. Because we see a very high suicide rate among those that are other than honorably. I am pleased to say that today the VA will provide mental health services for those that are other than honorably discharged. We are not going to leave any of these veterans without care. (Applause)

The other area that we're making great progress is reducing veteran homelessness, a 46 percent reduction over the last five years. We still have much more work to do. But we're not going to stop working at this till we make sure that there are no homeless veterans. We're working with communities across the country and, one by one, beginning to eliminate veterans homelessness from communities.

We're also working to make sure that when people leave the service that they get jobs and they get good jobs. Now I'm pleased to say that while veteran unemployment five years ago was about 11 percent, today it's 3.6 percent, lower than the general population. The reason is employers know that the very best employees they can get are veterans. These are the leaders in the community. They make great employees. They're really extremely valuable to our employers. So we have a commitment now to hire a million veterans from our employers. We've just reached above the 600,000 mark. We'll continue to work at this to make sure every veteran has a great job. (Applause)

Finally, as we get ready to hear from our president, I can't tell you how grateful I am for his commitment to making sure that we can fulfill our mission. The president's budget that he proposed this year is a strong budget for VA. It provides us with extra resources to strengthen the VA. It provides us with extra funding for mental health services, for women's health services, and the areas that we need. So we have to make sure that Congress supports this budget because it allows us to fulfill our mission.

For those who think that just because we want to work more with the community, that that's privatization, absolutely not. It is essential that we have a strong VA. It is essential to our veterans. It is essential to the country. It is essential to national security. When somebody raises their hand to go and defend their country, they have to know that when they come back, somebody is there who has their back for the rest of their lives. That is our mission, and that's our commitment. We will never let this system be privatized. (Applause)

So I just want to end by thanking you again. We couldn't be doing our work without The American Legion, without all of our veteran service organization partners. We're working together very aligned with the same goals. We're making progress. We continue to push ahead to make the progress that all of you want to see happen, and I thank you for everything you're doing. I appreciate the time with you today. Thank you very much. (Applause)

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: I would now like to call our national vice commanders to join me onstage for our next presentation, which will be given by Bron Mogenis, trustee for the Chapel of the Four Chaplains Foundation; Foundation Chairman of the Board Louis Cavaliere; and Foundation Executive Director Christine Beady.

ANNOUNCER: The Legion of Honor Bronze Medallion from the Chapel of Four Chaplains is granted for extraordinary contributions to the well-being of others at the national or world level, to world peace, or to interfaith or inter-ethnic understanding. The Medallions are being presented by Bron Mogenis, Trustee, Chapel of the Four Chaplains; Foundation Board Chairman Louis Cavaliere and Foundation Executive Director Christine Beady. They are being awarded to National Commander Charles E. Schmidt,
Presentation: Chapel of Four Chaplains Legion of Honor Bronze Medallion
Bron Mogenis, Trustee, Four Chaplains Memorial Foundation
Louis Cavallere, Chairman of the Board, Four Chaplains Memorial Foundation
Christine Beady, Executive Director, Four Chaplains Memorial Foundation

It is indeed an honor to stand here and talk about service people who honored this country, who have honored this country for 20, 30 years and then thereafter joined The American Legion. And they continue to provide that kind of patriotism and leadership that our country needs.

I was extremely interested in reading the background of the candidates, and we have six of them back there, and finding out just how much they do. What we were looking for is not just how busy he or she has been, but what are some of the things that the candidates have done that are selfless. In other words, where the duty did not require that. But they were selfless in sacrificing more time. Believe me or not, our veterans can use a lot of help. There's a lot of trauma that's going on, lack of employment, elderly, sickness, you name it, and so forth. So to enrich that was sort of difficult.

I guess the heroic act that centers in on my presentation, my honor, is on January 23, 1943, the USAT Dorchester, an old coastal steamer quickly thrust into military service, left New York harbor bound for Greenland. The weather was terrible. Everybody suffered from it. And what made this unusual, the trip, is that on February 3, 1943, the USAT Dorchester was hit with a torpedo in a torpedo alley. On February 2, the captain warned that he had some interceptor communications, for the men to go to sleep in their clothing with life jackets close by. But 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 3, 1943, where an enemy submarine fired a torpedo into the Dorchester flank. The missile exploded in a boiler room, destroying electric supply, releasing suffocating clouds of steam and ammonia. Many onboard died.

What was even more interesting for me, that I would like to convey to you, I actually met at one of the functions that the Chapel of Four Chaplains, a nonprofit organization located in Philadelphia, they actually were trying to remember bit by bit. And so they produced a person who was from that survivors. When he started to talk about how horrible it was to come up at midnight, freezing temperature, where there were no life jackets available, the people did not give up their life jackets, did not jump overboard to save themselves. They were afraid. This is where the four chaplains came in.

They encouraged people, they helped people, and they gave the lifejackets out to the men that were in fear of their lives. However, they ran out of lifejackets. So the four chaplains gave away their own lifejackets to the young men who didn't have any. The four men of God had given away their only means of saving themselves in order to save others. 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. That was the only heroic act. But it will still be remembered for many lifetimes.

Today, many years later, the Chapel of Four Chaplains serves the memory of these brave men. They don't want to discourage this kind of patriotism, this kind of love for your country, love for your fellow man.

The people that we selected for the award, I'd like to name, our first candidate was National Commander Schmidt, National Vice Commander Fae Casper, National Vice Commander Paul Martel, National Vice Commander Douglas Boldt, National Vice Commander Paul Espinoza, National Vice Commander Vincent James Trollo. We wouldn't mind giving them a standing ovation. (Standing applause)
Thank you. I'd like to also take this opportunity to introduce one of the leaders of the Chapel of Four Chaplains, Managing Director Christine Beady wants to say hello and goodbye.

CHRISTINE BEADY: Good morning, everyone. I want to say thank you to each and every one of you who continue to support us throughout the year at the chapel. We invite all of you, as always, to come visit us in Philadelphia at the Navy yard. Congratulations to all of our award recipients. And especially just a sincere and heartfelt thank you to Mr. Bron Mogenis. He's a true, dedicated member of our team, and we could not be here and present today without his dedication. And to also the two who stand beside him every day, Ms. Julie Mogenis and Mrs. Christa Mogenis, his wife and daughter who are also here today.

We just want to say thank you to all of you. And again it's an honor and always a privilege to be here, to speak with you. When you come to visit us in Philadelphia, know that we're there for you, we're always open for you. Today I'm happy to say we have 172 Tin Can Sailors visiting the chapel today. So Michelle is in the office presenting the programs that we do and what we're participating in and all the things that we are doing in Philadelphia.

But lastly I want to say the four legs that we stand upon every day to help our veterans, to help our communities, to help our country, is that our Legion of Honor program, which we present today, which is an international program. So please look to your departments, work with the Legion. Let's get those who go above and beyond their day to day, those ordinary people who do extraordinary things, honored and recognized for all the great work that they do.

Our scholarship program, students in fifth through 12th grade, applications come out in October. They're due in March. Get those applications in. Let's get those students awarded for their community service, for their going above and beyond, what they need to do. Let's grow that next generation as much as we possibly can.

For our Emergency Chaplain Corps that's rebuilding and growing, we are ready, willing and able to be there to support our veterans, to support our programs, to support our first responders, to stand beside them and be able to support everything that's going on within the country.

And lastly, and most importantly, our veterans outreach. It has been a huge piece of what we're doing over the last few years, and we are now called upon in multiple ways to have first responders respond, chaplains attend different events, being there and being able to help all of our veterans go where they need to go. Help them in the situations that they need to do. And the things that they need to get, being able to direct them in the right proper ways. So, again, it's truly an honor to be here. Thank you all very much. We look forward to next year. God bless America, and thank you all for your service. (Applause)

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: USAA was founded by veterans and holds strong to its mission of facilitating the financial security of military families and its core values of service, loyalty, honesty and integrity. Before joining USAA, our next guest served in the United States Navy for 30 years, retiring as a force master chief. After leaving the Navy, he worked as a veterans employment representative right here in Nevada. He joined the USAA team in 2007 and is a member of The American Legion Department of Texas. Please welcome Greg Pratt, relationship director of USAA. (Applause)

...At this time, National Vice Commander Espinoza assumed the Chair.

Address: Greg Pratt
Relationship Director for Sea Services, USAA Military Affairs

Good morning, Legionnaires. How are we? I didn't expect such a large crowd, but I understand there's a pretty big speaker coming after me, so that's why everybody's here, right? Hey, good morning. It is great to be in Reno with you, and it's been great to be here
all week. I'm honored to be with you because of what you do and continue to do for our veterans, their families and the communities. It really is very humbling.

Before I really roll into what I want to talk about for just a couple of minutes today, I do want to give a couple of shout-outs. I want to shout out to the state of Pennsylvania, because that's where I got my beginning, and I want to shout out to Texas, because that's where I hang my hat now. I'd also like to send my thoughts and prayers out to the families and the sailors of the USS John McCain as I know we continue to search for some of the missing from the USS John McCain.

I'm very proud of being a member of The American Legion, because it's their members and those of you from the Vietnam and Korea era which inspired me to join the Navy, as I watched you do what you did and serve, wearing the cloth of our nation in the '60s and '70s. That inspired me. In the mid '70s I was off to the Navy. As you all know, in the mid '70s and '80s our Navy went through a rebuilding phase, and we started the all-volunteer force. I was mentored by some great leaders, and early on helped me become a pretty good sailor. I consider myself very lucky that this kid from northwest Pennsylvania had the opportunity to serve a 30-year career, and that was because of those folks that mentored me along the way. As I call them, the best of the best, who helped me, and I learned from their experiences.

Learning from others is what I'd like to talk about briefly this morning, because it's those mentors, those leaders that influenced me and shaped me into who I am today. Dedication is something that I learned early on from those mentors and those other leaders. If you look up the word "dedication" in Webster, it says, "A feeling of strong support or loyalty to someone or something. The quality or state of being dedicated to a person, group or cause." I would tell you, you could replace those words and simply put in "American Legion," because that's what you all do. (Applause)

As I learned early on in my Navy career, from my first chief, and for my Navy brethren here, you'll probably really understand a little bit of this more, but everybody will understand this. I learned from my first chief, and I was on my first deployment, 1976, in the middle of the Indian Ocean, 0530, they get us up. I was a deckhand. Told us to go topside, get our swabs and swab the deck. Well, I asked the chief, "Why the heck are we up here at 5:30, it's pitch dark outside, swabbing the deck?" Of course, you know I'm lucky to be here today because I'm lucky he didn't tear my head off. Right.

But you know, the chief didn't tear my head off. He stood there for the next 45 minutes and explained to me the importance of my job. He talked about dedication. He talked about mission. He talked about leadership. He talked about each one of us playing a role and no matter what our job was that day or at that moment, our role was important to that mission. He said it was dedication, dedication to self, dedication to others, dedication to mission. I'll remember that chief and what he told me forever. I'll remember it today as well as I remembered it the day I asked that question.

Like you, I was dedicated to my service and those I served alongside and their families. After transitioning from the Navy, I wanted to continue to dedicate my efforts to those currently serving veterans and their families. Which brings me back to you. You wore the uniform, the cloth of our nation. You continue to support those in uniform through your continued dedication, efforts and time that you give to veterans, their families and the community.

A quote I recently read from an unknown person: "Dedication is not what others expect of you, it is what you give to others." That is what you do through your many Legion programs, like Legion Baseball, Boys State, Boys Nation, Operation Comfort Warriors, Legion Riders, you provide a future for those that have served, those that are serving, those who will serve in the communities that they live in. When I look into the eyes of a young servicemember, I see dedication, desire, and often I know one of the Legionnaires or one of the programs is something that has put that desire in those young folks.

I have the opportunity to see some of this dedication from sailors in action many years ago, but really it's one of those things that we all remember aboard the USS Cole back in
October of 2000. They were put into a situation from an attack on their ship that required them to save their ship and their shipmates. It was their training and commitment to the ship and shipmates that helped them save that. But it was the dedication through their adverse conditions and their determination and dedication to help them persevere in that environment.

The USS Cole is only one story of dedication to each other that we could all talk about today. It's the servicemembers. It's what you do. It's what servicemembers do, whether it be on the battlefield, whether it be here at home, helping someone adjust, reacquaint or even transition from the military. Servicemembers like you are dedicated and do so many things greater than themselves. It is you, they are, and, again, that's you in that picture. You support them through your many legislative benefits. We've heard about so many of the great accomplishments this week and they continue through the family support programs, through scholarships and on.

When I look at The American Legion, I look at a group that had the dedication and the commitment to wear the uniform and continue to serve, dedication of The Legion to our military, their veterans and their families. I see many parallels in The American Legion and what USAA works to do every day, taking care of our veterans, those serving and their families. I'm proud that I have the opportunity to work for a company that knows what it means to serve. I'm proud to be a member of The American Legion who continues to serve those who serve or have served. It's you making a difference through the dedication that makes that all possible. (Applause)

Before I close, I want to remind everybody of one thing, and we've seen many of you this week. If you haven't signed up and got your post entered in the drawing that will happen in November for the opportunity for your post to win $20,000, make sure you do that.

In closing, I really want to simply say this: I want to offer a quote from Pat Tillman, football star who joined the Army Rangers after 9/11 and was killed in action in Afghanistan. The quote is: "A passion for life is contagious and uplifting. Passion cuts both ways. I want to create passion in my life and with those I care for. I want to feel, experience, and live every emotion. I will suffer through the bad for the heights of the good."

Thank you all for your dedication and your passion and your vision to support those that are serving, those that have served, those that will serve and their families. Thank you for having me here today. I see us being able to make the difference, making things work together for those that are serving, have served and their families. You make a difference. Thank you for your patriotism. May God bless those serving in uniform, our veterans, their families, and may God bless the United States of America. Thank you. (Applause)

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER ESPINOZA: Thank you for your efforts. We want to give you a national commander's medallion, from The American Legion and thank you for everything that you've done.

As horrendous as World War I was, it gave birth to the greatest veterans organization that the world has ever known. Our next guest is dedicated to reminding us about the significance of what was at the time thought to be "the war to end all wars." A 20-year-veteran of the U.S. Army, he holds a bachelor's degree in history from the University of Rhode Island and a master's in European studies from Cornell University. He is a member of The American Legion Post 18 in Essex, Connecticut. Please give a warm welcome to John D. Monahan of the U.S. World War One Centennial Commission. (Applause)

Address: John D. Monahan
Commissioner, United States World War One Centennial Commission

Good morning. Thank you, Vice Commander Espinoza, distinguished guests, friends, comrades. The cataclysm of the First World War changed literally everything. Empires
fell. The social and moral fabric of Europe was torn asunder. War was systematized, mechanized, resulting in death and destruction on an unprecedented scale. America entered the war on the world stage owing to this war. The Great War is the hinge literally upon which the 20th century turns, and it is in fact the American century that it became the 20th century.

The United States World War One Centennial Commission was formed in 2013 and entrusted with three missions: To foster education about the conflict; to commemorate its important anniversaries; and to honor the contributions of those who served in the Great War. Honorary commission co-chairs include all of the living past presidents of the United States. The honorary commission co-chairs also include three former secretaries of state and two former secretaries of defense, including our awardee this morning, Dr. Gates. The Centennial Commission itself is comprised of 12 commissioners appointed by the President, Congress and The American Legion and the VFW. The commission is also guided by a diplomatic advisory board of distinguished former diplomats and as well as historical advisory board of eminent historians. The commission is also privileged to have a number of special advisors, many of whom I’m sure are known to you, including General McCaffrey, Admiral Mullen, Gary Sinise, General Gordon Sullivan, and former senator from Virginia, John Warner.

The commission has partnered with a number of organizations, including The American Legion, which is a main sponsor, in honoring the service of the Great War generation. As you can see these are a number of substantial organizations that are assisting us in this effort. We have international partners as well as you might imagine, including the coordinating organizations in France, Belgium, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands, all of which are places, I might add, where the American Battle Monuments Commission also maintains U.S. cemeteries.

So who served in the Great War? We see a scene from 100 years ago. But these scenes and these faces are reminiscent of those that stare out at us from the tintypes that you see of the Civil War. The images from our own time in service, in fact, those faces are the same ones we see in photos from Iraq and from Afghanistan. There is a brotherhood of warriors that transcends service, that transcends, in fact, time itself. The doughboys and the bluejackets of the Great War are our spiritual brothers and sisters. For this reason, we should be interested and concerned about World War I. 4.7 million Americans served in World War I. 200,000 came home with physical and psychological wounds. 116,000 Americans did not come home at all. These men and women deserve to be commemorated. But just as importantly, by remembering those who served in the Great War 100 years later, we assure that those serving today, that they, too, will be remembered in 100 years’ time.

Our education mission is to inform Americans of all ages about the key World War I facts and concepts, to teach American students meaningful lessons about World War I’s history and its impact, and to inspire Americans to individually pursue deeper engagement and participation in the commemoration efforts. In fact, The American Legion, I’m proud to say, has sponsored a teacher-training initiative, which will in this next academic year provide educational grant that is administered by Gilder Lehrman Institute. This will be a train-the-teacher arrangement whereby we’ll equip teachers in schools nationwide with resources and materials necessary to conduct classroom studies on World War I, its conduct, and its lasting impact.

We commemorate World War I, of course, we started this on April 6 of this year with our ceremony called "In Sacrifice for Liberty and Peace." This was held at the World War I Memorial in Kansas City, and it was an amazing, lovely ceremony. We were fortunate to have Commander Schmidt with us that day, as well as Past National Commander Rehbein, who was chairing our own 100th anniversary commemoration committee.

We have a very robust state outreach program, which has grown into literally a national movement. We currently have 42 states which have active centennial commissions. It is their network that we seek to build upon. I’m also proud to say The American Legion has, in fact, been very helpful in establishing this network nationwide.
In honoring the veterans of World War I, we have established a program of matching grants called 100 Cities/100 Memorials. The submissions, I can say from personal experience, are truly amazing. They are indicative that their community’s impulse to honor those who served is still alive. Many are deeply touching. I served on the selection committee myself, and I understand the efforts that have been involved. Many Legion posts and VFW posts, in fact the majority, were from Legion and VFW posts and multiple posts, in fact, cooperating on the same projects in certain cases. The submission period lasted from July 2016 to June 2017, and has focused on local World War I Memorials to awaken interest in the war. The 100 Cities/100 Memorials team is now working on a plan to extend the program potentially with the initial awards being announced September 13 and 14, and subsequent awards, if the program is extended with a further extended submission window. If that is in fact the case, that will be announced September 13-14.

We wish to honor the World War I doughboys and bluejackets by creating a memorial at Pershing Park in Washington, D.C. This location is not on a National Mall, but it is nearby. Pershing Park is approximately a block from the White House itself and about three blocks from the National Mall, directly on Pennsylvania Avenue. So it is a most prominent and worthy location, a fitting location for the memorial.

The main element of the memorial will be a monumental 65-foot, bronze bough relief wall with water cascading down the sides into a pool. Similar in fashion to the Vietnam wall, a visitor will be able to literally go up to the memorial and touch it. The memorial itself will have a series of images centered on the recurring image of the soldier who leaves his family, answers the call to service and joins the nation’s march to war, experiences the violent chaos and passion of battle, suffers the aftermath and loss of that battle, and then, after reflecting on his accomplishments, marches forward into the great American century which is to be. In the first scene the soldier takes his helmet symbolically from his young daughter. In the last scene, he returns the helmet to her, marking a pass of the torch to the next generation, the generation which will come to be known as the Greatest Generation, but sadly would have to fight another war 20 years in the future.

The timeline for this memorial in Washington, D.C. is shown here. The key points at this point is that a design has been approved and all of the relevant approvals are in place from the various commissions and committees, and a groundbreaking is scheduled for this November 9 in Washington, D.C. We hope to dedicate the memorial itself the following year on November 11, 2018, which of course marks the centennial of the original Armistice Day.

Why is this of importance to The American Legion? The spirit of the doughboy, his courage, character, values and ideals was the spirit tempered in the crucible of combat which formed the values of The American Legion as expressed so eloquently by the founders in the preamble to our constitution. We Legionnaires stand on the shoulders of giants who were the founders, all of whom were World War I veterans.

Some of the people you see here I’m sure you recognize. Theodore Roosevelt, later Medal of Honor winner at D-Day, Franklin D’Olier, who later became president at Prudential Insurance. Bennett Clark, later senator. Thomas Miller, who we honored just the other day, buried here in Reno, who was president pro tem of the Paris Caucus and before the war had served as a Congressman from Delaware. George White, later Major General, first editor of our American Legion Magazine. Milton Foreman, past national commander 1921. William Donovan, Wild Bill, later chief of OSS, Medal of Honor winner. Of course, the OSS was the precursor of the CIA. Eric Fisher Wood, late brigadier general. Hamilton Fish of New York, later Congressman, who was literally the author of the preamble. We owe the doughboys and our founders a debt which we cannot fully repay, but we have it within our power, we have it within our power, to honor their service and their sacrifice.

I close with a short story. On June 1, 1918, the Indian Head Division was attached to the Sixth French Army, which was under heavy pressure from the Germans. Colonel Preston Brown, division chief of staff, reported to General Duchesne, the Army
commander, and he was somewhat hesitant to receive the orders. General DuChesne, south of the Paris-Metz Highway, he was directed to be astride the expected German main access of approach. DuChesne asked Colonel Brown, "Will they hold?" to which Brown replied, "General, these are American regulars. In 150 years, they have never been beaten. They will hold."

Fellow Legionnaires, we, too, are American regulars. In nearly 100 years we have never failed our mission. Our mission today is to ensure that a fitting memorial to the doughboys, to those who bequeathed us our beloved American Legion, is erected in our nation's capital. I ask for your help in achieving this. It must be done, and with your help and with the grace of God it shall be done. Thank you. (Applause)

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER ESPINOZA: Ladies and gentlemen, fellow Legionnaires, please direct your attention to the screens as we prepare for our next speaker.

... At this time, the delegation viewed a series of videos. (Applause)

...National Commander Schmidt resumed the Chair.

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: A graduate of the Wharton School of Finance and Commerce at the University of Pennsylvania, our next guest built a number of highly successful international real estate, hotel, sports, and entertainment businesses. On November 8, 2016, he was elected 45th president of the United States of America. (Applause)

The president and senior officials in the administration have since met The American Legion on numerous occasions, and on June 23, he signed the Department of Veterans Affairs Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act of 2017 into law. (Applause)

His administration has proposed a $54 billion increase in military spending and, consistent with American Legion resolutions, authorized construction of the Keystone XL Pipeline. The White House has also taken steps to reduce illegal immigration, and the president has publicly called for legally protecting the flag of our United States of America from desecration. (Applause)

My fellow Legionnaires, ladies and gentlemen, proud Americans, it is my honor to introduce the president of the United States, Donald J. Trump. (Cheers and applause)

Address: The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President of the United States of America

Thank you, Commander Schmidt, for that wonderful introduction and for your steadfast devotion to our country. I want to thank all of our distinguished guests with us today, including HUD secretary Ben Carson, VA Secretary David Shulkin, and former Secretary of Defense Bob Gates. Bob Gates has been so great. I tell you, he started off saying bad things about me, and then he said great things, and now I like him. Thank you, Bob. It's a great honor to be back here with all of my friends at The American Legion and your national convention. I want to thank Governor Sandoval for being here. Dean Heller is here someplace or will shortly be here. He caught the first flight out. So I want to thank Dean Heller, senator, for being here.

The American Legion embodies the spirit of patriotism; that is the true source of our strength and the best hope for our future. You love our country. You cherish our values and you definitely defend our great American flag. No doubt about that. (Cheers and applause)

Above all else, you believe in America, just like America believes in you. (Applause)

Today we are here to honor you for the sacrifices you have made to defend our nation and preserve our way of life. But we're also here for another reason. We are here to hold you up as an example of strength, courage, and resolve that our country will need to overcome the many challenges that we face. We are here to draw inspiration from you as we seek to renew the bonds of loyalty that bind us together as one people and one nation.
Those who wear the nation's uniform come from all different backgrounds and from every single walk of life. But they are all united by shared values and a shared sense of duty. They are all part of one team with only one mission in mind. Most importantly, they're all Americans, and they work together, they fight together, and they sacrifice together to defend our magnificent home. Thank you. (Applause)

Now our nation must follow that same work ethic, that same devotion to a greater cause, to achieve our country's full potential. Here with us today are veterans who have fought in every major military engagement dating all the way back to World War II. You've endured bitter winters, treacherous jungles, barren deserts, and stormy waters. You have left your families, charged into danger, faced down your enemies, and bore the scars and wounds of war. Each of you took an oath to support and defend the Constitution. With that oath, you pledged your honor and your very lives for our great nation. Every veteran here today is part of a long, unbroken chain of American heroes. We salute your service. The American Legion not only remembers history, you help keep history alive. (Applause)

You teach young Americans to have pride in our history so that they will have confidence in our future. History and culture, so important. For generations now, The American Legion has taught our young people the principles of Americanism. You emphasize the need to preserve the nation's cultural, moral, and patriotic values. You encourage the observation of patriotic holidays. You stress the need to enforce our laws, including our immigration laws. (Applause)

You teach the responsibilities of citizenship and the importance of the Pledge of Allegiance. (Applause)

True. So important. And you do it all, as your motto says, for God and country. (Cheers and applause)

That's why we're here today, for America and for God. But to fulfill our patriotic duties, we must take care of our great veterans. (Applause)

One year ago at this gathering, and I remember so many of you so well, I promised you that I would make it my priority to fix the broken VA and deliver our veterans the care they so richly deserve. (Applause)

And you see what's been happening. Now you have a true reformer in Secretary David Shulkin. He has done an incredible job. (Applause)

He's working night and day to implement the ten-point reform plan that I discussed with you last year. Already we have made incredible progress. We are publishing wait times online for every VA facility so you know what the wait is. We've delivered same-day emergency mental health services at every VA medical center. (Applause)

We've opened the promised White House VA Hotline. That's a big deal. That's a big deal. We've dramatically increased the number of veterans approved to see the doctor of their choice and signal legislation to continue that very important Choice Program that I spoke to you about last year, and I want to thank The American Legion for your help in getting this done. You have been so helpful. Thank you very much. (Applause)

Something that they've been trying to pass for 40 years, and we've passed, VA Accountability legislation. (Applause)

So if somebody that works at the VA is bad to the people of the VA, disrespectful, not treating our fellow patriots well, we look at them, and we say, "You're fired." That's it. (Cheers and applause)

That's it. They don't do a good job, they're out. We have great people at the VA, but we want people that do a great job. We weren't able to do that before. That was a hard piece of legislation to get passed. It's been worked on for so long. We got it done, so we're very proud of that.

Last week I also signed the Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act. That's a big thing. (Applause)

This legislation bears the name of one of the first members of the Legion, your past commander, a man who wrote the original draft of the first landmark GI Bill in 1944. (Applause)
Now under this legislation, veterans can use their GI benefits at any point in their lifetime. Some difference. And in just a few moments, right here on this stage, I will sign another historic bill that The American Legion helped us deliver, the Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act, and you all know what that means. (Applause)

No longer will veterans be kept waiting for years to get an answer to their appeals. They will receive timely updates, and they will get decisions much more quickly, in a fraction of the time. (Applause)

And The Legion, I have to say, pressed so hard for that legislation. So I want to thank you very much. I want to thank you. I want to thank you so much. You really helped. They have a lot of power, a lot of power. And they use it well. (Applause)

When I spoke to you last year, I also promised that we would build up our military, and that's exactly what we have done. I am proud to report that we have worked with Congress to achieve a dramatic increase in defense spending this year. We are committed to expanding and improving a state-of-the-art missile defense system to shoot down missiles in flight, and we're getting better and better and better at it. It's actually incredible what's taking place. And we will develop new surveillance and long-range strike capabilities to prevent our enemies from launching them in the first place. (Applause)

Thank you. In every foreign policy decision, we are making clear that we will always put the safety and security of our citizens first. That is why early this week I announced a new strategy in Afghanistan and South Asia. We will pursue an honorable and enduring outcome in Afghanistan, worthy of the tremendous sacrifice our troops have already made. We will give our men and women in uniform the tools they need and the trust they have earned to fight and to win. (Applause)

And we have made, as you have been reading and seeing, tremendous progress in the fight against terrorism. Just over a month ago in Iraq, Mosul was liberated from the barbaric rule of ISIS. We are stripping terrorists of their territory at a record clip of their funding, their networks, and the false allure of their ideology. And I will tell you, we're going to start working very hard on the Internet, because they're using the Internet at a level that they should not be allowed to use the Internet. They're recruiting from the Internet. We are going to work under my administration very hard so that doesn't happen. (Applause)

No longer are we using our military to build democracies. Instead, we're forming a coalition of nations that share the aim of stamping out extremism, defeating terrorism, and pursuing stability, prosperity, and peace. Through the generations, America has always prevailed, not by military might alone, but also by the strength of our spirit. We have, in this country today, such spirit. I see it when I meet the people backstage. They're so proud once again. I must say, much more proud than they were last year at this time. They are feeling very good about our country. (Applause)

Very, very good about our country. Because our people have always had that will to endure and to overcome. This is now the challenge of our times. We must ask ourselves who we are, what we stand for, and what together we can achieve. If American patriots could secure our independence, carve out a home in the wilderness and free millions from tyranny and oppression around the world, then that same spirit of strength, courage, and resolve can help us create a better future for our people today, a future like even our people have never had before in this great country. That's what we're aiming for. (Applause)

We don't have to be content with a dilapidated road system, with crumbling buildings or rusted-out factories. We can build gleaming new highways, state-of-the-art manufacturing, and modern works of wonder, and we can do it all with American workers and American iron, aluminum, and steel. We can do it ourselves. (Applause)

We do not have to accept the economic decay of once-thriving hubs of industry where they leave and they let all those jobs go and those companies move to other countries. We've stopped that flow, and companies are now coming back into the United States. I am so proud of that. (Applause)

We can bring new jobs to Pittsburgh and Detroit and Baltimore and help struggling communities thrive and dream and prosper. We do not need to limit the potential of our
children by trapping them in failing government schools. Every child should have the chance to explore their talents, pursue their passions, and know the joy of achieving their ambitions. We will never tolerate crime in our cities, bloodshed in our communities, or acts of hatred or terrorism against our citizens. We will not stand for it. (Applause)

We will always support our great law enforcement personnel. (Cheers and applause)

These are great people. Build bridges of trust and cooperation, and keep our families safe. It is time to heal the wounds that divide us and to seek a new unity based on the common values that unite us. We are one people with one home and one great flag. (Cheers and applause)

We are not defined by the color of our skin, the figure on our paycheck, or the party of our politics. We are defined by our shared humanity, by our citizenshipship in this magnificent nation, and by the love that fills our hearts. (Applause)

I know I speak for all of you when I say our hearts beat for America. Our souls fill with pride every time we hear the National Anthem. (Applause)

This is the spirit we need to overcome our challenges, to pursue our common destiny, and to achieve a brighter future for our people. We will win. Watch. We will win. (Applause)

This is the future we can build together if we have the courage to act, the strength to endure, and the patriotism to join together with true affection for our fellow citizen. (Applause)

I want to close with a story of a hero who defines this spirit of service and sacrifice, a man whose strength, patriotism, and courage knows no bounds, a Vietnam veteran who threw himself on top of a grenade to protect his fellow comrades. This true American hero went on to serve in the National Guard for over 27 years. He is now a retired captain at his local fire department and owns a funeral home that memorializes our heroes. He has worked tirelessly to bring another veterans post to Kansas City so that those who return from combat have a place to go that honors and supports them. Some of you know this incredible patriot. He's a friend to many in this room. He is with us here today, and he's on stage with us right now. Medal of Honor recipient, Donald E. Ballard. (Applause)

He's got to say a word, right? This wasn't in the planning. Do I have your approval?

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: Yes, sir.

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Come on, Don, get up here.

DONALD E. BALLARD: There is no greater love than someone that loves this country, and I believe we've elected the right leader to lead us out, to drain the swamp. (Cheers and applause)

PRESIDENT TRUMP: See, that's very risky of me. That could ruin the whole day for me. If he got up and said the opposite, I would be in trouble. Thank you, Don, that was very risky. I didn't know what was going to happen. I had a pretty good idea. But, Don, on behalf of the people of the United States of America, I want to thank you for your courageous service. You inspire us all.

Today we are reminded that the greatness of our nation is found in our people like Don. As long as we have faith in each other and confidence in our values, then there is no challenge too great for us to conquer. We are people, we are people who love. We are people with heart. We are people who adore. We are people that are great. There is no country like the United States of America. (Cheers and applause)

We have no division too deep for us to heal. And there is no enemy too strong for us to overcome. Because in America, we never lose faith, we never forget who we are, and we never stop striving for a better future. Together we cannot fail. We will not fail. We will make America great again, greater than ever before, I promise. (Cheers and applause)

So I want to thank you to The American Legion. You talk of greatness. You talk of greatness. The American Legion is greatness. Thank you very much to our servicemembers and to Don and to everybody in the room. Thank you to our great, great veterans. May God bless you. May God bless the United States of America. Thank you very much. It's my honor. Thank you. Thank you. (Standing applause)
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PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: This is a big one. (Cheers and applause)

... At this time, President Trump signed Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act of 2017.

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: Thank you, everybody. (Cheers and applause)

... At this time, the delegation viewed a series of videos.

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: Ladies and gentlemen, we'll proceed to the next order of business. Our next guest directs a health-care system with an annual budget of $68 billion and is responsible for overseeing the delivery of care to more than nine million enrolled veterans. She has a diverse background in health-care administration and delivery, to include clinical practice, hospital practice and administration, managed care, pharmaceutical medicine, and health-care policy. Please welcome the acting under secretary for health at the Veterans Health Administration, Dr. Poonam Alaigh. (Applause)

Address: Dr. Poonam Alaigh, Acting Under Secretary for Health Veterans Health Administration, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Thank you, everyone. What an amazing, amazing speech by our president and his commitment to all the veterans in our VA health-care system. Round of applause for our president. (Applause)

First of all, I do want to thank everyone for being here. My most important identity is as a physician in the VA, and I've learned so much from all of you, from all the veterans, whether it was part of my training or whether it was part of my weekend work that I do where I see my veterans in the nursing home, or whether it's the opportunity that I have and the privilege I have of leading the nation's largest health-care system in changing the health-care delivery for not just the veterans but also for the whole country. So it is a true, true honor and privilege to be here and to be serving all of you.

I do want to thank Commander Schmidt for his leadership. I have to tell you, The American Legion executive team with Verna and Lou are just tremendous in terms of how we're working shoulder to shoulder to bring about transformation and solutions to our health-care delivery infrastructure. I can reassure you that your voices are heard every single time. As we're coming up with changing programs, as we're coming up with improving a Choice Program or improving our outreach when it comes to suicide prevention and other key initiatives that all of you are involved with, you are represented so well with the executive team. As a result of our constant interactions, we go back to the drawing board and come up with a design and a plan and a policy as a result of hearing from you through them. And so, again, a tremendous, tremendous contribution that all of you have directly into how VA will continue to improve care and lead change.

It's not just as part of what we do formally in D.C. as we're coming up with innovative solutions. It's also what you do at the grassroots level. As you help to champion change when we're delivering care in our medical facilities, your program, the System Worth Saving program, which, again, I know PNC Conley and chair of the VA&R Commission, Ralph Bozella, is so tremendous in their leadership and ensuring that we at the VA medical facilities are getting that unbiased outside perspective on what's working and what's not working. It's so valuable as we're improving health care.

Health care, as you know, is going through a lot of transformation as such, but as a result of The American Legion and programs like the System Worth Saving program, we know in real time when to work together and how we fix things before they become huge crises. One of the things that had happened in the recent past is in D.C., in the medical center in D.C. And many of you may have heard of some of the challenges that we faced in the medical center. Verna with her team was right there with us as we spoke to the leadership, as I sat down with the frontline workers to understand what was working and what wasn't working. Then it was your American Legion and your VA that got together and had town halls where Verna, again, chaired that town hall, and we heard directly your
voices around how we needed to change and what were the root causes of some of the challenges that we were facing.

So thank you for being such a great partner, as together we're evolving and transforming our health-care delivery so that our VA system is not just preserved but it absolutely is our crown jewel for the country, our foundational services continue to get strengthened, and we invest in the care that you so deserve and need. *(Applause)*

So what are we, the VA health-care system? So just to give you a perspective on the enormity of who we are, we have over 300,000 employees. We have 25,000 physicians. We have 65,000 nurses and health-care professionals. We have over 75,000 volunteers that work in the VA. We have over 1,700 access points, 168 medical centers, over 300 vet centers. All of them the fabric of the VA system, the fabric of the system that belongs to you, the fabric of the system that leads change.

In addition, we have 70 percent of physicians, one of them being me, who trained at the VA. We have 1,800 academic facilities that partner with the VA. We have 125,000 health-care professionals that every year get trained in the VA in over 40 different disciplines. So you can see how important and how critical we are to not just the VA system but to the fabric of our entire country when it comes to delivering health care.

Something that I always tell my veterans, my patients that I truly, truly am so honored to treat and be there for, is that they've not only served once but they continue to serve as a result of teaching me and teaching so many people like us around what works and what doesn't work and how we have to evolve the system.

We serve over nine million veterans, and we have 100,000 veterans who work in the VA. So the VA taking care of the VA. That's what it is. The veterans taking care of our veterans. They're the ones who understand what the issues are. Our veterans, all of you know, you've walked in those shoes of what it means to have served and in many ways sacrificed. I have to tell you, when everything else is gone, the veterans, for my patients, when they've lost as a result of medical illness their memory or their thought process, the thing that stays is the fact that they've served. So the changes and the impact that your service has made not just to you but to all of us is something that is sustainable and continues into the future.

So what have we done so far? We've embarked upon a journey where we've come about a rapid transformation, and every month, ever since the secretary took office, the leader that we have, we've actually impacted and changed things on a fast-track basis. So in February he became the secretary. Very soon after that, we've seen successive changes. In April we launched the Access website. That's the site, if you guys haven't been on that site, you have to go on that website. It's the Access to Care website. It gives you the tools to empower you so that you can compare what the wait times are, what the satisfaction surveys are, and what the quality is in your medical center compared to others and in many times compared to those in the community, the private hospitals in the community. So you can choose where you want to get care and how you want to get care.

Again, every month we've seen major, major changes as far as what we've been doing. In April we had the accountability legislation. In June we had a whole bunch of other things we've been working on. In July for the first time we opened up our panels to the other than honorable. We also worked on making sure that we set up something called the VSO Advisory Council for Suicide Prevention. As the secretary said, our number one clinical priority is suicide prevention.

We can't come up with that comprehensive program until we hear from you directly around what's working and what's not working. We need you every step of the way as we're looking at these audacious goals in bringing about change that is going to be long lasting and sustainable and change upon which we're going to continue to build our VA system.

As I said, suicide prevention is going to be key. Suicide prevention, there is no veteran, there is no veteran, and I repeat, that should ever feel so alone and with so much loss of hope that he or she resorts to this. We have to work together for this. For the 20 suicides that take place every year in our veteran population, 14 of them happen outside of the VA
where they have never had contact with the VA in the last year. So we have to do everything possible to band together as a community to help our veterans. We have to be there. We have to make sure that they have a purpose to live, they have something that they look forward to, that energy, that adrenaline rush that our veterans are so used to is reinfused in them, and we have to work together to make that happen. As part of that, there are other aspects of suicide prevention we're working on, whether it's substance abuse, whether it's taking care of PTSD, whether it's identifying risk before our veteran gets to the point of becoming suicidal. How do we help them before they get to that point?

Those are the things that we're working on. We're spending lots of research dollars in understanding that. But in the meantime, all of us have to band together. I don't think there's a single person here who doesn't know of a veteran, either personally or have heard of a veteran, that has been impacted by a suicide. We have to be there for their families. We have to be there for their loved ones.

Access, as I said, is an important piece. We will continue to work on improving access. Not only do we have same-day services in all of our medical facilities, but we're embarking upon this journey where we're committed to having same-day services in our CBOCs also. So when you as the veteran need care and you decide you need care, you should be able to get it at the same time. This again is a high bar, but you deserve it, and we're committed to making that happen. (Applause)

In addition, the anywhere-to-anywhere program, where we again launched that just this month with the president and the secretary, is a very important program. It's about being able to care anywhere, no matter where you are in the country, and not have to drive into your medical facility or your CBOCs to be able to get care. If you choose to have care using a smartphone or a mobile device, then you should be able to get it using a secured Skype or FaceTime-like technology, which we just launched.

And we're so proud of this because this also helps our health-care professionals. They don't have to be in the medical center to render care. It could be after hours. It could be weekends. But if you wanted to talk to your physician or your health-care provider, you should be able to do that. We have studies that show 70 percent of issues can be resolved by just a quick face-to-face virtual care visit that we can launch using technology like that.

That is so important to be able to render care in your terms based on what you find convenient, when you want the care, in the way you want the care. So no physician in a VA or a nurse in the VA should say, "No, you don't need care." It cannot be a paternalistic culture. It has to be a culture where you're in the driver's seat and you're leading the care decisions that's personalized to you. So this is another huge advancement. (Applause)

And the Choice Program. We've heard about the Choice Program from all of you. It's a program that has helped meet the needs today, but it is not the program that will continue to bring about a high-performing network and a high clinically integrated program if it continues without change. We have to take the insurance companies, we have to take the TriWest and Health Net out of the middle of the care that your physician and your community provider want to work on.

So the new program that we're launching where, again, The American Legion under Lou and Verna's leadership have worked so hard with us, and I have to tell you seriously, they had us go to the drawing board four times before it became acceptable. That's the program that we're about to release, and that's the program where your physician inside of the VA with you in the driver's seat works with the physician in the community to make sure you're getting the best care whether inside of the VA or outside of the VA. (Applause)

And the electronic health system will help with that, because the electronic health system right now, a decision that's taken over a decade to make, we've been able to make that decision in the few months that the secretary has been in office. In June we announced our intention. That was the other big thing that we did. In June we announced the intention of working with the same electronic health care system that DoD has. So from the time that you get enlisted to the time you serve in the military and post-military service as a civilian and a veteran, we have your longitudinal health-care records. So whatever happened in
military service or before that, we have a way of looking at what that impact will be in terms of your prognosis and your course of illness as a result of having all your electronic health records on one platform. And this is something that, again, no other health-care system has ever done or is able to do.

One of the other things we're trying to do is bring the community providers, the Choice care providers into this mix so that the electronic health system is going to be there on one platform from DoD to VHA, whether it's inside the VA or outside of the VA. Again, we'll reduce a lot of the bureaucracy, a lot of the redundancy, a lot of the fragmentation in care. It will help coordinate the care better as a result of it. (Applause)

Something that I'm really proud of that we're just starting to sort of dabble in is something called whole health. It is so important that as we're caring for you, as our system is caring for our nation's heroes, we are making sure that we're not just empowering you when putting you in the driver's seat but we're also equipping you with the system and the resilience that you need by integrating care using integrative medicine like your tai chi, like your meditation, like your mindfulness so that you can deal with adversity better, you can deal with the inevitable better, and you become stronger inside to be able to take care of your illness. And, again, you have that positive mind-set that no matter what happens we're going to win. You're going to win when it comes to taking care of your health. That's the whole health model we're building, and we're really excited about it.

One of the things that comes out of the whole health model, which, again, is going to be key. I've worked most of my professional career in geriatrics with nursing home veterans and patients. One of the things that we're so committed to do is making sure that we provide all the resources possible so our veterans can live in the home- and community-based setting and they don't as a default have to be admitted into the nursing home for the rest of their lives, unless that's absolutely needed. (Applause)

I see my nursing home patients, and I have to tell you, there's so many of them that inspire me, so many of them that have taught me so much. One of the things they tell me is that: The system has failed when there's nothing available for me to be at home, when I have my wits, when I have my functioning arms and legs, but I need a little bit of help so that I can be safe at home, and the system doesn't provide me that. And as an immediate resort, I'm put into a nursing home. So we can't do this. It is for my veterans, for my patients that I take care of on weekends that I am committed to making sure that we provide everything possible, a system of support so that the inevitable, when we get to that point, all of us will one day. We have to make that decision, we are in the home and comfort of what makes more sense to us based on our personal values and our personal preferences. So I'm committed to making sure that we provide that to all of you. (Applause)

And the Million Veteran Program, again, remember we have four principles, core mission principles here at the VA. One is our health-care system; the second is our research; the third is our training, and we went through how much we do in terms of training the American health-care professionals; and then the emergency preparedness. The research piece is like the Million Veteran Program where today we have over 600,000 blood samples that we can do genetic analysis on as a result of all of you continuing to contribute.

That connected with our health care, electronic health records, that connected with our social determinants of care, our lifestyle history, our military history, all together provides such valuable databases where we will be seeing breakthrough research and cure of disease that we could never have even fathomed in the past. It's because of all of you and, again, your service to the country that you continue to commit to that we're going to be able to change the care and come up with so many different advances around our chronic conditions that will help to improve not just the age but also our longevity, our wellness.

It is so important as we grow older to have three main things in life, to be able to have the richness and quality of life no matter what happens. You do this through The American Legion.
The three main things is getting up every morning with a purpose, having that fire inside you to serve and have a purpose. Secondly, to be connected as a social network. And I see you as I walk down the halls, all of you connecting together. It's family. I come here, I feel like this is family. All of you are connected socially and are there for one another. And the third piece is that spirit of constant service. So you have a purpose. You are socially connected. And you have that spirit of purpose.

So it's going to be so important, so important to make sure that you stay strong, because I'm going to need you as we continue to go down this transformation journey. And this is my commitment to you on behalf of the VA. There are times and there will come a time in all of our lives when we're most vulnerable, when we feel most feeble, where we're most frail, where mortality is looking into our eyes. But I can't thank you enough for allowing us to enter that space, that personal space and doing a small bit in terms of serving you as we all go through this journey of the inevitable.

But here, again, thank you for your service. We are there for you. We will continue to make sure that the VA health-care system is strong and something that you're going to continue to be proud of. And again thank you for your service. (Applause)

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: When groups like the American Civil Liberties Union and other secular organizations targeted veterans memorials, The American Legion understood that if we want to defend both "God and Country," we would need friends like First Liberty Institute. The legal scholars there specialize in religious liberty cases. Our next speaker has been named one of the 25 greatest Texas lawyers of the last quarter century by Texas Lawyer Magazine. He is a frequent guest on Fox and Friends, Good Morning America, and the Today Show. He has been president and CEO of First Liberty Institute since 1997. Two years ago, he presented his organization's first Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr. Religious Liberty Award to the man for whom it is named, our very own national judge advocate. Last year it went to our national adjutant, Dan Wheeler. Today he is to present the award to another deserving recipient. Please give a warm American Legion welcome to Kelly Shackelford, Esquire. (Applause)

Presentation: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr. Religious Liberty Award
Kelly Shackelford, President & CEO, First Liberty Institute

First Liberty Institute is the largest legal organization in the country that focuses exclusively on religious liberty in the United States. For 13 years we are proud to say that we have partnered with The American Legion and represented The American Legion when the attacks have begun on our veterans memorials across the country. When the Mojave Desert Veterans Memorial was actually declared by a court that it had to be torn down, we went to the Supreme Court and we got that reversed and that memorial, that World War I memorial, stands today. (Applause)

When the Mt. Soledad Veterans Memorial, outside of San Diego, came under attack, we entered that case. We made sure that that memorial still stands again today. You can go see that memorial. It's one of the most beautiful memorials in our country. (Applause)

When the Pledge of Allegiance or our national motto have come under attack, we have joined The American Legion and gone into court and we have won those cases every single time. (Applause)

Now the Bladensburg Memorial is under attack. In fact, on Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day, we had to argue at the Federal Court of Appeals to keep this memorial from being torn down. One of the judges asked the following question during the oral argument: "If we just cut the arms off this cross, won't that take care of any offense?" So we're not sure what kind of decision we're going to get from this court, but I want to assure you that we are not going to stop until this is a victory and this memorial is left standing. (Applause)
Now, I'm here today to give the Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr. Religious Liberty Award to somebody who has really shown sacrifice and courage and real advancement for our veterans and for religious liberty. The prize that goes with this award is fairly incredible. It's a Henry repeating arms special edition rifle that only a few people have: Philip Onderdonk and Dan Wheeler. And one more person is about to get that award. I want to show you a video that explains the award and shows the prize up close so you can see what they're about to receive.

... At this time, the delegation viewed a video. (Applause)

The recipient of our award this year, before he was ever elected to office, was known as one of the leading attorneys in the country and donated hundreds of thousands of dollars of his time for the veterans and religious liberty. When the Mojave Desert Cross was under attack, he went all the way to the United States Supreme Court to get that victory. In fact, his brief was cited 12 times by the justices of the Supreme Court in upholding that memorial. When Houston National Cemetery decided that the burial ritual that had been used by the veterans for 100 years could not be said anymore because it mentioned God, this man entered the fray and we won a great victory, making sure and in fact preserving the rights of 22 million veterans who had the right to be buried in our national cemeteries. So I am proud to announce that this year's winner of the Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr. Religious Liberty Award is now Senator Ted Cruz. (Applause)

Address: Honorable Ted Cruz
United States Senate

God bless The American Legion. (Cheers and applause)
What an incredible, incredible privilege to be with each of you. What a privilege to be with heroes and patriots. (Applause)

It is humbling and it is powerful that when we live in an era when someone who can throw a ball or sing a song is called a hero, to be reminded that the real one percent are the men and women gathered here. The real one percent are those who answered the call and rose up to defend our nation and fought and bled and far too many who died to protect our freedom. (Applause)

I am honored to be with you. I thank you. I salute you. And, in particular, I wanted today to thank you for your commitment to defending our first liberty, to defending religious liberty. When our nation was founded, we fought a bloody revolution, a war with guns and bayonets, where a handful of scrappy revolutionaries defeated what was then the mightiest armada on the face of the earth. But it wasn't just a revolution of arms we fought; it was a revolution of ideas. Because the ideas behind the American founding transformed the world.

We began with two fundamental propositions. Number one, that our rights, they don't come from a king, they don't come from a queen, they don't come from a president. Rather, they come from God almighty. (Applause)

As the Declaration so powerfully put it: We hold these truths to be self-evident: That all men are created equal; and we are endowed not by a king, not by a queen, not by a president, we are endowed by our Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. (Applause)

When each of you took up arms to defend our nation, those are the rights, those are the freedom you were defending. And the second revolution of ideas is from time immemorial we have been told that power emanates from the top, it emanates from the monarch. The American Revolution upended that. We said power, sovereignty comes from down-up. It comes from we the people. (Applause)

And our founders created what Thomas Jefferson called a constitution to bind the mischief of government. Well, in modern days, there's a lot of mischief of government. That right, that first liberty, religious liberty, the right for every one of us to seek out the
Lord God almighty with all of our hearts, minds and souls, to live according to our faith, without government getting in the way, that is foundational to everything else. *(Applause)*

And I want to commend The American Legion because it would have been easy for you to sit back and say, "You know what? I stood and fight. I gave my service. My time is done." But The American Legion, the patriots in this room and across the country, you cannot leave a man on the battlefield, and you cannot stop fighting for the country you love. *(Applause)*

When you look at faith and religious liberty, one of the great blessings I've had is meeting across the state of Texas and across the country so many chaplains who serve. Can everyone here who has been an active duty or is a retired chaplain in the military, I would ask you if you would please stand that we can thank you and recognize you. *(Applause)*

The service of so many chaplains for centuries has made such a profound difference to our soldiers and sailors and airmen and Marines, and yet we saw just a few years ago an Air Force chaplain in the state of Alaska reprimanded because he wrote a blog post saying: There are no atheists in foxholes. His political superiors reprimanded him for doing that. I guess they thought he was being insensitive to atheists. I kind of thought that was a chaplain's job, to welcome and embrace them with God's forgiving love.

But it's interesting, if you look at that phrase, "There are no atheists in foxholes," it can be traced back to a 1954 speech that President Dwight D. Eisenhower gave to The American Legion. Now, I'd note President Eisenhower had some passing familiarity with the military. And President Eisenhower, in that speech, he told the tale of what's come to be known as the Four Immortal Chaplains.

The USS *Dorchester*, coming off the tip of Greenland, was hit by a German U-boat, and the boat began to sink. There were four chaplains aboard the *Dorchester*, two who were Protestant, one who was Catholic, and one who was Jewish. And as the boat began to go down, they looked around and realized there were not enough lifejackets for the people on board. So each of those chaplains took the lifejacket he had around his neck, and he put it around the neck of another man. And when those chaplains did so, they didn't ask that man in front of them "Are you a Catholic? Are you a Protestant? Are you a Jew?" He simply gave his life that the other man might live. And those four chaplains, arm in arm, began singing and praying and went down with the ship, giving their lives so their brothers might live. That truly is the definition of love. And the idea that we have had litigating organizations and political appointees that would want to make it a punishable offense to acknowledge God truly stagers the minds.

Another example that we saw in my home state of Texas, in Houston, the VA directed The American Legion and other private organizations, other private clergy, that if you were presiding over a military funeral, you could not invoke the name of God. You could not say Jesus. You could not say God. This is the VA saying God's name is not allowed in a military funeral. And a Houston pastor, who refused to be silenced, brought a lawsuit. The American Legion brought me in to represent you, and I was honored to represent The American Legion and that pastor fighting for religious liberty. And we won, defending that fundamental liberty. *(Applause)*

Yet, another example, in recent years, we saw the prior administration litigating against the Little Sisters of the Poor. Now, what are the Little Sisters of the Poor? A Catholic charity of nuns who have taken vows of poverty. They devote their lives to caring for the poor and elderly. The Obama administration litigated against them, arguing that the nuns must be fined millions of dollars unless they agree to pay for abortion-inducing drugs and others. Now, let me give y'all a very, very simple rule of thumb: If you're litigating against nuns, you've probably done something wrong. *(Laughter)*

By the way, there's a corollary to that: If you're litigating against The American Legion, you've definitely done something wrong! *(Applause)*

That case, the Little Sisters of the Poor, went all the way to the Supreme Court. I'm pleased to tell you the new administration, with President Trump and Attorney General Jeff
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Sessions, have come in with a renewed commitment to religious liberty, and they are no longer persecuting the Little Sisters of the Poor. *(Applause)*

Yet another example, one that my friend Kelly talked about, the Mojave Desert Veterans Memorial. This is a lone, white, Latin cross in the middle of the Mojave Desert erected to honor the men and women who gave their lives in World War I. Has stood there for over 80 years, until one day the ACLU came along, and they were offended. Let me just say for a minute to everyone who gets offended at everything they see: Can't everyone just chill out. *(Laughter and applause)*

Look, I see nuts doing offensive things all day long. You don't have to whine about it, and you don't have to run to a federal court and say: Oh, oh, guard my eyes.

The ACLU filed a lawsuit seeking to tear down that monument in the Federal District Court. They won. In the Federal Court of Appeals, they won. The federal court ordered that 80-year-old veterans memorial to be covered with a burlap sack, with a chain and a padlock at the bottom, because the federal court concluded you could not gaze upon the image of a cross on public lands. Well, I'll agree with the court on one thing: There is power in the image of a cross. Well, The American Legion, as has been your pattern and practice, did not shy away from the fight. You stood forward to fight to preserve that veterans memorial, and I was incredibly privileged to be your lawyer, pro bono, for free, defending that memorial. *(Applause)*

We went before the U.S. Supreme Court, Kelly Shackelford and I, on behalf of The American Legion, on behalf of millions of veterans across this nation, defending religious liberty, and we won 5-4. *(Applause)*

But it was 5-4. Those stakes should give you pause. We were one justice away from the Supreme Court ordering: Tear down that veterans memorial. And mark my words, when they tear down the cross on a veterans memorial in the middle of deserts, we are but moments away from the next order to tear down the tombstone with the cross or Star of David lined one after the other after the other.

That's not America. That's not who we are. Those are not the fundamental freedoms and values everyone, regardless of your faith, regardless if you have no faith, America protects your right to live according to your faith and conscience. It is not government that should be an enemy of religious faith. *(Applause)*

So I want to say to the men and women gathered here, thank you. Thank you for standing and answering the call. We face a dangerous time in our nation's history. We face enemies abroad that are getting more and more dangerous, that are on the verge of acquiring nuclear weapons or have nuclear weapons. We face radical Islamic terrorists that seek murder and mayhem. We face a military whose readiness has been degraded for far too many years. I pledge to you, I'm committed to working hand in hand with the president and the administration and Congress to rebuild the military. *(Applause)*

To ensure that our servicemen and women have every resource, every training, every tool to keep this nation safe, to defeat our enemies, and to preserve our nation. *(Applause)*

For those who have served, for the veterans, I remain committed to ensuring that we honor our commitment to you, our solemn commitment to every veteran, and that includes when it comes to health care, I believe every veteran should have the right to choose your doctor, whoever that doctor may be. *(Applause)*

We should strengthen and improve the VA, but at the same time give veterans the ability that if you choose, you want to go to the cardiologist down the street, you ought to have the right to make the choice for your health care. *(Applause)*

And then I give you my solemn pledge that the fight to defend religious liberty, the fight to defend the First Amendment and the Second Amendment, by the way, I had four people say to make sure that there wasn't a chamber in the round in that rifle. There wasn't. And all of our fundamental rights. I give you my solemn pledge that just as each of you have risen to the occasion over and over again to defend our lives, our rights, our freedoms, that I will continue to be honored to stand shoulder to shoulder with you in that same fight.
for that same freedom that makes this nation, the United States, the greatest nation in the history of the world. Thank you and God bless you! *(Applause)*

**NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT:** Our next guest is a true patriot who truly loves veterans. He sits on the Veterans' Affairs Committee, and he's a great friend of The American Legion. Please give a warm welcome to United States Senator Dean Heller of Nevada. *(Applause)*

**Welcome: Honorable Dean Heller**

**United States Senate**

Good afternoon, everybody. What a pleasure it is to be here. I caught the earliest flight I could to get up here to hear the president's speech. And you know how best laid out plans go, right? But I'm sorry I missed it. But there were some activities I'd like to talk to you just a little bit about today, but I want to welcome you. It's great to be part of the 99th Annual American Legion National Convention. Welcome to Reno. I am your host. Thank you for being here. *(Applause)*

So I want to welcome President Trump, even though I saw his plane take off as I was driving into Reno today. You know, I couldn't land my plane in Reno. I had to land it in Carson City. So I drove up 30 minutes hoping to catch him at the airport, just to watch it fly away. So we'll have a phone call this afternoon and iron that out.

But it's great to have Senator Cruz here, a good friend of mine here in the great state of Nevada. I hope you're enjoying Reno and I hope you're enjoying this host city. There's a lot of activities, a lot of things to do inside the convention and outside the convention, so I certainly hope you enjoy yourself.

I especially want to thank National Commander Charles Schmidt for the introduction. I want to thank National Adjutant Daniel Wheeler; Executive Director Verna Jones; National Legislative Director Matthew Shuman; Department of Nevada Commander Bob Terhune from Ely, Nevada. Thank you for being here and for hosting us here today. And I also want to thank all The American Legion staff, volunteers in Washington, D.C., Nevada and across this country for the work that you do. Thank you so much. *(Applause)*

With more than 300,000 veterans living in Nevada, The American Legion is an integral part of our communities across our state and, furthermore, across our nation. To the veterans, family members, and those of you in the armed forces, thank you for your service. I'm truly grateful and humbled by your commitment to defend what makes this country so great, and that's the freedoms that make us proud to be Americans.

One of my most important responsibilities is standing up for Nevadan's veterans. As a senior member of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, I use my role to ensure that our veterans receive the care and benefits that they have earned and that they have deserved. Over the past few months, we've been able to make real progress on behalf of the veteran community. That's due to bipartisan cooperation in Congress and the president's commitment of taking care of the men and women who serve. And today I'm proud the president signed a bill that I worked to help pass through Congress, bring a much needed overhaul to the VA appeals process into law. What does it mean to our nation's veterans? More options to appeal their cases to the VA, allowing veterans to fast track their claims. This means veterans will ultimately, ultimately have more money in their pockets for their injuries and get it faster than they do right now.

The president also signed another bill we introduced and that's the legislation to continue funding the Veterans Choice program. You've heard a lot about it the last couple of days. The Choice Program is critical to our veterans who need access to the service that VA cannot provide, such as chemotherapy and other critical lifesaving surgeries. It also ensures veterans living in rural communities, like those surrounding Reno and Sparks, do not have to travel hundreds of miles just to reach a VA facility.
One more bill of mine that I'd like to mention is the legislation that expands the GI Bill benefits, giving more veterans and their dependents the opportunity to pursue an education. The president signed it just last week, an acknowledgment that we need to do everything we can to empower our veterans with the tools that they need to succeed.

And, lastly, Nevada just received great news from Secretary Shulkin at the beginning of this week. The VA will change its process for rewarding grants under the State Veterans Home Construction Grant Program. That's something I've been asking the VA to do several times to help veterans living in rural areas. It's particularly important for veterans living in this part of Nevada because it will help secure funding for the new State Veterans Home in Northern Nevada.

I'm extremely proud of what we've been able to accomplish for our veterans and believe they're examples of what we can achieve when both parties set aside their differences and work together. However, we still have a lot of work to do. We have a long way to go to fulfill our country's promise to those who stepped up to the plate. After all, we have the privilege of living in the freest nation on earth, because of the bravery of men and women who have sacrificed so much for us. We owe debt that could never be fully repaid, and we need to continue to work hard to make sure that we take care of those who take care of us.

So in closing, I want to thank President Trump for being here today, commend the great work that both he and Secretary Shulkin are doing to make sure that no Nevada veteran is left behind. Thank you so very much. Thank you, everybody. *(Applause)*

**NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT:** We meet a lot of heroes at our national conventions, but our next guest clearly has earned that title. A veteran of 85 F-4 combat missions, including 65 over North Vietnam, he was held at the infamous "Hanoi Hilton" POW camp from 1968 to 1973. His 24 awards and decorations include two Silver Stars, the Defense Superior Service Medal, two Legions of Merit, the Distinguished Flying Cross, Bronze Star for valor, two Purple Hearts, and seven Air Medals. Representing the National Veterans Memorial and Museum, please welcome retired United States Air Force Colonel Tom Moe. *(Applause)*

My fellow Legionnaires, let's salute a true hero. By the numbers. One.

... *At this time, the delegation rose and rendered a salute to Colonel Moe.*

**NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT:** Two! Colonel Moe, sir. *(Applause)*

**Address:** Colonel Tom Moe, USAF (Ret.)

**National Veterans Memorial and Museum**

That was an extra special treat, commander. Thank you. Well, good afternoon. Thank you for the honor to present the new National Veterans Memorial Museum, being built in America's Heartland, central Ohio, where over half the U.S. population lives within a day's drive.

I want to thank a couple of individuals who are behind-the-scenes people because, you know, I had the pleasure of being at the convention last year and been to some other national conventions. There's so many moving parts. And those moving parts are kept in place by people like Jack Monahan, who spoke earlier; Jack Querfeld who has been indispensable; and way behind the scenes, but very, very important, Mary Rooney. I'm sure many of you worked with her as she got things on track during this busy schedule. Of course, special thanks to Commander Schmidt for allowing me to be here, and best of luck to sister Denise Rohan for the coming year. I have to say: Go Bucs. Although, I can't see the Ohio delegation. Are you out there somewhere? *(Cheers)*

All right. I love it. Well, of course, most of all, thank you all for your service. I'm proud to be a member of The American Legion. *(Applause)*

Absolutely, and I applaud you as well.
There's no single comprehensive museum dedicated to share the veteran's experience in this country. Until now. This facility will also memorialize those who died in service, those who could never enjoy as a civilian the fruits of their service and sacrifice. We remembered them at the dinner last night with the table set for one, a very moving tribute. So I'm honored to be a part of the team that is creating that place.

Today, as I share with you the mission of the museum, I will include photos of construction progress and renderings of the exhibits that are being planned, led by the late Senator John Glenn, a diverse committee of veterans came up with a visionary concept, to create this National Veterans Memorial & Museum. This vision is now a reality. The memorial and museum will open next summer, 2018, and it's already paid for with over $77 million raised. (Applause)

That's impressive. Here are the four pillars on which we're going to build your story: We will honor, connect, inspire, and educate through this facility. We will honor American's contributions through military and veterans service. We will connect visitors with veterans by demonstrating the military training and experiences that form them. We hope to inspire visitors with your stories so that they might go forward and serve or continue to serve their community and nation in many ways. We will educate visitors, especially schoolchildren, through interactive permanent exhibits about the history and value of service. Professional designers are already creating exhibits that tell the story, your stories, beginning with what prepared you to serve, what it was like to leave home, take the oath, live on a base or on a ship, go through training, and then come home with those experiences and continue to serve your communities.

This is not a military museum. It's not about tanks or other technologies. It's about people and founded on the principle that veterans' stories have value and need to be told. Visitors will walk through various thematic alcoves, with each alcove highlighting key themes and moments in a veteran's journey. We'll incorporate personal stories, past and present, to share a wide range of your challenges, your sacrifices and achievements. Visitors will explore a chronology of real veteran stories and experiences. The particular example on the screen demonstrates the transformation that occurs for those of us who serve. You will see a depiction of the servicemember before he or she were deployed, while in service, and photos of when they returned to civilian life. We want visitors to learn what that transformation was like.

We would fail in our mission if we did not honor the servicemen and women who did not make it back to civilian life, who could not enjoy the benefits they created and paid for with their lives. This rendering shows the Remembrance Gallery where we pay tribute to those fallen brothers and sisters. It's a place for contemplation and reflection to think about those who made the ultimate sacrifice and remember them.

There will also be a beautiful Memorial Grove on the property next to the Scioto River Park, itself newly developed. The Memorial Grove will serve as a site of reflection but also a place for celebration, to celebrate the ties that bind us together. We would expect that as time goes by, veterans service organizations and even individuals might want to create their own memorials here. This place is your home, a place to honor you like nowhere else.

Finally, we'll have a rooftop sanctuary, accessible not only from the inside but also by an open-air, grand, spiral ramp perfectly designed for processions and ceremonies. This open-air space can also be a place for memorial ceremonies, but like the grove, a place for celebration, for ceremonies, to include military weddings and receptions. Some groups have already reserved the facility for just that.

So, please, connect with us as we connect with you. Get in touch with us at the email address on the screen so that we not only have your support, but your ideas as well. Exhibit designers are already gathering personal memorabilia and veteran stories to be featured in the core exhibits program. So contact us, check out our website and look at the flyer in your convention packet where we solicit donations of items that you might have, letters, service items, examples of your service as a veteran. We certainly expect to commemorate the great service of our VSOs, not the least of which is The American Legion.
This memorial and museum is not a fantasy. We look forward to the grand opening next summer. We have universal support for this project, and I hope we have yours as well. During this convention, you'll vote on a resolution of support, and I ask very much for that support. Bipartisan legislation has been introduced into the House and Senate to officially designate the museum as a national institution. We have asked your leadership to reach out to Congress and the president as this legislation moves forward to completion. Testimony will take place this September in Washington. Our 22 million living veterans and the countless millions who have gone before us have earned a national museum to call home. Now we will have that home. Thank you for allowing me to present it to you.

Now, if I might deviate from my prepared remarks, I'd like to close with a story of my vision of veterans in service, especially those that I call the unnamed veteran, those veterans who serve our brothers and sisters every day. So I'd like to just give one example of what I think of when I think of veterans in service, not a veteran who became president or an astronaut or senator or governor or what have you. That's important, too, they brought their lessons from military service, but every day the unnamed veteran.

I had the chance to become the director of the Ohio Veterans Department. Served under Governor Kasich. One of the things he wanted me to add was an attorney to help me some of the difficult issues that veterans face in the legal system. So I got a list of names, and I'm interviewing a bunch of folks, and this one gentleman impressed me very much. I told him I was very interested in hiring him. He said, "Well, I appreciate that you took the time," he said, "but you need to know I'm in the National Guard, the 37th Buckeye Division," the very same division my uncle fought in in World War I on the front lines in France. He said, you know, "I'll be deployed from time to time." And I said, "Shawn, you're hired."

He did great work for me. The months went by, and then one day he got a notice that he was going to deploy to Afghanistan. And he was killed. I had an unbelievable honor to go to Delaware and pick up Shawn and the two brothers that died with him that day from a terrorist bomb. We flew in a KC-135 back to Ohio and landed in a driving rain. It's one of the hardest rains I've ever experienced anytime. Just constant, solid rain. As I got out of the airplane to join the group that was waiting, including the governor, the attorney general, the adjutant general, but beyond the staff, well over a thousand people standing there in the rain, no umbrellas, that tiny sacrifice for their brothers, and hundreds of bikers, veterans bikers standing there ready to escort our brothers to their funeral homes. They divided up into three groups, the hearse following each of these hundreds of bikers off into the falling rain. Unnamed veterans serving their brothers. God bless. (Applause)

... At this time, National Vice Commander Martel assumed the Chair.

Presentation: Daniel J. O’Connor Americanism Trophy

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER MARTEL: Daniel J. O’Connor was the chairman of the National Americanism Commission from 1962 to 1983. He was chairman emeritus from 1984 until his passing in 2004. The Daniel J. O’Connor Americanism Trophy is given to the department that achieves the most outstanding results in conducting Americanism programs. These programs advance patriotism among the citizens of this nation and participation in our youth activities. Ladies and Gentlemen, the winner of the Daniel J. O’Connor Americanism Trophy is the Department of Virginia. (Applause)

ANNOUNCER: Daniel J. O’Connor Americanism Trophy awarded to The American Legion Department of Virginia in recognition of the most outstanding Americanism program, presented at the 99th National Convention of The American Legion.

DELEGATE QUECK: Once again, I'd like to thank the Department of Virginia for giving me the opportunity of being their Americanism chairman for two years in a row. This is the second year we've taken this trophy, and we're not going to stop at that. Thank you very much. (Applause)
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NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER MARTEL: The Chair recognizes Richard Anderson of Connecticut, chairman of the National Convention Committee on Americanism, for the purpose of making a report.

Report: Convention Committee on Americanism
Richard W. Anderson, Connecticut, Chairman

At 8:30 am, Sunday, August 20, 2017, the Convention Committee on Americanism, consisting of the two subcommittees of Americanism and Children & Youth, met in the Atlantis Resort, Grand Ballroom Section 4, Second Floor, in Reno, Nevada, for the purpose of electing a chairman and secretary for Americanism. Richard Anderson (CT) was elected chairman and Charles Tucker (GA) was elected secretary for the purpose of reporting to the Convention.

It was moved, seconded and carried that the committee chairman and secretary be authorized to accept and sign the report of the Convention Committee on Americanism on behalf of its delegates.

It was moved and seconded that the chairman, Americanism Convention Committee be authorized to accept the actions of the two subcommittees assigned to Americanism on the resolutions assigned to the respective subcommittees.

It was also regularly moved, seconded and carried that the chairman and secretary may 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).

No further business was discussed at this point and the delegates were then released to the two subcommittees assigned to the Americanism Convention Committee—Children & Youth and Americanism—for the purpose of reviewing and acting on the assigned resolutions.

The Americanism Convention Committee was recessed at this point, subject to call by the chairman if required.

The Convention subcommittees met and considered their assigned resolutions as follows:

Children & Youth
Herbert Petit, Louisiana, Chairman

At 9:00 am, Sunday, August 20, 2017, 49 delegates assigned to the Convention Subcommittee on Children & Youth met in the Atlantis Resort, Grand Ballroom, Section 7, Second Floor, in Reno, Nevada. Herbert Petit (LA) was elected chairman and Donald Suchy (NE) was elected secretary. The subcommittee considered one resolution and its disposition is as follows:

Referred to the Standing Americanism Commission

Resolution No. 12 (AR): War on Drugs Poster Contest

Americanism
Richard Anderson, Connecticut, Chairman

At 9:00 am, Sunday, August 20, 2017, 47 delegates assigned to the Convention Subcommittee on Americanism met in the Atlantis Resort, Grand Ballroom, Section 4, Second Floor, in Reno, Nevada. Richard Anderson (CT) was elected chairman and Charles Tucker (GA) was elected secretary. The committee considered nine resolutions and their dispositions are as follows:
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Referred to the Standing Americanism Commission

Resolution No. 10 (AR): Proposed Change to the Oratorical Contest National Finals
Resolution No. 11 (AR): Oratorical Contest National Scholarship Awards Structure
Resolution No. 37 (ID): Ashes to Graves Flag Disposal
(Consolidated with Resolution No. 38 (WA) Ashes to Graves Flag Disposal)
Resolution No. 48 (IL): Recruitment of American Legion Baseball Players
Resolution No. 69 (CA): 21st Century Policy of Remembrance

Resolutions Rejected

Resolution No. 18 (MD): Establishment of a National Day of Remembrance in Honor of Our Cold War Veterans and Their Families
Resolution No. 43 (MS): Proposed Renaming and Format Change to the National Oratorical Contest Finals
Resolution No. 68 (AZ): Advance Eighteen Contestants from the Oratorical Contest National Quarterfinals to Semifinals

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN ANDERSON: As a duly elected and registered delegate from the Department of Connecticut, I move for the adoption of this report. ...Second.

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER MARTEL: Is there any discussion? Hearing none, all in favor so indicate by the usual sign. Opposed? Ayes have it. The report of Americanism is adopted. Thank you very much. Having completed the adoption of the Americanism report, it is appropriate to announce the winners of two Americanism awards.

Presentation: Frank N. Belgrano, Jr., Trophy

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER MARTEL: Frank Belgrano Jr., was National Commander from 1934-1935. He was a founder of the Galileo Post in San Francisco and was the Department Commander of California during a peak year for membership and activity in the Golden State. The Frank Belgrano, Jr., Trophy is given annually to the department rendering the most outstanding service to the Boys Scout of America program during the 12-month period beginning August 1. This year’s winner is the Department of Missouri. (Applause)

Presentation: Ralph T. O’Neil Education Trophy

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER MARTEL: It is only fitting that an educational award be named after the national commander who graduated from Harvard Law School and interrupted his term as a county attorney in Kansas so he could serve in World War I. The Ralph T. O’Neil Education Award is given to the department within the United States documenting the greatest activity in operating The American Legion School Medal Program. The winning department shows what can be accomplished by an active and involved American Legion. The winner is the Department of Delaware. (Applause)

Presentation: Garland D. Murphy, Jr. Award

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER MARTEL: In 1952, Department Commander Dr. Garland D. Murphy, Jr., of Arkansas came to The American Legion with an offer to provide a valuable contribution to be used solely for children. After much study and discussion, the idea of a foundation was adopted. Eventually, on October 15, 1953, the National Executive Committee approved the establishment of the foundation and entered into a trust agreement with Dr. Murphy. Legal work was completed, and on July 9, 1954, the foundation was duly incorporated under the laws of the State of Indiana. At that time,
Dr. Murphy assigned to the foundation deeds to fractional mineral rights on nearly 10,000 acres of land in the oil-rich Williston Basin in Montana and North Dakota. To date, more than $13 million has been awarded to organizations to assist the children of this country from the American Legion Child Welfare Foundation, Inc. I now have the pleasure of presenting the Garland D. Murphy, Jr., award to the department that raised the most money for the Child Welfare Foundation during the past program year. Ladies and Gentlemen, it is a pleasure for me to present this award to the Department of Arizona. (Applause)

ANNOUNCER: The Garland D. Murphy, Jr. Award is presented by The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation to The American Legion Department of Arizona for the program year 2016-2017. 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.

Presentation: U.S. Grant Legacy Award

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER MARTEL: It is now time for me to present the U.S. "Udie" Grant Legacy Award. Udie was a member of the National Executive Committee for 38 years from the Department of Kansas. He also served as a longtime director and later president of our National Child Welfare Foundation until he joined Post Everlasting in 2004. The U.S. "Udie" Grant Legacy Award recognizes the collective effort of The American Legion Family in a department. It goes to the department that collectively raised the most money for the Child Welfare Foundation during the past program year. The winner of this prestigious award is the Department of Arizona. (Applause)

ANNOUNCER: The U.S. Grant Legacy Award presented by The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation to the Department of Arizona for the program year 2016-2017 in recognition of outstanding support of The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation. We thank you.

DELEGATE BOLAND (FL): As president of the Child Welfare Foundation, it is indeed an honor to present the meritorious achievement award. "There is a wonderful mythical law of nature that the three things we crave most in life, happiness, freedom, and peace of mind, are always obtained by giving them to someone else." Peyton Conway March.

Achieving the highest increase in per capita giving for 2016-2017, The American Legion Department of Arizona. The board of directors greatly recognize your outstanding support of The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation. Service to the critical needs of America's children is made possible through your caring and generosity. (Applause)

The Excellence Award. "You will find, as you look back on your life, that the moments that stand out are the moments when you have done things for others." Henry Drummond.

Achieving the highest in per capita giving for the 2016-2017 year, The American Legion Department of Arizona. The board of directors greatly recognize your outstanding support of The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation. Service to the critical needs of America's children is made possible through your caring and generosity. (Applause)

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER MARTEL: If anyone has a donation to the Child Welfare Foundation, I will now accept those onstage.

... At this time, National Vice Commander Boldt assumed the Chair.

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER BOLDT: For those that are donating to the Child Welfare Foundation, please come to the microphone and announce the amount.
DELEGATE CLEWELL (WI): Hi, I'm Laurel Clewell, the Department of Wisconsin commander, and we are proud to donate to and support the Child Welfare Foundation.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (MI): From the Mitten State, home of this year's National Law Enforcement Officer of the Year and birthplace of the American Legion Riders, Michigan, we donate $2,000.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (NE): From the great state of Nebraska, The American Legion Family would like to donate $1,796.84.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (OH): The American Legion Department of Ohio Family would like to add to the Child Welfare Foundation a donation of $5,000.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (PA): The great state of Pennsylvania donates $1,396 to the Child Welfare Foundation.

DELEGATE FUELLING (FR): I'm Robert Fuelling from the Department of France. I have two checks totaling $500. One from the Department of France for $250, and one from the Paris Post No. 1 for $250.


UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (CA): From District 13, Department of California, also known as Santa Clara County, the home of Silicon Valley, $2,210.82.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (TN): Department of Tennessee would like to add to our previous donation of $150.

DELEGATE GREETING (AR): I'm Jake Greetling, the Alternate NEC from the Department of Arkansas, also past department commander. My wife, Karen, and I would like to donate $1,000 to the Child Welfare Foundation.


DELEGATE KILEN (ND): Orletta Kilen, past department commander of the Peace Garden State of North Dakota. We donate $250 to the Child Welfare Foundation.

DELEGATE MEANEY (NH): Dave Meaney, Department of New Hampshire, $1,000 Child Welfare Foundation.

DELEGATE ELSTON (WA): Wayne Elston, department commander, Washington State, and Alternate National Executive Committeeeeman Ken Lee, with an initial check of $4,118 for CWF. (Applause) …National Commander Schmidt resumed the Chair.

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: The American Legion has supported Scouting since our organization's founding in 1919. American Legion posts sponsor thousands of Scouting units serving more than 60,000 young people nationwide. The national commissioner of the Boy Scouts of America earned a bachelor's degree at Brigham Young University and a J.D. at the University of Utah. He has previously served as the 20th president of the Young Men organization of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome the national commissioner of the Boy Scouts of America, Charles Dahlquist. (Applause)

Address: Charles Dahlquist
National Commissioner, Boy Scouts of America

Good afternoon. I love the way you respond both when somebody says "Good morning" or "Good afternoon" but also when you say "Amen." You don't see that very often, so thank you very much.

I'm honored to be here for this wonderful convention. It's been good being here since early this morning and also joining you last evening for the commander's dinner. I have learned an awful lot about The American Legion. In fact, in preparation for this, I watched
some YouTubes, and I got so excited watching the YouTubes that I went online and registered as a new member of The American Legion. (Cheers and applause)

So I am in. I'm thrilled to be here as representative of the Boy Scouts of America. Thank you for all you do, not only what you do looking back and making sure that those who have defended our country and served and our veterans are taken care of, but also in looking forward and making sure that the rising generation is taken care of and well-schooled. I greatly appreciate the opportunity to be here to celebrate this almost-100-year partnership. You may not know that in 1919 when The American Legion was organized that its first convention, one of the very first items of business was to recognize the Boy Scouts of America and begin this wonderful partnership. Today, The American Legion sponsors 50,000 Scouts and has 22,000 leaders who are making a great difference.

There's a great poem that goes: We are blind until we see that in the eternal plan nothing's worth the making if it does not make the man. Why build these cities glorious if men unbuilded goes? In vain we build the work, unless the builder also grows. And these youth of the rising generation are the builders. So thanks to each of you for sponsoring troops, cub packs, explorer units, venture crews all over this great country. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. (Applause)

In July, I had the opportunity of being with Commander Schmidt at the National Scout Jamboree at the Summit in West Virginia. Wonderful, beautiful, almost heaven, West Virginia. It was wonderful to have Commander Schmidt there, but there was something that was missing. That is every leader, at least in Scouting, needs to have a walking stick. So, Commander Schmidt, I have something for you. Commander Schmidt, when you and I met at the Summit, you didn't have a walking stick. And you needed a walking stick. So I have one here that is engraved. It says: Charles E. Schmidt, National Commander, American Legion, 2016-2017; 2017 National Scout Jamboree, and it has the logo of The American Legion on it, of the Summit Scout Ranch, of the Jamboree. And most importantly, when you go hiking, you always wear hiking boots, right?

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: Yes, sir.

CHARLES DAHLQUIST: And so does your walking stick. (Laughter)

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: Fantastic. Thank you, sir.

CHARLES DAHLQUIST: Thank you. My pleasure.

When I was a young cadet in the Air Force ROTC program, we didn't have an awful lot of money. So I worked nights at KSL, at a Clear Channel radio station. During that time there was a man by the name of Charlie Freed who taped a program every night that I was there, and the program was called "Windows." And what he would do, he would talk about a day in history, and he'd talk about what happened and the people that were impacted, and then at the end he would say: And that's the way it was, August 5th, 1947, as we watched from windows at KSL home of radio.

Our lives are a series of windows. Because of what you do with the Boy Scouts of America, you are making windows for these young people that will impact their lives forever. Let me just give you one example, one window occurred in the life of Andy Flosdorf a number of years ago. This 13-year-old boy was a normal, garden-variety young man, but just happened to be a great speller. He was involved in the National Spelling Bee in Washington, D.C. He came from Fonda, New York. Andy got up and was asked to spell "echolalia." He spelled it. The judges weren't sure that he spelled it correctly, and so they went back and listened, and then they approved it. Andy then sat down. One of his friends said, "So how did you spell it?" And all of a sudden he realized that he had spelled it incorrectly. Not the way that the judges thought it might have been, but he had used an "e" instead of the first "a."

So he went to the judges, and he went to Chief Judge Robert Baker, and he said, "I misspelled echolalia." The judge said, "No, we went through it." He said, "No, I misspelled the word." They went back over the tapes, and, sure enough, he had misspelled the word, and, as a result, was disqualified from any more participation. Someone from The New York Times, a reporter, said, "Why did you do that?" He said, "Well," he says, "I didn't
want to feel like slime." The typical 13-year-old boy expression. And then he said, "No, why did you do it? It took a lot of courage to do that." This young man said, "I am a Boy Scout, and, above all, a Boy Scout is honest."

When that was announced to the large gathering in Washington, D.C., there was a standing ovation for this simple 13-year-old boy who realized the very first Scouting Law, a Scout is trustworthy. It's because of what you do in the lives of these Scouts that they stand out wherever they are. That's the reason why a Scout, one of your Scouts, when he takes a test, keeps his eyes on his own paper because a Scout is honest. A Scout is trustworthy. That's why when a Scout goes through a door, he always looks behind him to see if there is someone else following for whom he can open the door because a Scout is courteous.

There are all types of stories. One particular window that was brought to my attention was by a father who talked about a pinewood derby experience that he had with his son Jeffrey. As you may know, every year, about the first part of the year, Cub Scouts get together and make small pinewood derby cars and they race them. Well, as is true to form, Jeffrey's father did most of the work on this car. They went to the pinewood derby, and they were so proud. The car looked so good. The paint job was good. The decals were great. The wheels were aligned. There was enough graphite to make sure that they ran really well. When pit row was there before the race began, it was mostly filled with fathers instead of boys. When the races began, the fathers moved out of pit row, and the sons began to race the cars.

After a few races, Jeffrey was doing pretty well, and he came to his dad and said, "Dad, I need to have you do something with my car." His dad was ready to check the alignment of the wheels, and Jeffrey said, "No, Dad, you don't understand." He pointed over to a friend of his who obviously had special needs, and he said, "My next race is against Steven. And Steven hasn't won a race all night. Will you do something with my car to make sure that Steven wins?"

So his dad first looked at his son, and then he looked at the car. He took the front wheel and he tweaked it just enough so it was out of alignment, gave it back to his son. The two cars were up there. They got ready. The cub master pulled the handle down, the cars went down, and Steven won. But the dad recalled: When I looked down at the end of that race and the two boys grabbed their cars, I saw two happy boys. You see, Jeffrey learned at the hands of your leaders that a Scout is kind and a Scout is helpful and a Scout is courteous.

I had a window occur to me just a few months ago when I was on Normandy Beach. I had been asked to speak at an encampment of the North Atlantic Council of the Boy Scouts of America. As I prepared myself, I read all of these books. I read everything I could. I watched movies. I did everything to prepare. And in the midst of all of that, a thought came to me over and over again: I wonder where Dad was during that time.

It haunted me as I read these books and as I watched the movies. Just as a week before, I went to some papers that Dad had before he passed away. And in there, as I opened a little box, there was an envelope that I had never seen before that said: Winston's military records. So I opened it up, pulled up his certificate of service and realized a week before I went to Normandy that Dad was there. For on his record, his discharge record, battles and campaigns, Rhineland, Central Europe, Air Offensive Europe, Normandy, Ardennes.

Then I realized what these little V-Mail notes meant. They didn't mean anything to the family because they didn't realize what my dad never told them, because Dad never talked about his experiences in the war. I asked him one day, "Dad, why don't you talk about it?" He said, "When you go out and you get one buddy blown off from one side and one shot off from the other side, and that happens day after day, why would you want to talk about it?"

And, yet, this individual that I called Father and was one of the greatest heroes I ever had, he gave me a wonderful feeling of patriotism for this great country. So on that day after I participated in the encampment and watched along Omaha Beach, I tried to picture
in my mind what it was like for my father to come onto Utah Beach and for all those GIs to come onto Omaha Beach on that day when instead of a sunny day it was overcast and stormy.

The next morning we met in the American Cemetery in Colleville-sur-Mer with 3,500 Scouts and leaders and parents. If you have been there, there's a wonderful memorial and it overlooks 10,000 crosses of many of those who gave the ultimate sacrifice that we might preserve freedoms. On that day, as I spoke about my experience and my father, I asked those 3,500 young men, many of your Scouts, to turn and raise their arm to the square in the Scout Oath. Together as we faced those crosses of those men who had given their all, we pledged to them that we would live the Scout Oath all our lives: On my honor, I will do my best to do my duty to God and my country, to obey the Scout Law, to help other people at all times, to keep myself physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight.

Then I had each of those young men salute. And together we pledged allegiance and promised our allegiance to those great principles upon which this country was based and for which they gave their lives; that we would forever be true to this great country.

Now, in Stephen Ambrose's book on D-Day, there's a great quote. It says: When Hitler declared war on the United States, he bet that the young men brought up in the Hitler Youth would outfight the youngsters brought up in the Boy Scouts. Hitler was about ready to find out how wrong he was.

We are together, the Boy Scouts of America and The American Legion, with your Four Pillars and your preamble to the Constitution and with our Scout Oath and Scout Law, we're building a rising generation who will be able to follow in your footsteps and the footsteps of my father and all of those who have gone before to keep this country free. There is too much dissension in this country now, but there are more things that unite us than divide us. Those young men under your tutelage are learning to unite and bring peace in a troubled word.

Somebody once said: If we are really to get serious about world peace, we ought to start at a Scout Jamboree. My suggestion is we start at a Scout Jamboree, then we come to an American Legion convention, and there we understand what it means to be patriot-loving, freedom-loving, peaceful individuals of this human race.

May God bless each of you as you strive to strengthen the youth of the noble birthright, this rising generation. I pledge to you that we as the Boy Scouts of America will continue to do everything in our power to strengthen the youth of today; that they might be strong and understand the principles for which their grandfathers and fathers and mothers and grandmothers lived and died; that we might keep this country free. God bless you for all you do to strengthen the rising generation. I am honored to be part of this great organization. God bless you, and God bless the United States of America. (Applause)

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: Thank you, Charles. Thank you for that great speech. You know, the Boy Scouts, one of The American Legion's programs, our very first program of youth, giving youth an opportunity. And we had, as a leader of this great organization, an opportunity to go to the Boy Scout Jamboree which happens every four years. I tell you what, Legionnaires, you've never seen nothing like it, 20,000 Boy Scouts, 6,000 volunteers there, young men learning about being a good citizen and learn about patriotism as well, because there were Legionnaires on site. Legionnaires tutoring, helping the young men. This young man here, the commissioner of Boy Scouts of America, you would think that he would be in an office or something. The first time I saw him, they said, "You're going to be meeting the commissioner of the Boy Scouts of America." And I said, "Well, who is he and where is he?" "It's that gentleman over there sitting underneath that cover with a bunch of young men," and he was teaching them different knots. That's the type of leader we have in the Boy Scouts of America. Charles, on behalf of The American Legion, we'd like to present to you our medallion.

CHARLES DAHLQUIST: Thank you very much. (Applause)
NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: The American Legion's generosity has once again come forward. Today's Child Welfare Foundation donations that just took place here on the stage a few minutes ago totals $40,699. Which brings the year's total to $925,743.62. Which adds to the all American Legion donations for the year, $8,136,661.89. The American Legion Family has stepped up again! *(Applause)*

The Chair now recognizes Robert Newman of Indiana, chairman of the National Convention Committee on Internal Affairs, for the purpose of making a report.

**Report: Convention Committee on Internal Affairs**
Robert E. Newman, Indiana, Chairman

At 9:30 am, Sunday, August 20, 2017, the Convention Committee of Internal Affairs, consisting of the two Subcommittees of Other Internal Matters and Membership met in the Grand Ballroom, Sections 1 & 2, Second Floor, at the Atlantis Resort for the purpose of electing a Chairman and Secretary for Internal Affairs. Robert Newman (IN) was elected Chairman and Randy Goodman (GA) was elected Secretary for the purpose of reporting to the Convention.

It was regularly moved, seconded and carried that the Committee Chairman and Secretary be authorized to accept and sign the report of the Convention Committee on Internal Affairs on behalf of its delegates.

It was moved and seconded that the Chairman, Internal Affairs Convention Committee be authorized to accept the actions of the two sub-committees assigned to Internal Affairs on the resolutions assigned to the respective sub-committees.

It was also regularly moved, seconded and carried that the Chairman and Secretary may 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).

No further business was discussed at this point and the delegates were then released to the two sub-committees assigned to the Internal Affairs Convention Committee---Membership and Other Internal Matters--- for the purpose of reviewing and acting on the assigned resolutions.

The Internal Affairs Committee was recessed at this point subject to call by the chairman if required.

The Convention Sub-Committees met and considered their assigned resolutions as follows:

**Membership Sub-Committee**
Randy Goodman, Georgia, Chairman

At 10:00 am, Sunday, August 20, 2017, 46 delegates assigned to the Convention Subcommittee Membership met in the Emerald Room Section B & C on the second floor of the Atlantis Resort. Randy Goodman (GA) was elected Chairman and Gary Schacher (NY) was elected Secretary. The committee considered one resolutions and its disposition is as follows:

**Referred Resolutions**

The following resolution was referred to the Standing Committee on Membership & Post Activities:

**Resolution No: 36 (CO): Payment of Membership Dues for Multiple Years**
At 10:00 am, Sunday, August 20, 2017, 42 delegates assigned to the Convention Sub-Committee on Other Internal Matters met in the Grand Ballroom A on the second floor of the Atlantis Resort. Robert E Newman (IN) was elected Chairman and William O. Moore, Jr. (KY) was elected Secretary. The committee considered eighteen resolutions and their dispositions are as follows:

Approved Resolutions

Resolution No. 86: Appreciation to Host City
Origin: Convention Committee on Internal Affairs
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Internal Affairs

WHEREAS, The 99th National Convention has been held in Reno, Nevada, August 22, 23 and 24, 2017; and

WHEREAS, There has been a spirit of cooperation and friendship along with mutual helpfulness evidenced by the Legionnaires of Nevada, the officers of the convention corporation and the department, and by the officials and the people of Reno, Nevada; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion National Convention assembled in Reno, Nevada, August 22, 23, 24, 2017, That we express our deep appreciation to the Department of Nevada, Governor of Nevada Brian Sandoval; Mayor of Reno, Nevada, Hillary L. Schieve; the city of Reno, Nevada, including the fire department, police department, and other public safety officials, and to The American Legion National Convention Corporation of Nevada, Inc., John F. Warden, president, around this nucleus has been built the moving force that provided for every necessity that made for a successful and enjoyable convention.

Resolution No. 87: WWI National Memorial in Pershing Park, Washington, D.C.
Origin: Convention Committee on Internal Affairs
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Internal Affairs

WHEREAS, One of the founding principles of The American Legion is to “preserve the memories and incidents of our associations in the Great Wars,” as stated in the preamble to the Constitution of The American Legion; and

WHEREAS, World War I was one of the great wars from which The American Legion was founded; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion previously expressed support of a National World War I Memorial without financial obligation to The American Legion in Resolution No. 15, National Executive Committee (October 2010), Resolution No. 13, National Executive Committee (October 2015) and Resolution No. 4 National Executive Committee (May 2017); and

WHEREAS, The Congress, in the National Defense Authorization Act of 2015 (NDAA) Pub. L. 113-291 Paragraph 3091, has endorsed the memorial by passing the legislation that authorizes the United States World War I Centennial Commission to build said National World War I Memorial; and

WHEREAS, The National Capital Memorials Advisory Commission which consists of representatives from several agencies, including the National Parks Service, the National Planning Commission, the General Services Administration, the Commission of Fine Arts, as well as the American Battle Monument Commission supported the legislation; and

WHEREAS, The National Capital Planning Commission gave their final approval on July 13, 2017 for the memorial design as did the Commission of Fine Arts on May 18, 2017 for dedication in November 2017 in Washington, D.C.; and
WHEREAS, The World War I Centennial Commission is still conducting a fundraising campaign to collect private and individual donations for the construction of the memorial; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion national organization donated $50,000 as approved in Resolution No. 4 (May 2017) for continuing education of the importance of World War I as well as $20,000 from American Legion Charities for the WWI Commemoration Ceremony of the U.S. entry into World War I conducted in Kansas City at the National WWI Museum and Memorial (Liberty Memorial) on April 6, 2017; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Reno, Nevada, August 22, 23, 24, 2017, That the national organization supports the concept of constructing the World War I Memorial on the site known as Pershing Park in Washington, D.C. without any further financial obligation from the national organization; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That individual, post or department donations, if they so choose to support, may be made directly to the National World War I Centennial Commission and that our national American Legion media channels be utilized to advance awareness to our membership on the construction status this memorial.

Resolution No. 88: National Veterans Memorial and Museum
Origin: Convention Committee on Internal Affairs
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Internal Affairs

WHEREAS, One of the founding principles of The American Legion is “To preserve the memories and incidents of our associations in the great wars”; and

WHEREAS, The National Veterans Memorial and Museum (NVMM) has a nonprofit organization incorporated in the State Of Ohio currently conducting a campaign to raise money to construct a memorial and museum in Columbus, Ohio in honor of all military veterans; and

WHEREAS, They have currently raised in excess of $75 million for the design and construction with a completion date for opening in Summer 2018; and

WHEREAS, The Columbus, Ohio Downtown Development Corporation is currently serving as the project manager for the design and construction of the NVMM and once constructed ownership will be transferred to a different 501(c)(3) organization to manage the ongoing operations and maintenance of the memorial and museum; and

WHEREAS, The NVMM purpose is to honor the contributions of our nation’s veterans, connect civilians and veterans, inspire communities and citizens to honor service in the military, and educate our youth on the value of serving our nation; and

WHEREAS, Senator John Glenn served as the founding chairman of National Veterans Memorial and Museum Advisory Committee and it was his vision to construct this memorial and museum in the heartland of America so more citizens would be able to visit in order to honor those who served this nation in uniform; and

WHEREAS, There is legislation pending in the 115th Congress to approve the National Veterans Memorial and Museum as a national landmark with the idea the bill will be included in the current National Defense Authorization Act currently under review; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion is in favor of honoring veterans with such a memorial; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Reno, Nevada, August 22, 23, 24, 2017, That The American Legion goes on record to support the construction of a memorial dedicated to our veterans in Columbus, Ohio which is to be named the National Veterans Memorial and Museum without financial obligation by The American Legion; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the national organization supports legislation to designate the memorial and museum as a national landmark and that our national American
Legion media channels be utilized to advance awareness to our membership on the progress of the National Veterans Memorial and Museum.

Referred to the Standing Convention Commission

Resolution No. 34 (CO): Reject Sanctuary Cities in Selection of National Convention Cities

Referred to the Standing Media & Communications Commission

Resolution No. 63 (NY): Supply Copies of The American Legion Magazine to Facilities that Provide Services to Veterans

Referred to the Standing Internal Affairs Commission

Resolution No. 4 (MT): Reexamination of the Paid Up For Life Program
Resolution No. 6 (MA): Award Congressional Gold Medal to the Chinese American Veterans of WWII
Resolution No. 29 (OH): Definition of Active Duty for Membership Eligibility
Resolution No. 35 (CO): Use of Gender Neutral Language in Official Documents
Resolution No. 42 (WA): Free Admission to National Parks for Honorably Discharged Veterans
Resolution No. 45 (IL): Increase National Emergency Fund Relief Amounts
Resolution No. 60 (NY): Update Funeral Honors Section of Consolidated Post Report
Resolution No. 61 (NY): Award Congressional Gold Medal to the Chinese American Veterans of World War II
Resolution No. 71 (CA): Award Congressional Gold Medal to the Chinese American Veterans of World War II

Resolutions Received and Recorded

Resolution No. 50 (WI): Endorsement of Roger P. Mathison for National Vice Commander
Resolution No. 67 (AZ): Endorsement of Robert B. Gilmore, Jr. for National Historian

Rejected Resolutions

Resolution No. 44 (OK): Male Spouse Eligibility in the Sons of The American Legion
Resolution No. 66 (MO): Tractor Cruisers

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN NEWMAN: Mr. Commander, as a duly elected and registered delegate from the Department of Indiana, I move for the adoption of this report.

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: You've heard the motion. Do I have a second? ...Second. Is there any discussion? Hearing none, all in favor say aye. Opposed? The ayes have it. The report of Internal Affairs is adopted. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Chair now recognizes Paul Dillard of Texas, chairman of the National Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education, for the purpose of making a report.
Eighty-four (84) members of your Committees on Employment and Veterans’ Preference and on Veterans Education, Other Benefits & Homelessness met at 9:00am on August 20, 2017, in the Atlantis, Grand Ballroom, Sections 5 & 6, Second Floor, Reno, Nevada, and agreed on the following report, which is respectfully submitted for your consideration.

The Committees were called to order by Joseph C. Sharpe, Jr. (DC), Liaison Representative appointed by the National Adjutant to act as temporary chairman. Ariel De Jesus, Jr. (DC), Assistant Director for the National Veterans Employment & Education Commission, acted as temporary secretary and called the roll. A quorum being present, nominations were received: Paul Dillard (TX) was elected Chairman and James Fratolillo (MA) was elected Secretary of the Convention Committee.

James Fratolillo (MA) was elected Chairman of the Employment and Veterans’ Preference Committee and Dennis Tipsword (IL) was elected Secretary. Eric Measles (CA) was elected Chairman of the Veterans Education, Other Benefits & Homelessness Committee, and Geraldine Hince (TX), as Secretary.

A Veterans Employment & Education Resolutions Screening Committee met earlier to screen and group the resolutions. A report of their actions, with recommendations, was presented to the Convention Committees for consideration.

The Screening Committee conserved the time of the Convention Committees substantially. It was chaired by Paul Dillard (TX), Chairman of the National Veterans Employment & Education Commission, and was composed of the following persons:

James Fratolillo, Massachusetts
Dennis Tipsword, Illinois
Geraldine Hince, Texas
Eric Measles, California

There were 11 resolutions presented for the consideration of this Convention.
The following actions on the resolutions were taken by the Convention Committees:

- Approved or Approved w/Amendment.....................................................10
- Consolidated with Resolutions Approved.............................................0
- Referred to the Standing Commission...................................................0
- Received and Recorded .........................................................................1
- Rejected ................................................................................................0

A motion was made and seconded to authorize the Chairman and Secretary to sign and deliver the report on the Convention Committees’ behalf.

A report of action taken on the 11 resolutions referred to the Standing National Veterans Employment & Education Commission will be made to the National Executive Committee and to the Adjutant of the Department concerned.
Resolution No. 81: Military Veterans Spouse Employment
Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education

WHEREAS, Military spouses struggle to find jobs and are more likely to work for less pay, or in positions lower than their education level, with over 40 percent of spouses stating that the biggest barrier to employment is employers not wanting to hire spouses due to frequent moves; and

WHEREAS, Military spouses earned less on average than their civilian counterparts; and

WHEREAS, Military families identified spouse unemployment and underemployment as the highest obstacle to financial security, with 44 percent of spouses reported living paycheck to paycheck or struggling financially; and

WHEREAS, Struggling with frequent moves, deployments, and unpredictable schedules of their servicemember spouses, military spouses have a much higher unemployment rate of 16 percent, compared to the national unemployment rate of 4.4 percent; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion fully supports all veterans, servicemembers, and their family members to the fullest extent possible in order to further expand the economy, and enhance veteran economic prosperity; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Reno, Nevada, August 22, 23, 24, 2017, That The America Legion supports legislative and administrative measures that seek to encourage and recognize organizations that hire veteran and military spouses; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion reminds employers, both public and private sectors, of their moral obligation to hire, not only veterans, but their civilian spouses as well.

Resolution No. 85: Support Employment and Veterans Reemployment Rights of National Guard and Reservists Returning from Deployment
Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education

WHEREAS, Over seven years of war has caused record high deployment rates of citizen soldiers, who have the responsibility of maintaining civilian employment while waiting for the call to serve their country; and

WHEREAS, Many of these soldiers, who struggle daily to balance their dual military and civilian lives, have returned home from deployment to find that same contract of balance was not upheld by their employers; and

WHEREAS, According to the Department of Defense’s Status of Forces study released in November 2007, among post-9/11 returning reservists and National Guard, nearly 11,000 were denied prompt reemployment, and more than 20,000 lost seniority, pay and other benefits awarded to them through their dedicated service; and

WHEREAS, It was the intent of Congress in enacting the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act of 1994 that no veteran be denied employment, reemployment, advancement or discrimination in employment for serving their country in the interest of protecting our nation; and

WHEREAS, As currently drafted, the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act of 1994 fails to adequately support military personnel upon their return to civilian employment as countless employers have violated the rules laid out in Title 38 of the United States Code; and
WHEREAS, Legislation is under consideration that will help ensure that
servicemembers and veterans are promptly reinstated in their civilian jobs when they return
from tours abroad; and

WHEREAS, This legislation would strengthen the protections in current law to ensure
that servicemembers’ and veterans’ employment and reemployment rights are effectively
enforced under the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act of
1994; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in
Reno, Nevada, August 22, 23, 24, 2017, That The American Legion supports and
urges Congress to adopt and enforce the provisions as outlined in the Uniformed
Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act of 1994 (USERRA); and, be it
further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion supports the amending and
strengthening of USERRA to ensure that National Guard and reservists receive the
employment and reemployment rights afforded to them through their dedicated service
to the country and as required under law; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion supports legislation that would assert
explicitly in the USERRA law that servicemembers cannot be blocked from the court
system by arbitration agreements.

Committee on Veterans Education, Other Benefits & Homelessness

Approved Resolutions or Approved with Amendment

Resolution No. 26: Support Effort of the Small Business Administration’s Office of
Veterans Business Development and Veterans Business Outreach Centers
Origin: Maryland

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education

WHEREAS, Assistance to veterans who have honorably served our country is a
veterans benefit that dates back to the Servicemen’s Readjustment Act of 1944; and

WHEREAS, Benefits to veterans have always included assistance in creating and
operating veteran-owned small businesses; and

WHEREAS, The Veteran Business Outreach Centers (VBOCs) offer veterans in-depth counseling and mentor services that are vital in aiding veterans in starting or growing
their small businesses; and

WHEREAS, Currently, there are not enough VBOC offices to fully support business-aspiring veterans; and

WHEREAS, The military is currently in the process of downsizing, which will mean
that thousands of former military personnel who have honorably served their country will
be unemployed; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in
Reno, Nevada, August 22, 23, 24, 2017, That The American Legion supports increased
funding for the efforts of the Small Business Administration’s (SBA) Office of
Veterans Business Development in its initiatives to provide enhanced outreach and
specific community-based assistance to veterans and self-employed members of the
Reserve and National Guard; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion support legislation that would permit
the SBA’s Office of Veterans Business Development to enter into contracts, grants,
and cooperative agreements to further its outreach goals and develop a nationwide
community-based service delivery system specifically for veterans and members of
Reserve Components of the United States military; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion fully supports SBA funding that would
allow for there to be a Veteran Business Outreach Center in every state, including
Puerto Rico.
Resolution No. 77: Authorization to Build Veteran College Search Tool
Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education

WHEREAS, The American Legion wants to ensure that student-veterans and their family members using the Post-9/11 GI Bill and military student programs achieve educational success and a positive transition to the civilian workforce; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion has identified the complicated and challenging process of selecting and applying for schools; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion desires to assist veterans in acquiring information necessary to make informed decisions on education; and

WHEREAS, Home Front Alliance, LLC, created the virtual tool “College Recon” to provide an unbiased and secure environment for current and former military personnel to connect with over 3,000 not-for-profit colleges and universities from across the country; and

WHEREAS, Home Front Alliance, LLC, desires to create and produce at no cost to The American Legion a college search tool that compounds “College Recon” with geolocated information on American Legion posts and resources; and

WHEREAS, Home Front Alliance, LLC, agrees to grant The American Legion “final approval” of all content; and

WHEREAS, Both parties share a common purpose of supporting the military and veteran community; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Reno, Nevada, August 22, 23, 24, 2017, That The American Legion supports Home Front Alliance, LLC, designing an American Legion veterans’ college search tool that incorporates Legion posts and our relevant programs/services that enable veterans and their families to successfully transition into the civilian workforce.

Resolution No. 78: Support Greater GI Bill Outcomes by Closing 90-10 Loophole
Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education

WHEREAS, The American Legion wants to ensure that student-veterans and their family members using the Post-9/11 GI Bill and military student programs achieve educational success and a positive transition to the civilian workforce; and

WHEREAS, Under current law, for-profit colleges may receive no more than 90 percent of their revenues from federal aid, but military education events in order to ensure colleges are not funded solely by federal taxpayers; and

WHEREAS, Under current law, Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) funds and Department of Defense (DOD) funds are counted as private dollars on the 10 percent side, allowing schools to count GI Bill and Department of Defense tuition assistance as private dollars on the 10 percent side, resulting in aggressive recruitment of veterans and servicemembers; and

WHEREAS, Veterans and military students are targeted for deceptive and aggressive recruiting – as documented by many major news outlets, including an Emmy-nominated PBS NewsHour expose, as well as U.S. Senate reports and two undercover U.S. Government Accountability Office investigations – because of a loophole in federal education law through which the GI Bill and DOD student program funds are able to be counted as “private funds” to offset a cap the schools face on federal funds; and

WHEREAS, In December 2016, the Department of Education issued a report that 191 colleges receive more than 90 percent of their revenue from federal student aid, GI Bill education benefits, and DOD education programs; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Reno, Nevada, August 22, 23, 24, 2017, That The American Legion expresses its strong support for legislation and federal agency action to ensure better quality and student outcomes for institutions approved for use of Department of Veterans Affairs
VA) education benefits by excluding Department of Defense and VA funds from the
90/10 calculation as defined by section 487(a) of the Higher Education Act.

Resolution No. 79: Expanding Department of Veterans Affairs Employment
Pathways
Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education

WHEREAS, In order to recruit and retain top talent, the Department of Veterans
Affairs (VA) offers an Education Debt Reduction Program to provide student loan
payments to employees; and
WHEREAS, The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) runs a similar
program that places providers in underserved areas; and
WHEREAS, The student loan benefits offered through HHS are significantly greater
than they are for the VA, even though our nation’s veterans are clearly “underserved”; and
WHEREAS, 2017 analysis of department operations shows shortfalls in human
resources specialists across the department are hurting retention and slowing the hiring of
new employees, resulting in a growing number of vacancies across the VA bureaucracy; and
WHEREAS, Pilot initiatives have been developed to cultivate initial entry talent
through scholarships for critical VA positions, such as the Grow Our Own Directive
(GOOD) Pilot Program; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in
Reno, Nevada, August 22, 23, 24, 2017, That with the intention of improving the
quality of care and user experience veterans receive through the Department of
Veterans Affairs (VA), The American Legion supports increasing education benefits
to VA veteran employees to match competing federal employment opportunities in
order to competitively recruit veterans; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion supports financial assistance for
veterans seeking to complete their education in exchange for commitment to
continued service; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion support innovative retention practices
that provide education and training incentives for VA veteran employees to achieve
credentials and licenses to fill critical vacancies.

Resolution No. 80: Support Expansion of Microsoft Software and Systems Academy
Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education

WHEREAS, Servicemembers transition from active-duty to a civilian sector that
often overlooks or underestimates their employment potential; and
WHEREAS, The Global War on Terror has incurred record high deployment rates of
citizen soldiers, who have the responsibility of competing for civilian employment while
waiting for the call to serve their country; and
WHEREAS, The unemployment rate for veterans ages 25-34 is 7.2 percent compared
to 4.6 percent amongst nonveterans; and
WHEREAS, Servicemembers and veterans need proper training and tools to begin
new careers transitioning from military service; and
WHEREAS, The Microsoft Software & Systems Academy (MSSA) bridges this gap
with comprehensive training and career mentorship that helps prepare servicemembers for
long-term, high-paying tech careers; and
WHEREAS, MSSA has a 91 percent graduation rate with 85 percent working in
information technology fields earning an average salary of more than $70,000; now,
therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in
Reno, Nevada, August 22, 23, 24, 2017, That The American Legion supports the
Microsoft Software & Systems Academy (MSSA) in order to provide servicemembers with necessary skills and resources to obtain gainful employment in today’s global information technology marketplace; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion supports adaptation and expansion of the MSSA across eligible military installations.

Resolution No. 82: Preserve Veteran and Servicemember Rights to Gainful Employment and Borrower Defense Protections
Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education

WHEREAS, The U.S. Department of Education's (ED) rule on Gainful Employment [Docket ID ED–2014–OPE–0039] requires vocational programs at for-profit higher education institutions and non-degree programs at community colleges to meet minimum thresholds with respect to the debt-to-income rates of their graduates at the risk of losing access to all federal financial aid; and

WHEREAS, This requirement protects both students and taxpayers from waste, fraud and abuse by requiring schools to disclose basic information about program costs and outcomes and prevents funding for programs that consistently leave students with debts they cannot repay; and

WHEREAS, ED’s rule on Borrower Defense [Docket ID ED-2015-OPE-0103] codifies a process for providing student loan relief to defrauded borrowers, ensures that students at schools that close suddenly know their options and that their loans are automatically discharged if they do not continue their studies within three years of the school’s closure, and protects veterans and military servicemembers for bearing the costs for the wrongdoing of schools; and

WHEREAS, In June 2017, the secretary of education suspended said rules from taking effect, resetting a rulemaking process that took two years to complete with no solicitation from military stakeholders for input; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Reno, Nevada, August 22, 23, 24, 2017, That The American Legion support legislation and/or administrative rulemaking that protects and enforces the principles upon which Gainful Employment and Borrower Relief were drafted in previous rulemaking; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion insists that veterans’ interests be represented on any new negotiated rulemaking committee on Gainful Employment and Borrower Defense, as they have been for previous negotiations.

Resolution No. 83: Protect Veteran and Servicemember Rights to Fair Consumer Arbitration
Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education

WHEREAS, The American Legion is a national organization of veterans who have dedicated themselves to the service of the community, state and nation; and

WHEREAS, The U.S. Consumer Financial Protection Bureau's (CFPB) rule on Arbitration Agreements (Docket No. CFPB-2016-0020; RIN 3170-AA51) addresses the widespread harm of forced arbitration by restoring the ability of servicemembers, veterans and other consumers to join together and seek relief in class action lawsuits when financial institutions break the law; and

WHEREAS, Congress enacted the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (SCRA), 50 U.S.C. app. §§ 501 et seq., to strengthen and expedite national defense by granting servicemembers certain protections in civil actions against default judgments, foreclosures and repossessions, enforceable in a court of law; and

WHEREAS, In some cases, financial institutions violate SCRA or other statutory or constitutional protections in their interactions with servicemembers; and
WHEREAS, Many financial institutions include pre-dispute mandatory arbitration clauses in contracts of adhesion that bar servicemembers and others from bringing a legal action in court or banding together in a class action lawsuit to seek relief under federal or state law; and

WHEREAS, Class action waivers are particularly burdensome to servicemembers, who may not be able to challenge a financial institution’s illegal or unfair practices individually due to limited resources, deployment or frequent relocations; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense concluded in 2006 that “Servicemembers should maintain full legal recourse against unscrupulous lenders. Loan contracts to servicemembers should not include mandatory arbitration clauses or onerous notice provisions, and should not require the servicemember to waive his or her right of recourse, such as the right to participate in a plaintiff class”;

WHEREAS, This is extremely unfair to bar servicemembers, veterans and other consumers from joining together to enforce statutory and constitutional protections in court, placing an extreme hardship on the individual; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Reno, Nevada, August 22, 23, 24, 2017, That The American Legion oppose legislation to repeal the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau's rule on arbitration agreements and bar servicemembers, veterans and other consumers from joining together in court against unscrupulous financial institutions.

Resolution No. 84: Support and Strengthen the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (SCRA)
Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education

WHEREAS, The American Legion has been the leading veterans advocacy organization since its inception in 1919; and

WHEREAS, Such advocacy resulted in the creation and passage of the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (SCRA), formerly known as the Soldiers' and Sailors' Civil Relief Act, and the original GI Bill, codifying into federal law benefits earned by active and former members of the United States military as a result of their honorable service during a time of war; and

WHEREAS, Both the GI Bill and SCRA have been legislatively updated on occasion by the United States Congress to reflect societal changes and rising costs of providing said benefits; and

WHEREAS, One of these benefits allows servicemembers to keep their residency at one state throughout their military service, rather than changing it after every permanent change of station move for tax purposes; and

WHEREAS, Spouses are not protected or given this benefit as spouses are forced to legally change their state of residency for state and local income tax purposes after each move, which can cause undue financial burden to the servicemember; and

WHEREAS, It is the intention of the SCRA to protect members of the United States military called to active-duty by duly authorized and issued orders and their immediate family; and

WHEREAS, Such protection is not extended to include the necessary termination of a contract under family or group plans, nor to the necessary cancellation of reservations for air or train transportation, resulting in unnecessary, unintended and expensive costs incurred by servicemembers who are obeying the task placed upon them by duly authorized orders; and

WHEREAS, Such costs coincide with negative credit reports which further exacerbate the ability of the servicemember to perform his or her duty, and impacts the ability of the individual or family to realize the American dream and own a home by punitive credit rates; now, therefore, be it
RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Reno, Nevada, August 22, 23, 24, 2017, That Congress be urged to amend the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act to include protections for members of the armed forces, and their families, acting under duly authorized and issued orders to include, but not limited to, deployment and temporary duty assignment orders against fees, fines and the resulting negative credit reports by cancellation of ticketed travel on U.S. airlines or train transportation; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion supports amending the current Servicemember Civil Relief Act to include extending residency benefits to military spouses for tax purposes, thus, alleviating any unnecessary financial burden to the servicemember.

Received and Recorded Resolutions

Resolution No. 46 (IL): Eliminating Tax on Discharged Education Debt for Veterans

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN DILLARD: Mr. Commander, as a duly elected and registered delegate to this Convention from the Department of Texas, I move for the adoption of this report.

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: You've heard the motion. Do I hear a second? ...Second. Is there any discussion? Hearing none, all in favor so indicate by the usual sign. Opposed? The report of Veterans Employment & Education is adopted. Thank you, Mr. Chairman,

Military members transitioning home have few priorities that are more important than finding meaningful employment. A number of outstanding employers were recognized by The American Legion at the Veterans Employment & Education Convention Committee meeting for their work in hiring veterans. But we would like to recognize a couple of other award winners today.

Presentation: Employer of the Year Award for Hiring Veterans
Large Category
Sansone Auto Mall, Avenel, New Jersey

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: For their outstanding record of hiring veterans in the large business category of 200 or more employees, The American Legion recognizes Sansone Auto Mall based in Avenel, New Jersey. Accepting the award are Chairman Paul Sasone, Jr.; Veteran Coordinator Richard Liebler; Corporate Counsel Bob Dato; and department employment chairman of New Jersey, Robert Looby. (Applause)

ANNOUNCER: The American Legion National Award for Outstanding Employer of Veterans presented to Sansone Auto Mall, Avenel, New Jersey, for an exceptional record in the employment of veterans.

PAUL SASONE: Good afternoon, Legionnaires. We had a wonderful afternoon having the secretary of Veterans Affairs, the progress that they're making in the VA and the military, and then having our president here, I mean, it's really a full agenda. And being here myself and feeling the warmth of all your people has made me feel more dedicated than I was when I left home to come here. (Applause)

On behalf of the Sansone Auto Mall and its 400 dedicated employees, I wish to take a moment to thank The American Legion for this special honor and award. Many things can happen, but you can't do it alone. I feel that I have to mention one of my senior people who is a Marine pilot. He has helped me develop this program over the past years. Why we are so successful is the dedication of the team that I put forward. We have employed over 150 military people. Not only at my auto mall, but throughout the state. (Applause)
It wasn't an easy task in the beginning, but I can tell you that we have a more serious problem. We have 200,000 veterans that are incarcerated. So Rich Leibler, who is my right arm in this program, I would just like to give him briefly a round of applause. Rich, will you stand up. (Applause)

So we developed a program which we just started about a year ago, and we have now begun to employ the incarcerated. I have to just give you a brief example of the four or five people that I have employed in my business that have turned out to be wonderful employees that went through this drug problem and all these other things that happened. We have two females that were in this program that are now presently making just under $100,000 a year working for me. They are very successful. (Applause)

So successful that Governor Christie and former Governor McGreevey and even Kim Guadagno, our lieutenant governor, independently came down to my facility to meet some of these individuals. We are so proud of them, and we have about 20 working for us right now. They are marvelous human beings and employees. So I feel the training that we have given them and the follow-up that we do really helps them succeed.

For over 55 years, I have been in the automobile business. And one thing that I recognize was that many of our veterans were experiencing great difficulty in securing employment upon being discharged from the military. So a few years back I put the words into action. I created a large-scale training program for the veterans and their families, with employment opportunities in the business of selling and servicing automobiles. I initiated this program with the construction of a 7,500-square-foot facility. I call the program Sansone Military Assistance and Training Center. (Applause)

You can look it up on the Internet, if you'd like. I agreed to a substantial grant to provide hands-on education and training. Many of our graduates now work at Sansone and in dealerships across the state. The automobile business needs employees. They need technicians. They need business development center people. So there are many facets in the automobile business, and there's about 7,000 nationwide, that could use employees that are trained. Now, we can't train everyone. So I'm going to ask different dealerships to take our model and then try to implement it with our help. (Applause)

I would like to thank Bob Looby of local American Legion Post 471 in Iselin, New Jersey, on facilitating our job fairs and employment opportunities. We at Sansone Auto greatly respect our veterans for what have done for us in our great country. I promise to continue doing all we can to assist veterans and their families in providing employment opportunities in the automotive business. (Applause)

Thank you. So I'm going to strongly encourage all employers to follow in our footsteps. If we could place 150 people, then other dealerships can do the same. But even if, for their own personal benefit, they can employ ten through our training, just as the other dealerships are benefiting in the state of New Jersey, the employment of solid automobile people, not everyone has worked out. I'm not going to say something that's not factual. They have to have the right attitude. Most of them do.

We make sure we're training properly. We have a whole training center. We have quality people doing the training. Led by me financially, but led by Rich Liebler who's dedicated to the program. We're going to continue working with the at-risk people that are coming out of the incarcerated program. But 200,000 veterans are in our system, most of them through drugs. I think maybe rather than incarcerate all of them, I think we take some and maybe put them through a one-year program of detoxing them. I think we would be better off. That's my personal opinion. (Applause)

This is a tremendous honor to be here, to address you, people that have been so dedicated for years and years. I would like to end by saying thank you so much for allowing me to be here and accepting this honor. I really appreciate it, and I truly appreciate the efforts that The American Legion has done. So I want to say thank you. (Applause)

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: The American Legion is also proud of the men and women who work on behalf of disabled veterans seeking employment. This year
I am happy to present the Disabled Veterans Outreach Program, DVOP, Specialist of the Year Award to Bradley Aune of Fargo, North Dakota. (Applause)

ANNOUNCER: The American Legion National Award for Outstanding Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialist Presented to Bradley Aune of Fargo, North Dakota, for your outstanding service to the veterans of the state of North Dakota. We thank you.

Presentation: Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialist of the Year Award
Bradley Aune, Fargo, North Dakota

Thank you very much for this honor. I'm humbled to accept this. I work out of the Fargo Job Service office, and I would like to thank the state of North Dakota Legion department for putting me in for this prestigious award. And just to let you know that I enjoy working with vets. I'm a vet. I had 22 years in the Marine Corps and the Army. I have been doing this for about nine years now, and I go to the homeless shelters in the area and into the Cass County jail and work with the veterans that there to get them back on track and help them find their honor and get their honor back in their service and get them back on the road to employment. So I'm very honored to be here, and I appreciate this honor. Thank you. (Applause)

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: On behalf of every veteran in America, I extend to you our congratulations and say those words all workers love to hear: "Thank you for a job well done." We're certain you will keep hiring or assisting veterans. Please tell other employers about the reliability and work ethic of veterans. No veteran should be in need of a job, nor should veterans have to live on the streets. And those with disabilities often prove to have many abilities. Thank you and congratulations to our award winners. Let give them another hand. (Applause)

Our next guest is a 1983 graduate of the United States Air Force Academy and has earned more than 3,000 flight hours as a command pilot for T-37, T-38, B-52G, B-1B bomber and B-2 aircraft. As the commander of Air Force Recruiting Service, Joint Base San Antonio-Randolph, Texas, he is responsible for more than 2,470 airmen and veterans in more than 1,100 recruiting offices across the United States and abroad. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome Major General Garrett Harenck of the United States Air Force. (Applause)

Address: Major General Garrett Harenck
Commander, USAF Recruiting Service

Off we go! All right! Good afternoon, Legionnaires! I'll tell you, I'm so thrilled to be here and the opportunity to come talk to you. I'm a member of The American Legion. I've been a part of this family my entire life, as my father and uncles all were members of American Legion Post 347 in Clifton, New Jersey, where I grew up in. (Applause)

I got to tell you, ladies and gentlemen I'm very, very excited to be here. Although I understand that the national commander is an Air Force veteran. Thank you for your great service to our great Air Force. Yesterday there was an Army general here who made fun of my beloved Air Force. Now, you might expect that I'm going to respond in-kind, but, no, I'm going to take the higher road today. Because as a graduate of the United States Air Force Academy, I could tell you I have tremendous respect for graduates of West Point and all they've done despite the fact that they never got a formal education or graduated from an accredited university. (Laughter and applause)

And to help out all our Army veterans here, you're going to notice I took all the words off of my slides, all right? So you don't have to worry anymore about looking them up. (Laughter and applause)
But let me tell you, ladies and gentlemen, I am so excited to be here. On behalf of our secretary of the Air Force, the Honorable Heather Wilson, and our chief of staff, General David Goldfein, I'm thrilled to represent the United States Air Force to talk to you. I'm going to talk to you just for a short period of time. I know they told me they only gave me 15 minutes. If you know me, when I drive through McDonald's I talk longer than 15 minutes.

So I'm going to try to condense what I'm going to do here today. But I'm here for three reasons. One, I'm here to hug your necks and rub your tummies and to tell you thank you for what you do for everybody who has ever, ever worn the cloth of our great United States military and of our nation. I'm here to thank you on behalf of all of us, because what you do each and every day as The American Legion is truly inspiring. And our airmen and our soldiers, sailors, Marine Corps and Coast Guardsmen, we all thank you for what you're doing as you fight each and every day for the veterans of our great nation. (Applause)

I'm also here to talk to you a little bit about recruiting and the environment that it takes to recruit today. Many of you, I believe, are going to be shocked by some of the things I'm going to talk to you about in the next few minutes, about just how difficult it is to recruit these days and the misconceptions and the mythologies out there that hinder us getting the best and brightest to serve in the world's greatest Air Force and the world's greatest military. Lastly, I'm going to ask for your help, because you're needed. You're doing a lot. I'm going to ask you to do more, specifically when it comes to recruiting our next generation of airmen and our next generation of soldiers, sailors, Marine, and Coast Guardsmen.

You know, I have the absolute best job in the world because we get to inspire and engage and recruit the next generation of airmen. And it's the most important job. I've had a lot of important jobs in the Air Force. We always say, oh, every job you do is important. Yeah, this one, just a little bit more important. Because we make sure in Air Force recruiting that, as our song says, we are followed by more. But more importantly, I believe, I believe we're bringing the single greatest weapon system into our Air Force. I have flown some great weapon systems, the B-2 bomber, the B-1, the B-52. We have some awesome, awesome weapons, smart bombs, all that's needed to hunt down and destroy American's enemies wherever they may be hiding. We have great weapon systems out there, and we need them, and we thank you for your support to giving it to us.

But what I learned in my 38 years in this great Air Force is the greatest weapon system we have, ladies and gentlemen, does not come with a tail number. The greatest weapon system we have does not come with a serial number stamped on it. The greatest weapon system we have comes with a Social Security number. (Applause)

We believe at Air Force Recruiting we're bringing that great system in each and every day, and there's one last reason why I have the best job in the world: Because I know that we are changing positively people's lives when they join the Air Force. I'm going to ask for some audience participation here. Everybody in this room, if you believe that your service in the United States military, whether it be for two years, four years, six years or 40 years, are you a better person because you served? Raise your hand if you believe. (Cheers)

Of course we are. So when we brought in 35,000 airmen last year, we know we changed their lives for the better. We tell our recruiters all the time: We can talk about the education benefits, we can talk about the adventure, we can talk about all the cool things that they're going to get to do when they join the military and our United States Air Force, but what I really tell our recruiters that we do every day is just tell your story.

Here's my story. I left Elmwood Park, New Jersey, on 21 June 1979, and everything good and great in my life happened because I left to join America's Air Force. Everything. I owe everything to this great Air Force. I'm a better person. The adventures, my wife, my children, the dogs we rescued along the way, everything about my Air Force family, it has made me the person that I am. And every single day I have gotten to wear this uniform has been a gift. And that's our story. That's your story, too, ladies and gentlemen. The time, the
place, the circumstances have changed, but the end result is all of us are better because we served. *Applause*

That story needs to be told. Because let me explain a little bit of the environment that we deal with as recruiters, all the services do. There are 20 million, 17- and 21-year-olds, which is our target market. 20 million. I know what you're saying: Oh, General Harencak, you mean it's hard to get 35,000 out of 20 million? My God, you're incompetent. Well, I may be. But let me tell you about that 20 million. Only 11 million meet our academic standards. Only 11 million. It's still 11 million. You should be able to get 35,000 out of that, pretty easily.

Out of that 11 million, only 4.4 million are not obese, don't have drug convictions, don't have any of 202 different medical disqualifying factors. We're down to 4.4 million. Out of that 4.4 million, only about 450,000 are propensed. That's a word I learned when I took over this job. That means they have some knowledge, they understand the value of serving in our great military. Out of that, less than 500,000, all the services need 250,000 of them a year. It is, ladies and gentlemen, something that many of us did not experience when we joined our services so many decades ago.

Let me give you some other facts. Here's a simple fact: Young adults are more disconnected from the military than ever before. I don't need to tell this audience, but I'll say it anyway. More disconnected than ever before. Forty-nine percent of young adults ages 17 to 35 can name all four DoD services. You know what I say to that? How is that even possible? Over half of 17- to 35-year-olds could not name all four services. 34 percent of young adults 17 to 35, well over a third, do not comprehend the most basic, basic military fundamentals, ranks, officer, enlisted, standards, requirements. We see them every day as we recruit. Well, I'd join the military, but I want to have a family. Duh, we have families. I'd join the military, but I heard you can't have dogs. Uhh, we have dogs. What are you talking about? Absolutely, absolutely, complete lack of understanding of the most basic military fundamentals.

Here's the one that really, really concerns all of us and all of my fellow commanding generals of the other recruiting services: 52 percent of American parents will not recommend the military to their children. If one or both of those parents have a college degree, the number is in the 70 percent. If one or both have a college degree and they're in certain minority diversity groups, it could be as high as 85 percent will not recommend the military to their children. That's the environment that we're working in. And why is that? Here's a simple reason: Influencers. Lack thereof.

Now, I was born in 1960. On 1 September 1965, that's the date I started my second year in kindergarten. And let me tell you 91 percent of American households in September of 1965 had a core influencer in their family unit that had served in the military. My dad was a World War II vet. All of his brothers and all of my mother's brothers had all served. Had all served. Most of them were members of American Legion Post 347. I used to go there all the time and personally hear how every single member of that Legion won World War II. And then on the side they also won Korea. *(Laughter)*

Everybody in my high school, all the faculty, if they weren't personally veterans, they were spouses of veterans. We had cousins, everybody. There was a draft going on. Everybody. 91 percent. Some of them did not enjoy their military service. Okay. But they certainly understand the fundamentals of it and they understood the opportunities that were inherent in serving even for a short period of time in our United States military.

Thirty years later, 1995, September 1995, that number is down to 40 percent. Today, today, almost September of 2017, that number is 14 percent. And the math majors tell me that if you solve for the slope, that number never gets better. Less than 1 percent has served, all-volunteer force for over 40 years. Population increases, that number never gets better.

The influencers, ladies and gentlemen, they're not there, certainly not in the numbers that there have been. So that manifests itself in a lot of ways. When we talk to the young men and women about the reasons they would join, they tell us certainly pay money, pay for future education, travel, to help others, gain experience, serve their country. They're
there. But those are reasons, quite frankly, they could go on social media and see. They could go on it. You can go on airforce.com, and we'll tell you what your starting pay will be. We'll tell you about all the great opportunities that exist.

But when we ask the people who decided not to join or were not propelled or who would not consider serving in our great military and positively changing their lives for the better, this is what they say. Number one reason: Possibility of injury of death, 58 percent. Leaving families or friends, 46 percent. Of course, they don't realize they're going to gain a much bigger family and a hell of a lot more friends by joining. (Applause)

Possibility of PTSD or others, 40 percent. When we ask, "What do you think when a veteran leaves military service, what percentage of them think is suffering certainly PTSD or whatever," the number that's most likely numbered is about 46 percent. The real number is less than 1 percent. Where do they get that from? Oh, I don't know, how about Hollyweird. Right? Every crime procedural drama, no matter what we have, there's always, oh, the guy took a hostage. He's a vet. We have to engage with people, ladies and gentlemen. The reasons to join are right there on a website.

But the reasons to diffuse people of their reasons why they wouldn't join, we must engage, you, I, all of us who know better, must look them in the eye and go: "That is not true." Should you be injured, we will take care of you for the rest of your lives to the best extent we can, and we'll continue to improve that. But your belief, your knowledge, your lack of knowledge of the United States military is severely hurting your chances to positively change your life for the better. You are missing opportunities. You are closing doors that haven't even been opened to you yet. We must, together, personally use the handshake, look the look in the eye and talk to the folks. Recruiting today cannot be left up to social media. It cannot be left up to the Internet. It must be as it always was. A personal, where we inspire people, where we engage with them and we tell them about the incredible opportunities that await them as they serve the world's greatest nation in the world's greatest military. (Applause)

This is where I need you. You know, there are over 37,000 high schools in America, both private and public. 1,500 junior colleges. Out of those 37,000 high schools and 1,500 junior colleges, there are about 4,000 schools all around the America that either blatantly do not allow recruiters or in some way restrict them so severely that they are not in compliance with even this spirit of the law that says recruiters should have access to schools. 4,000 of them.

Now, some of them, a relatively small percentage of them, it's due to ideological concerns. And we have that in certain areas of the country. There's counter-recruiting going on, where one of our recruiters is allowed into the school but only if they're accompanied by an anti-war or anti-military group that hands out the most vile, disgusting and inaccurate information about what might happen as they actively try to do it. Now, thankfully that's in small areas of the country, but it is active and it is growing. The overwhelming majority of the schools don't do it, do without it for one simple reason: The members of that school board, that member of the high school, the faculty has no comprehension of the incredible opportunities that service in the United States military provides. That is unacceptable. We must re-engage and we must not allow it.

You can think whatever you want. It's a free country. If you want to feel that "I'm going to be ignorant about this and remain ignorant about the educational opportunities, about all the incredible benefits of service," fine. But you really, in my view, have no right to prevent your students from exploring the positive, life-changing experience of serving in our great military. (Applause)

So I challenge each and every one of you. My recruiters are all over, all over. I just talked to two of them in Reno here. Good news. Twenty-eight high schools they're responsible for in this area, not one of them restricts. That's cool. That's great for Reno. It's not great for some of the areas where your posts are. Every single department in The American Legion has high schools that restrict access.
I'm asking you to engage. You are leaders of your communities. I'm asking you to make sure that those high schools in your post area, in your departments, are not doing that. And if they are, work to educate them, to give those young 17- to 21-year-olds the option to at least consider positively changing their lives for the better.

I'm asking each and every one of you. That's why I need you. We need your help. We don't have enough recruiters. None of the services do. And if they say, "Oh, we allow recruiters," how do you allow recruiters? Some schools like to allow only one day a recruiter can come for job fairs. Sometimes they allow only one day for a recruiter to come and they have to sit in the principal's office and only talk to people who come in. I don't know about you, but I always wanted to stay away from the principal's office. (Laughter)

Again, where does it all come from? It comes from a colossal misunderstanding and ignorance of the incredible value of service in the United States military. I could go on and on and on and tell you more stats. Tell you what the environment is out there. But I think you know, I think you know how difficult it is these days. There just aren't enough of us out there. So you do a lot. And for that, everyone in the United States Air Force thanks you, American Legion. You do a lot. Now we're going to ask you to do more.

Keep, keep working on that. Make sure that your high schools are allowing it. Reach out to your recruiters, not just of the Air Force, of all the services, and ask how your post might help them become more successful. The more successful they are, the more lives they're going to positively change. It's fun. All of our recruiters are amazing. You're going to love to get to know them. Many of you know your local recruiters. Please reach out to them. They need your help, specifically when it comes to getting access to our target market, which is the youth of our great nation. We no longer can take for granted that we in the United States military will get whomever we need whenever we need them. We can't do it. The facts are there. Every single day, every single day, all of the recruiting services struggle to meet their goals.

But let me tell you one thing: Those that we do get, those incredible airmen, those incredible soldiers, sailors in the Marine Corps and Coast Guardsmen, I live with them, I see them. I'll tell you, they are truly America's best. I can't tell you how thrilled I am as a 57-year-old man to still be able to put on this uniform and go serve with them each and every day. Those that do choose to join our great Air Force and our great military are the very best of this nation, make no mistake. Their values of integrity and service above self, their excellence in all they do are as strong as ours ever was or may have ever been. They will never give up, they will never lose, and they will never let us down. I respectfully request you do what I do every day. Every day I wake up and I pray I never let them down.

God bless you all, God bless The American Legion, and God bless the United States of America. Thank you. (Applause)

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: Before I introduce our next guest, are there Gold Star family members in our audience? If so, would you please stand. Mothers, fathers, wives, husbands, daughters, sons, brothers and sisters of our fallen heroes, thank you is inadequate. Just know that you are loved and appreciated by your American Legion Family. Thank you. (Applause)

Our next speaker belongs to a club that nobody hopes to join. She is a Gold Star mother whose son, Sergeant Jeffrey D. Young, gave his life for his country during the terrorist bombing of the Marine Corps barracks in Beirut, Lebanon, on October 23, 1983. She is the chairman of the Gold Star Mothers National Monument Foundation. Let's give a warm welcome to Judith C. Young. (Applause)

Address: Judith C. Young
Chairman, Gold Star Mothers National Monument Foundation

Good afternoon. I've been truly honored to be able to say a few words about my project. As you can see, I'm a past national president of the American Gold Star Mothers,
and I have taken on the job of being the chairman of the Gold Star Mothers National
Monument Foundation. I would really like to thank everyone who has been so helpful to
me in the last few days, having some problems with, let's say, luggage getting here that
never arrived, et cetera. So everyone has been just so kind and helpful to me. I really want
to thank them for that.

Over the years we've heard veterans all say to us "You mean there isn't a national
monument or memorial to Gold Star mothers?" And we have to say, "No, there really isn't." And they would say, "Wow, it's really long overdue."

So I'm going to give you a very brief history of how this all came about. So take notes.
I'm going to have to test when I'm all finished, see if you're paying attention. I'm going to
be very brief in this because it can get very long. In 2002, in New York, Putnam County,
the veterans there decided they wanted to have a statue and they wanted to have a statue of
a Gold Star mother.

So one of our past national presidents went and she, from the various bunch of some
things that were submitted, selected this particular statue. I know you can't see it, but I call
her Our Lady. She's a depiction of a mom during World War II, being that's the most kind
of casualties we've had, the most Gold Star mothers. She's receiving what they did have at
that particular time a telegram telling her that her son has just been lost. So she's our
emblem at this particular point. She is now the prototype statue in Putnam County, and in
2006 she was unveiled. Since then we've actually have two more statues. One is in New
Hampshire and one is in Connecticut.

In 2009, we decided we had to come out from under the umbrella of the American
Gold Star Mothers because actually you cannot have a memorial or monument in
Washington, D.C. for a particular organization. So we have become completely separate
from my organization, the American Gold Star Mothers. So in 2009, in New Jersey, I know
there's some of you out there, I incorporated and became the Gold Star Mothers National
Monument Foundation. That is the foundation that is behind getting this recognition.

That is not necessarily the name of what it's going to be. It will be called the Gold Star
Mothers Family Memorial because mom is the center of the family. She has been; she
always will be. We will have depictions of the rest of the family, those who received the
Gold Star lapel button from the government, which is mother, father, sister, brother, wife,
children, et cetera. They will all be depicted in our memorial in other ways. But mom will
be the center of the memorial.

We had to go through Congress, and that took, well, actually four years, which was
pretty good. We had to go through the House and then the Senate, and then the president,
of course, signed off on it. We were lucky because my congressman added it to the National
Defense Authorization Bill, and of course that has to be signed. So we were ahead of the
game then. But then here comes the next part. There's three things that people ask you: Where is it going to be, what's it going to look like, and how much is it going to cost?

Well, you can't answer number three, how much it's going to cost, because you don't
know where it's going to be. And if you don't know where it's going to be, you don't know
how much space you'll have for it to look at. So you really have to go in steps to get this
whole thing together.

Now, the authorization was given in 2012, and we then proceeded at that particular
point to get a spot. We had a lot of pro objectives to this. One, we wanted to have the
expression of our nation's gratitude and teach that military service is a worthy endeavor,
and we wanted to commemorate the history of the Gold Star Mothers and the Gold Star
Families on their benefits as to what they give back to the veterans. I mean, they all do
work in many various ways. We also wanted to recognize the loss that a Gold Star Mother
and her family does share.

We can now say that we are going to be at the gates of Arlington National Cemetery.
We had the Women's Memorial Service surrounding us, we have the Fourth Infantry, and
we have the United Spanish War Veterans Memorial. There are several niches that are
along the boulevard there. We have been offered that one. They have a few left. But we
wanted this particular spot. We are now going to be at Arlington National Cemetery. And we have the official, official word as of November that it is definitely our spot. And the National Park Service has been with us all along the way. I have to say, they have been very supportive. Now, the existing buildings, as you can see around there, are if you're coming out of the opening, visiting center there, then we are to the right, and that looks towards the Women's Memorial. And General Vaught, who is also one of our honorary members, was very helpful in us getting our site. I'm very grateful to her.

So now we go to the design stage. One thing we did promise the National Park Service is we would have no water because they do not like to get water because it's such high maintenance. And we did promise them that. But the other thing we promised them would be the fact that we're going to restore all the oak trees that have more or less died. They were planted in 1929, and they have since either come down or, because of construction, etcetera, have now died. We will replace all those. This is the concept of what our memorial would like to look like. It is in the stages right now. We again have to go through all the committees in D.C. We have to go through National Capital Memorial Advisory Commission and the Commission of Fine Arts, etcetera. We've had to do that all along. However, at this particular point, the Commission of Fine Arts really doesn't like my lady. I don't know what they want, but as the secretary of Labor said to me yesterday, it's your memorial and it's what you want; what difference does it make whether they like it or not? So I totally agreed with him on that one. (Applause)

This is going to be the inside of the memorial. We're not having a lot of confusion in there. There will be the statue. There will also be the Gold Star lapel button symbol with the various service organizations surrounding it. But it's meant to be a place where people can gather. On the far wall there will be the reliefs depicting various aspects of the family life. One of the things that we have chosen for the reliefs would be the caisson in Arlington National Cemetery, and we wanted to do that in honor of Arlington National Cemetery.

We also had hundreds of photos of mothers, fathers, with their sons, their daughters, the wives, etcetera, of all nations, all nationalities depicting the background of the military service and who then have sent their children off to serve and have lost them.

So we're very proud of our organization and what we're trying to do. So we have some various things that we want to do with this. One of the things is we want to be independent from the other commemorative works. You know, you don't want to have to be interfering with them. We have a height limit. We don't want it to be too tall because we certainly don't want it to overshadow anything. We are going to avoid any light pollution, etcetera. Again, no water in there. And the spaces for walking, walkers, wheelchairs, etcetera, all these things have been taken into effect. There will be a path leading in, and then there will be a path leading out.

So we're very pleased with this, and we are hoping that maybe by next year we will be able to break ground with it. I'm just very happy that I was able to be able to share this project with you. It did start in 2002, so, you know, we are kind of into getting into the years. So I'm kind of hoping by next year, if we have the groundbreaking, that we can move a little bit faster towards this.

But we want to be able to recognize mom and her family as to her loss, what they have given, what they have shared. We know that the veterans that we have spoken to, they all have someone that they know that they lost either while they were in combat or as an illness to any one of the many things that have occurred while you're in the service. So everyone that we have talked to said, yes, they know a Gold Star mom, they know their family, and they are kind of hoping that we will get this thing accomplished soon.

So somebody had to do it. It's been long overdue. The Gold Star Mothers National Monument Foundation is the backbone behind this. I want to thank you very much for your time. (Applause)

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: Soldier's Wish is an organization that is dedicated to meeting the needs for military personnel, veterans, and their families. By
authority of our National Executive Committee, The American Legion has established an official relationship with this outstanding group. Please welcome the executive director of Soldier's Wish, Mark Ochsenbein. (Applause)

Presentation: Mark Ochsenbein
Soldier’s Wish

Oh, my gosh. I'm trying to get these people, they're like: I don't want to get up there close to that podium. It's like it scares them. We got any Marines out there? Okay. Now that I know that, I'm going to start speaking a lot slower. (Laughter)

All right. All right. Good afternoon. As you know, I'm Mark Ochsenbein. I'm the volunteer executive director of Soldier's Wish. It's an honor for me to be here. I have board members back here that are part of it, they're part of The Legion. Ken Danilson, Dave Warnken, I want to thank them for being here today.

And we're going to give a wish today, but I want to talk a little bit about the recipient. I have the Nevada commander here, Yvette Weigold, and we're going to be giving this wish to a Nevada Legionnaire. It's great. What I want to do is talk a little bit about that person as we get going here. Let's see here. How are we going to do this? First, the person, believe it or not, and that's why I'm talking a little slow, joined the Marines and was in the Marine Corps for a period of time, I think about five years. Then they realized they could speak a little faster so they went and jumped over into the Army. That's right. Did I hear that again? Oh, hoohah. You know, you had that Air Force general up here cutting down on the Army, but you notice he had airborne wings on. Army. Just that's all I want to say.

All right. But we're going to give a great wish today. This recipient is a veteran, 27-year veteran, of the Marine Corps and U.S. Army. This individual puts thousands of hours into volunteer work to help the veteran, to help their families, and just continues on and on and on. This veteran has struggled with cancer and is now in remission. Thank God. (Applause)

Hoohah. I was wondering what it is we're going to be able to do for this individual to give this individual a wish. I've been playing covert operations today. I'm a special operations operator, and I've been talking to that individual for quite a while. So sometimes you got to go to another source, so I went to another source. Her daughter's name is Rachel. Come on, Rachel. She didn't know she was coming. How great is that? Her daughter is not from here. We got her daughter in. She's taking classes. And our wish recipient, of course, is Yvette. (Applause)

That's right. Yvette gives 110 percent to The American Legion. She gives 110 percent to veterans. We wanted to help her out for all the work that she's done at Soldier’s Wish. So had the great idea. As you know, she's going to be traveling around a lot in her job as a commander throughout the state, so we're going to get her a new set of tires. But guess what? Rachel said, well, she just got a set. I was like, well, crap. (Laughter)

So what we're going to do is we're going to reimburse her for those tires. We're going to do some help around her house to get things going. She's a single parent. Let me tell you, when you got two kids in college, it is not cheap. And we're going to help her out for all that she does. I just found out that she goes and is an ambassador for the women's military museum at Arlington. Is that correct? The women's museum. I said, "How are you going to get there?" She says, "I'm going to have to fly up there if I can get off work." I said, "Do you think you will be able to get off work?" She said, "I hope so. I think I can." I said, "Who pays for your plane fare?" She says, "I do." Guess what? We're going to take care of your plane fare. All right? (Applause)

Soldier's Wish helps all services, active duty, veterans, and their families. This is about taking care of one of your own, and we've got to do that. Come on out here, guys. Please come on out. Got the Nevada delegation here. She's the state commander, and that adds a lot more work on her with all the volunteer work. She does have a full-time job. She helps families that are a part of the National Guard, and she helps them. She's a very caring,
wonderful woman. I had to keep this secret and classified because I know if I told her she was going to get a wish, she would have thrown a fit and said, "No, there's somebody else that's more deserving than me." That's what she's all about.

You know, we gave a wish yesterday to a young Marine. We gave one this morning to a Vietnam vet that's suffering from the effects of Agent Orange. We have a great Legionnaire here that deserves a wish and so much more for all the help that she does. At this time, friend, would you like to say a couple words? *(Applause)*

DELEGATE WEIGOLD (NV): A bunch of sneaky people I work with, apparently. I had no idea this was happening. I was actually shocked to be asked to come out here and help present a Soldier's Wish to someone in Nevada. I'm shocked. I'm overwhelmed, and I just want to say thank you to everyone who took part in sneaking my daughter here and everything. I want to know who's watching the dogs. *(Laughter)*

MARK OCHSENBEIN: Again, thanks. Thanks to Nevada for what they're doing, all they've done to help us out here. Thank you so much. Thank you so much for coming, Rachel, and our board members. Ladies and gentlemen, I salute you for all that you do. Let's keep it going. Hooah. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: The Chair recognizes James W. "Bill" Oxford of North Carolina, chairman of the National Convention Committee on Legislation, for the purpose of making a report.

Report: Convention Committee on Legislation

James Oxford, North Carolina, Chairman

The National Convention Committee on Legislation met on Sunday, August 20, 2017 at the Reno-Sparks Convention Center, D6. There were 45 delegates to the Committee present and 12 guests in attendance.

Following the preliminary activities to officially organize the Committee, the Chairman and Secretary were duly elected. I, James Oxford, a delegate from the Department of North Carolina, was elect Chairman following a motion from Gary Force, a delegate from the Department of Colorado. Art Schwabe, a delegate from Florida, was elected Secretary following a motion from Darrell Hansel, a delegate from the Department of Indiana.

There was no new business to discuss. The Legislation Convention Committee received no resolutions for consideration.

A motion by Bill Babe, a delegate from the Department of Wisconsin, was initiated to allow the Chairman and Secretary to make technical corrections to the Committee Report, as necessary and appropriate, and to authorize the Chairman and Secretary to sign the report on behalf of the Convention Committee on Legislation. This motion was unanimously approved and adopted by the Legislative Convention Committee.

Commander, if I can deviate from the script just one moment. We have heard a lot about the Coin Act. The Senators with us, both Heller and Cruz, were both on part. If your representative is not, make the call. Make that bill pass. In closing, I thank all of you for your service to this great nation and I am privileged to share this stage with true patriots.

LEGISLATION COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN OXFORD: Commander Schmidt, as a duly authorized delegate to this Convention from the Department of North Carolina, I move for the adoption of this report. ... Second.

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: We've heard the motion. And I believe we heard a second, did we not? Are there any discussions? All in favor say aye. Opposed? The report of Legislation is adopted.

Tomorrow we will receive donations for Operation Comfort Warriors following the National Security report. Legionnaires, today has been a great day. Today has been a historic day. Tomorrow will also be historic. As you leave the hall today, think about what
you've heard, what you've seen. We are a great organization. We do a lot of things. And, again, be proud of what you've done and also be proud of what you're going to do.

Legionnaires, please join me in a salute to the flag of our United States. One!

... At this time, the delegation rose and rendered a salute to the Colors.

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: Two! The time now is 3:15. The convention will stand in recess until 8:30 a.m. tomorrow.

... At 3:15 p.m., the Convention was recessed to reconvene the following day, August 24, 2017, at 8:30 a.m.
PROCEEDINGS  
THIRD DAY  
Thursday, August 24, 2017  

... At 8:30 a.m., the delegates assembled for the third day of the 99th Annual National Convention, and the following proceedings were had.

Call to Order  
Charles E. Schmidt, Oregon, National Commander  

Fellow Legionnaires and ladies and gentlemen, as we begin our program today, please join me in a round of applause for Rick Pedro on the keyboard. (Applause)  
Thank you, Rick. Great job, as usual. The convention will now come to order. I call on the sergeant-at-arms.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: With the flag of our nation in place, hand salute. Two!  
... At this time, the delegation rose and rendered a salute to the Colors.

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: For the invocation, I call on National Chaplain Harvey Klee of Texas. Please uncover.

Invocation  
Harvey H. Klee, Texas, National Chaplain  

Divine Creator of all things good on this Earth and beyond, we thank You for the grace of another day and all that today may bring forth, a day of joy, excitement, anticipation, adventure and optimism. May Your beneficence abound as we continue in our service for God and country. You have given us this good land for our heritage. We humbly ask that we may always prove ourselves a people mindful of Your favor and glad to do Your will. Bless our land with honorable endeavor, sound learning, and pure manners. Save us from violence, discord and confusion, from pride and arrogance, and from every evil way defend our liberties, and fashion into one people the multitude brought here out of many nations and tongues. Endow with the spirit of wisdom those to whom in Your name we entrust the authority of government, that there may be justice and peace at home, and that through obedience to Your law may we show forth Your praise among the nations on Earth. In time of prosperity, fill our hearts with thankfulness, and in the day of trouble, do not allow our trust in You to fail. This we pray in Your most sacred name, amen.

Pledge of Allegiance  

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: Thank you, Chaplain Klee. I now call on the national sergeant-at-arms, Kevin J. Owens of Oregon, to lead us in the Pledge of Allegiance to our flag. ... At this time, the delegation recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: Cover. The 99th National Convention of The American Legion is now in session.

Presentation: The American Legion Fourth Estate Award  
Charles E. Schmidt, Oregon, National Commander  

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: We begin this morning by recognizing outstanding achievement in journalism that had a positive impact on a community. The American Legion Fourth Estate Award is difficult to earn. It is a testament to the demanding nature of the competition and the quality of entries. Not only do the reports have to be informative and entertaining, they have to provide a tangible benefit to society.
NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: Being honored in the broadcast category is KTVU-TV of Oakland, California. In its series "Mental Hospital Hell," the Fox affiliate exposed horrific conditions inside the John George Psychiatric Hospital in Alameda County, California. The station obtained hidden-video footage of patients sleeping and eating on the floor, with some of them moaning and crying for help, in a severely overcrowded facility. The stories triggered major policy and staffing changes at the hospital, including the hiring of more doctors and nurses and the resignation of the hospital's director. Please turn your attention to the video monitors.

... At this time, the delegation viewed a video.

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: Ladies and gentlemen, Investigative Executive Producer Simone Aponte and News Director Amber Eikel of KTVU/Channel 2. Welcome them. (Applause)

SIMONE APONTE: Good morning. I just want to say thank you. This is such an honor for us to be here and to receive this award. It's a great honor to serve our community as journalists and to shine a light on these types of stories.

The story you just saw about John George Hospital was, frankly, stunning when we saw the video and people started coming forward. We were really happy that we could get change done in Alameda County and San Leandro. I think that's the kind of work as journalists we strive for every day. It's not to do the wildfire or the car crash, but it's to really dedicate ourselves to our communities and the people in our communities and to hopefully shine a light on issues that need to be brought to attention of leadership in our communities.

I feel that it's great that mental illness is now being highlighted. I'd like to think that we're going in a positive direction. But there's still a lot more work to do. I know our team and the other talented journalists that are up here today being honored are going to continue to do dedicated work in our communities to hopefully make our communities better, especially when it comes to mental illness. Thank you very much. (Applause)

Online Category
The Clarion-Ledger, Jackson, Mississippi

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: The Fourth Estate Internet/New Media Award goes to the Clarion-Ledger of Jackson, Mississippi. For more than half a century, Mississippi native Felix Vail evaded justice with at least three apparent victims in his wake. But due to the tenacious reporting of Jerry Mitchell, a previous American Legion Fourth Estate Award winner, proof surfaced that Vail's first wife was a victim of homicide. Mr. Mitchell uncovered new witnesses and evidence, which helped lead to Mr. Vail's later conviction for the 1962 murder. It was the oldest conviction of a suspected serial killer in history. Here is a look at some of our award winner's reporting.

... At this time, the delegation viewed a video.

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: Ladies and gentlemen, Investigative Reporter Jerry Mitchell. (Applause)

JERRY MITCHELL: It's such an honor to be with you here today and receive this award. A lot of people did a lot of work, and I want to thank them by name real quickly. Debbie Skipper, my boss; Sam, our executive editor; and Steve Elfers, who did the video that you saw; and Shawn Sullivan, who did the excellent website.

But I really want to thank the families who basically came to me. I was approached by Annette, the last woman you saw pictured, I was approached by her mother. She called
me out of the blue and she said, "Would you be interested in writing about a serial killer living in Mississippi?" And so I said, "Well, yeah."

She decided she would come down to Mississippi. She wanted to confront Felix Vail about her daughter who was missing and the other woman missing and the first wife and just basically tell him she felt like he killed all these women. She wanted to go confront him. I said, "I want to go with you." Because I knew it sounded like a good news story, obviously.

We went to this remote area in Mississippi. I mean, extremely rural. There was like a gate, and she hopped the gate. So I followed her, and we went down like this remote trail, and finally it cleared out. You could see these two trailers. One that was on the left was kind of a newer trailer, and she went and knocked on the door. We didn't answer. I'm just starting to take in my surroundings. This is a guy that's a suspected serial killer. Right? I'm just kind of taking this in and the woods all around us. I'm thinking: Is he around? Where is he?

Then she takes off to this other trailer, which you could tell had been storm damaged because there was like wood in the front window of the trailer. She made it over to the other trailer before I even got over there. The next thing I knew, the back window was missing on the trailer, so she crawled in. Then she opened the front door, so I could see in now, and she just started rummaging around.

The next thing I knew she threw out a machete, and it clanked on the floor. Then she threw out another machete and another machete and all these swords. I'm like: What have I gotten myself into? So it was an interesting journey.

I wrote about 9,000 words on Felix Vail. In fact, during the middle of my reporting, Felix Vail disappeared again. He had a habit of doing that. Didn't know where he went to, but I wrote this story about him. The next thing I know, I think within five months he was arrested. He went on trial this past August and was, in fact, convicted of his first wife's murder. (Applause)

It's worth applauding; it is. I talked this past Mother's Day to Annette's mother, Mary Rose, again, after this journey began, and what she said to me was, "This is the best Mother's Day I've had in 33 years." She said, "The sky just looks bluer. The plants just look greener. It's amazing how justice changes things."

May God bless you. Thank you so much. (Applause)

Print Category
Arizona Republic, Phoenix, Arizona

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: The Arizona Republic continued its outstanding coverage of the troubled VA Medical Center in Phoenix, which led to national outrage in 2014 and resulted in the resignation of the VA secretary and other top officials, as other VA scandals were exposed. Reporter Dennis Wagner examined the VA two years after the crisis on a nationwide quest to examine its progress. Over a six-month period in 2016, he visited hospitals and met with scores of patients, advocates, politicians, critics and administrators. It's clear that this newspaper believes it has a special obligation to covering this important issue. The impact of the series is already being seen through recent legislation and future decisions made by VA, the White House, and Congress. Please turn your attention once again to the monitor. ... At this time, the delegation viewed a video.

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: Accepting the award is Investigative Reporter Dennis Wagner. (Applause)

DENNIS WAGNER: Good morning. I thank you guys very much for recognizing journalism in this day and age. As you probably know, newspapers and all the media have been shrinking, and it's really tough to devote resources to a big story. I am so grateful to my newspaper for putting in the time and the effort.
When some doctors at the Phoenix VA first came to me and started telling me about just horrible wait times, where patients were waiting for months and months to get tests for cancer or for treatment for any myriad of diseases and just the suffering that was going on, at first it was a story for me about bureaucracy gone mad or government corruption or something like that. But as soon as I started interviewing veterans who were trying to get that care and seeing the utter frustration and helplessness that they felt dealing with a system that would not respond, it transformed for me.

And partly because my father's a World War II veteran, and I started seeing my father's face in the men and women that I was interviewing. He wasn't getting VA care, but he was also ill at the time. Over the past three years I've kept that image in my face working on the stories. Last year, while I was traveling from VA hospital to VA hospital to try to see how much things had improved, my father died while I was doing that trip. And it drove it home all the more. I think there is some improvement in the VA. I'm hoping there will be a lot more. But what I would encourage is for each and every one of you to stand up and fight for your right to get good medical care. You earned it, and you deserve it.

Thank you very much. (Applause)

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: The Chair recognizes G. Michael Schlee of Maryland, chairman of the National Convention Committee on National Security, for the purpose of making a report. Mr. Chairman.

**Report: Convention Committee on National Security**

**G. Michael Schlee, Maryland, Chairman**

At 9:00 a.m., Sunday, August 20, 2017, 270 delegates and alternates assigned to the Convention Committee on National Security initially met in the Reno-Sparks Convention Center, Room A1 & A6. Mr. G. Michael Schlee (Maryland) was elected Chairman and Mr. E.C. Toppin (North Carolina) was appointed Secretary.

After the initial meeting, the following convention committees met, held elections and dealt with the resolutions assigned to them:

- **Aerospace**
  - Rick Oertel (VA), Chairman
  - Charles Craynon (OH), Secretary

- **Conventional Armed Forces**
  - Charles E. Kruger (MN), Chairman
  - Jake Cabuag (WA), Secretary

- **Foreign Relations**
  - Bill Flanagan (IL), Chairman
  - John Mella (MI), Secretary

- **Law and Order & Homeland Security**
  - George Wehrli (FL), Chairman
  - Richard Keisler (NY), Secretary

- **Military Benefits & Quality of Life**
  - Jerry Jordan (IN), Chairman
  - Roger Friend, (OH), Secretary

- **National Guard and Reserve Forces**
  - William Goede (MN), Chairman
  - Ron Struble (IA), Secretary

- **Unconventional Forces and Intelligence**
  - Doug Haggan (FR), Chairman
  - Douglas Frahm (NE), Secretary
At 10:15 am, Sunday, August 20, 2017, the delegates and alternates assigned to the Convention Committee on Security reconvened in the Reno-Sparks Convention Center, Room A1 & A6. Reports of all Convention Committees were read and their recommended actions on resolutions considered. A total of 15 resolutions were assigned to the Convention Committee on National Security or prepared by the Committee to meet issues which were held to be of concern to The American Legion and germane to its principles and objectives. The Convention Committee authorized the Chairman and Secretary to sign the report of the Convention Committee on National Security on behalf of its delegates and make technical and administrative corrections to the resolutions reported out of the Committee.

Conventional Armed Forces
Charles Kruger, Minnesota, Chairman

Approved Resolutions

Resolution No. 21: National Defense Budget
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The American Legion views a strong national defense as paramount to national security; and
WHEREAS, The president has submitted a proposed $639 billion total defense budget for 2018; and
WHEREAS, The proposed budget reverses sequestration and increases defense spending caps; and
WHEREAS, The Air Force desperately needs to replace its aging aircraft and the proposed budget includes the purchase of 70 F-35s as well as $2 billion allocated for B-2 Bomber research and development; and
WHEREAS, The proposed budget will increase the force end strength by nearly 50,000, it also increases service members pay and benefits, which prevents the loss of highly trained men and women; and
WHEREAS, The United State of America’s major adversaries, Russia and China, along with rouge nations such as North Korea and Iran are ramping up their military stocks and capabilities; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Reno, Nevada, August 22, 23, 24, 2017, That The American Legion urge Congress to support budget increases in military spending to reverse the effects of sequestration; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That Congress not allow our military forces to reach a weakened state in these uncertain and perilous times.

Resolution No. 23: Prohibition on Wrongful Broadcast or Distribution of Intimate Visual Images
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, In March 2017 an online message board titled Marines United was made public, where in members of the military shared nude photographs of servicemembers including some taken without the member’s knowledge; and
WHEREAS, The investigation has led to 21 felony charges; and
WHEREAS, As veterans who have honorably served our nation, we expect that all servicemembers be treated with respect; and
WHEREAS, The American Legion calls upon all in the family of military veterans to stand up and speak out against bullying and harassment wherever it occurs; and
WHEREAS, The American Legion fully supports the victims of harassment; and
WHEREAS, The American Legion supports the actions of the commandant of the Marine Corps for taking these allegations seriously and looks forward to learning the results of the Naval Criminal Investigative Service so those in violation of the Uniform Code of Military Justice be held accountable for their actions; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Reno, Nevada, August 22, 23, 24, 2017, That The American Legion urges Congress to amend Title 10, United States Code to make actions of wrongful broadcasting or distribution of intimate visual images an offense subject to court martial.

Resolution No. 70: Medal of Honor for E. Royce Williams
Origin: California
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, On November 18, 1952, then LT E. Royce Williams, USN serving with Fighter Squadron Seven Hundred Eighty-One (VF-781) on the USS Oriskany participated in an early morning major strike against the Hoeryang industrial complex five miles from the North Korea-Russian border; and

WHEREAS, Against later enemy retaliating bogeys LT Williams launched in treacherous winter weather as section lead of a four plane F9F-5 Combat Air Patrol (CAP) in defense of Carrier Task Force 77 (CTF-77); and

WHEREAS, With complications amidst the other three CAP aircraft, LT Williams unhesitatingly and with no regard for personal safety or risk of life, climbed and singly engaged the seven superior MiG-15s; and

WHEREAS, In a fierce 30-40 minute fight, LT Williams' superb pilot skills and gunnery accounted for three MiGs downed and a fourth confirmed years later, stopping the attack against CTF-77 in its tracks; and

WHEREAS, Out of ammo and suffering a 37 mm hit which disabled all but elevator control and a little aileron control LT Williams successfully disengaged and returned to the task force using the weather for cover; and

WHEREAS, LT Williams displayed outstanding airmanship in getting his badly damaged F9F-5 back on USS Oriskany with a minimum control speed of 170 knots (normal carrier approach speed 105 knots); and

WHEREAS, LT Williams' singular courage, superb skill, call to duty over personal risk of life reflected great credit upon himself and were in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service; and

WHEREAS, LT Williams' singular act of valor is unmatched either in the Korean War, the Vietnam War, or since then; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Reno, Nevada, August 22, 23, 24, 2017, That The American Legion petition the United States Congress and the Department of Defense to consider CAPT E. Royce Williams USN (Ret.) to be awarded the Medal of Honor for his act of valor given in service to our country on Nov. 18, 1952; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion continues to exert the maximum effort for honoring our forgotten heroes that have given so much to ensure our freedom.

Resolution Referred to Standing Commission on National Security

Resolution No. 5 (MT): Strategic Nuclear Policy
Resolution No. 22: POW/MIA Policies

Origin: Maryland

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

(As amended)

WHEREAS, American servicemembers and civilians remain missing or otherwise unaccounted for from America’s past wars and conflicts, and reports indicate that cases of Americans last known alive, information regarding their fates is still illusive; and

WHEREAS, The families of POW/MIAs suffer untold uncertainty due to the lack of information about and accounting for their missing loved one, often in spite of heroic efforts by U.S. specialists; and

WHEREAS, The National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) of 2010 called upon the secretary of defense to provide funds, personnel, and resources to significantly increase the capability and capacity of the Department of Defense (DOD) to account for missing persons so that, beginning with fiscal year 2015, at least 200 missing persons are accounted for annually under the program; and

WHEREAS, Improvements in foreign government cooperation have helped identify locations of incident sites that may enable remains of U.S. personnel to be recovered and identified by the U.S. Government; and

WHEREAS, Promising advances in scientific DNA capabilities and other identification techniques involving radiographic comparison and facial superimposition have dramatically increased the U.S. Government’s ability to identify remains of unaccounted for servicemen and civilians for whom identification had not earlier been possible; and

WHEREAS, Each member of the DOD POW/MIA accounting community plays a vital role in the mission to account for missing and unaccounted for U.S. servicemen and civilians from our nation’s past wars and conflicts; and

WHEREAS, The secretary of defense recently directed “complete reorganization” of the DOD POW/MIA accounting community, a consolidation encouraging to family members and veterans, though close scrutiny for viability will continue to be required; and

WHEREAS, The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency was formed as a result of the defense secretary’s directive for “complete reorganization” and is responsible for policy control and operational implementation to achieve the fullest possible accounting for missing U.S. personnel; and

WHEREAS, The POW/MIA accounting effort should continue to be a matter of highest national priority until all reasonable actions have been taken to achieve the fullest possible accounting for all U.S. personnel; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion fully supports and advocates for the fullest possible accounting of missing Americans, in every country, on every continent; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion believes U.S. Government POW/MIA operations, though currently still inadequate, are achieving substantial progress; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Reno, Nevada, August 22, 23, 24, 2017, That The American Legion remains steadfast in our commitment to the goal of achieving the fullest possible accounting for all U.S. military personnel and designated civilian personnel missing and unaccounted for from our nation’s past conflicts and current and present wars; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges the president and members of Congress to speak out on every occasion on the need to expedite the return of U.S. personnel still missing and unaccounted for, regardless of location or era of loss; and, be it further
RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges the president and Congress to support legislation and policies that will sustain use of all necessary resources to achieve the fullest possible accounting of missing American servicemembers and designated civilians regardless of location or era of loss; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion calls upon Congress to provide full funding for the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency to meet requirements for personnel and operations to achieve accounting goals and to ensure these funds not be redirected by the Department of Defense for any other purpose; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion calls upon the president and Congress to continue to declassify all POW/MIA information (except that revealing intelligence sources or methods) in a form readily available to the affected families and for public review; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion calls upon Congress to establish a joint standing congressional committee on POW/MIA affairs to oversee plans and policies to ensure continued priority by the executive branch in addressing requirements to achieve the POW/MIA accounting goals; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion calls upon the president to strengthen the U.S.-Russia Joint Commission on POW/MIs, and to initiate similar such commissions with the People's Republic of China, and Democratic People's Republic of Korea to increase POW/MIA accounting and recovery efforts; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion calls upon the president and Congress to continue taking favorable steps with the Socialist Republic of Vietnam as Hanoi increases efforts to provide the fullest possible accounting for U.S. personnel still missing in Vietnam or in areas of Laos and Cambodia controlled by Vietnam during the Vietnam War; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That "fullest possible accounting" is defined as releasing live prisoners, repatriating remains of those killed in action or who died in captivity, or providing convincing evidence as to why neither is possible.

Resolution No. 40: USS Liberty
Origin: Washington
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security
(As amended)

WHEREAS, On June 8, 1967, while operating in support of the National Security Agency (NSA) in international waters, properly marked as to her identity and nationality, and in calm, clear weather in the eastern Mediterranean, the USS Liberty (AGTR-5) was the target of an unprovoked attack by Israeli military forces that killed 34 members of the Liberty's crew and wounded 173; and

WHEREAS, In recognition of their heroic efforts during and after the Israeli onslaught, Liberty crew members were awarded the Presidential Unit Citation, 2 Navy Crosses, 12 Silver Stars, 20 Bronze Stars, more than 200 Purple Hearts, and the ship's captain, Navy Commander William L. McGonagle, was awarded the Medal of Honor; and

WHEREAS, The June 28, 1967 public summary of proceedings of the Navy Court of Inquiry into the attack stated: "It was not the responsibility of the Court to rule on the culpability of the attackers and no evidence was heard from the attacking nation"; and

WHEREAS, According to Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) information reports from June and October, 1967, sources in Tel Aviv reported: "Israel's forces knew exactly what flag the LIBERTY was flying" and Israeli Defense Minister Moshe Dayan "personally ordered the attack" on the Liberty over the objections of senior uniformed military personnel, one of whom characterized the attack as "pure murder"; and

WHEREAS, Richard Helms (Director of Central Intelligence, 1966-1973), stated in a 1984 CIA interview: "Everything possible was done to keep from the American public really the enormity of this attack on an American naval vessel" and, "since this is for the Agency's record, I don't think there can be any doubt that the Israelis knew exactly what
they were doing ... any statement to the effect that they didn't know that it was an American ship ... is nonsense"; and

WHEREAS, Lieutenant General Marshall S. Carter, USA (ret.) (Director of the NSA, 1965-1969), recalled in a 1988 NSA interview that he stated at a Congressional hearing in 1967 that the attack on the Liberty: "Couldn't be anything else but deliberate. There's just no way you could have a series of circumstances that would justify it being an accident" and Carter indicated this remained his belief in 1988; and

WHEREAS, In a 2003 affidavit published in the Congressional Record, Captain Ward Boston, Jr., JAGC, USN (ret.), legal counsel for the 1967 Navy Court of Inquiry stated: "I know from personal conversations I had with Admiral Kidd [president of the Court of Inquiry] that President Lyndon Johnson and Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara ordered him to conclude that the attack was a case of 'mistaken identity' despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary"; and

WHEREAS, According to the findings, published in the Congressional Record, of the 2003 Independent Commission of Inquiry, chaired by former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Thomas H. Moorer, USN (ret.): "There is compelling evidence that Israel's attack was a deliberate attempt to destroy an American ship and kill her entire crew" and, "the White House deliberately covered up the facts of this attack"; and

WHEREAS, In 2013, the Veterans of Foreign Wars adopted Resolution No. 423 calling "Upon Congress to immediately investigate the attack on the USS Liberty by the armed forces of Israel on June 8, 1967, in order to determine the truth behind the attack, and to bring closure to the families and crew"; and

WHEREAS, In August 1967, after the conclusion of the Navy Court of Inquiry, The American Legion adopted Resolution No. 508 (rescinded in 1984 without being first reviewed) declaring the published report of the Navy Court of Inquiry: "Fails to provide the American public with a satisfactory answer as to the reason for the attack" and stating that, "The American Legion denounces and condemns Israel's irresponsible attack" and demanding, "A complete and thorough investigation of the incident"; and

WHEREAS, According to Gurney Williams III, writing in The American Legion Magazine ("Death Strikes the Liberty", July 1997), Congress has never investigated the Israeli attack on the Liberty; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Reno, Nevada, August 22, 23, 24, 2017, That The American Legion calls upon the 115th United States Congress to publicly, impartially, and thoroughly investigate the attack on the USS Liberty and its aftermath and to commence its investigation before the end of 2017, the 50th anniversary year of the attack.

Resolutions Received and Recorded

Resolution No. 1 (AK): Taiwan Straits Dialogue
Resolution No. 24(MD): Taiwan Defense Arms Sales
Resolution No. 25 (MD): Taiwan Straits Dialogue

Law and Order & Homeland Security
George Wehrli, Florida, Chairman

Approved Resolutions

Resolution No. 17: Counter Transnational Organized Crime
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, Transnational organized crime refers to those self-perpetuating associations of individuals who operate transnationally for the purpose of obtaining power,
influence, monetary and/or commercial gains, wholly or in part by illegal means, while protecting their activities through a pattern of corruption and/or violence, or while protecting their illegal activities through a transnational organizational structure and the exploitation of transnational commerce or communication mechanisms; and

WHEREAS, Transnational organized crime is a vastly understated threat to public health and safety, the rule of law, and both the national and homeland security of the United States; and

WHEREAS, The activities of organized criminal groups are highly varied, and include drug, weapons, and human trafficking (including prostitution and kidnapping), murder (including contract killings and assassinations), cyber-crime, copyright infringement, counterfeiting, identity theft, money laundering, extortion, illegal gambling, and terrorism; and

WHEREAS, The complexity and seriousness of the crimes committed by global criminal networks pose a threat not only to the citizenry of the United States, but to democracy and legitimate economic development around the world as well; and

WHEREAS, Federal, state, and municipal law enforcement and criminal justice resources have been strained or outmatched by sophisticated, fluid, and violent criminal groups; and

WHEREAS, Heroin trafficking, in particular, poses an insidious peril to local communities, as witnessed by the skyrocketing rates of non-prescription opioid deaths within the United States since 2000; and

WHEREAS, Transnational criminal organizations, and the international criminal conspiracies they are engaged in, require a comprehensive, fully-funded ‘whole-of-government’ and ‘whole-of-society’ response to diminish their destructive activities and ill-effects; and

WHEREAS, The United States must cooperate with and, where necessary, provide aid and support to partner nations in order to order to most effectively deal with the regional and international presence of transnational criminal organizations; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Reno, Nevada, August 22, 23, 24, 2017, That The American Legion calls on the United States government to renew its commitment to countering transnational organized crime in all its forms, both domestically and globally, by coordinating with and rendering aid and support to all municipal, state, and international efforts to do the same.

Resolution No. 19: Homeland Security and the Opioid Epidemic
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, In 2015 there were 52,000 American deaths from all drug overdoses, with 33,000, from opioids, compared to 16,000 in 2010 and 4,000 in 1999; and

WHEREAS, Nearly half of all opioid overdose deaths involve a prescription opioid; and

WHEREAS, The epidemic of opioid addiction and death began in the 1990s as pharmaceutical companies started marketing opioids as a treatment for chronic pain, where in the past opioids had been reserved for acute pain and palliative care because of their known addictive qualities and diminishing effects based on user tolerance; and

WHEREAS, Federal and state governments began to crack down on the over-preservation of opioids in 2010, which while effective at diminishing the supply of prescription opioids in circulation had the unintended consequence of driving users toward cheaper and more readily available heroin and other synthetic opioids like fentanyl; and

WHEREAS, The opioid epidemic is exacerbated by transnational criminal organizations trafficking heroin and other opioids into the United States; and
WHEREAS, It is essential to coordinate a regional strategy between the governments of United States, Mexico, and other Central and South American nations to reduce supply through interdiction, as well as nations like China who export chemical precursors; and

WHEREAS, Federal and state law enforcement and public health responses to combatting the opioid epidemic are constrained by high demand, lack of funding, geography, and poor or incomplete data collection; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Reno, Nevada, August 22, 23, 24, 2017, That the United States government develop comprehensive and robust drug use surveillance and monitoring programs in collaboration with state and municipal authorities to provide targeted law enforcement and public health interventions into communities, that the White House and Congress support all evidence-based efforts at supply, demand, and harm reduction, and that the White House and Congress pursue wide-ranging efforts to increase regional security and counter transnational organized crime.

Resolution No. 27: Sanctuary Cities
Origin: Ohio
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The safety and security of all Americans depends on a civil and law-abiding society; and

WHEREAS, Immigration to the United States can be categorized either legal or illegal; and

WHEREAS, There are at least 165 cities and counties in the United States that harbor illegal immigrants by virtue of local policies that restrict law enforcement authorities from alerting federal authorities about an immigrants legal status; and

WHEREAS, These “sanctuary cities” receive a total of twenty-seven billion dollars annually from the federal government while not complying with federal immigration policies; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion Preamble states, “To maintain law and order”; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Reno, Nevada, August 22, 23, 24, 2017, That The American Legion take a firm stand in opposition of American citizens taxpayer dollars funding “sanctuary cities” that do not cooperate with the federal authorities on reporting the immigration status of those who violate federal, state, and local laws.

Rejected Resolution

Resolution No. 89 (Convention Committee on National Security): Healthcare Opportunities for Patriots in Exile

Military Benefits and Quality of Life
Jerry Jordan, Indiana, Chairman

Resolutions Referred to Standing Commission

Resolution No. 9 (NC): Support Walkway in Arlington National Cemetery on Chaplains Hill

Rejected Resolution

Resolution No. 73 (NJ): Sandy Hook Bay Pier
Proceedings of Thursday, August 24, 2017
Unconventional Forces & Intelligence
Doug Haggan, France, Chairman

Approved Resolution

Resolution No. 20: National Cybersecurity Strategy
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security
(As amended)

WHEREAS, Cybersecurity is broadly defined as a set of activities and other measures intended to protect—from attack, disruption, or other threats—computers, computer networks, related hardware and devices software and the information they contain and communicate, including software and data; and

WHEREAS, Digital capabilities today underpin financial, economic, transportation, energy, and defense infrastructure, and the economy, society and governments now rely on the cyber domain for many essential functions; and

WHEREAS, Cyber threats have been increasing and evolving at a fast pace; and

WHEREAS, Satisfactory solutions will require building partnerships among public and private organizations, establishing mechanisms and incentives to foster routine information sharing and collective defense, and educating users about their role in thwarting increasingly sophisticated attacks; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Reno, Nevada, August 22, 23, 24, 2017, That The American Legion calls on the United States government to continue to develop and refine processes and policies that will enhance interagency cybersecurity, to develop programs, initiatives, and other activities that educate citizens and grow the U.S. cybersecurity workforce across all levels of government, to support state and municipal government and private sector actors in building resilient networks through information sharing and promulgation of best practices and standards, and to ensure the protection of critical infrastructure from cyber and other electronic attack.

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 - Departments with 100,000 or more members
Post & Individual Participation: No submission

Category II - 70,000 to 99,999 members
Post & Individual Participation: Minnesota

Category III - 40,000 to 69,999 members
Post & Individual Participation: Maryland

Category IV - 25,000 to 39,999 members
Post & Individual Participation: No submission

Category V - 10,000 to 24,999 members
Post & Individual Participation: Montana

Category VI - less than 10,000 members
Post & Individual Participation: No submission

Many of our Departments participated in the ROTC Awards Program this year. Close to 4,500 medals were awarded to deserving cadets in Senior ROTC and Junior ROTC Units. The winning Departments for 2016-2017 are the Departments of Alaska, Connecticut, Colorado, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Montana, and North Dakota. This speaks well for these Departments and The American Legion in their recognition of the youth of America enrolled in ROTC programs.
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN SCHLEE: Mr. Commander, as a delegate to this Convention from the Department of Maryland, I move for the adoption of this report.

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: You heard the motion. Is there a second? ... Second. Is there any discussion? Hearing none, all in favor say aye. Opposed? The ayes have it. Therefore, the report of National Security is adopted. I'll now accept donations for Operation Comfort Warriors.

... At this time, National Vice Commander Martel assumed the Chair.

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER MARTEL: If there are any donations, please come forward.

Donations to Operation Comfort Warriors

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER COMER: Thank you, commander. I'm proud to represent the state of Massachusetts as we present this check on behalf of Middleborough Post 64. With me is my department commander, Mike Davis, and also Judy Hall, who is a member of that unit, a past department president. On behalf of Bob Burke of Middleborough post, they did a fundraiser and did a great job on Comfort Warriors in almost one day, and I'm proud to present this check on their behalf for $9,000.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (PA): From the great state of Pennsylvania, home of Past National Commanders Dominic DiFrancesco and Ronald Conley, we present a check for $22,055.50 for Operation Comfort Warriors.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN SAMPSON (NY): Good morning, commander. John Sampson, chairman of the delegation from the great state of New York. Mr. Commander, I would like to present to you in support of Operation Comfort Warriors two checks totaling $13,048.

DELEGATE FARLEY (NY): Good morning. Jennifer Farley from the Department of New York proudly donating $6,200 for Operation Comfort Warriors on behalf of Broad Channel Unit 1404 in New York.

DELEGATE HAGGAN (FR): Good morning. FODPAL, Foreign and Outlying Departments and Posts of The American Legion, proudly presents $500 to Operation Comfort Warriors.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (FR): Good morning. Paris Post 1 is honored to present a check for $250 for Operation Comfort Warriors, and the Department of France matching that with another $250 for Operation Comfort Warriors. Thank you.

DELEGATE GIMPEL (ID): NEC Art Gimpel from the Department of Idaho, $530.75.

DELEGATE FARRELL (TN): Former Commander Bobby Farrell, Membership Chairman Steve Wiseman of Department of Tennessee donate $450 to Operation Comfort Warriors.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN CHAPMAN (OH): Good morning. Ron Chapman, delegation chairman from the Department of Ohio. I have a check for $700 from Post 557 in Wintersville, Ohio. And from the great Department of Ohio American Legion Family, I have two checks totaling $27,894.53, for a total of $28,594.53.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN MILTON (MN): Good morning. Delegate Chair Denise Milton from the great Department of Minnesota donates $1,000 to Operation Comfort Warriors. Shout-out to our veterans service officer, Jeremy Wolfstellar, who does an excellent job on utilizing the program. Thank you.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (NJ): On behalf of the Department of New Jersey, we'd like to donate $1,000, Operation Comfort Warriors. And also we have a check for $500 from New Jersey Post 232.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (MI): The Department of Michigan proudly presents $2,000 to Operation Comfort Warriors.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (AZ): Good morning. From the Department of Arizona, Post 58 in Fountain Hills, I have another check for $500.
Proceedings of Thursday, August 24, 2017

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (NM): From the great state of New Mexico, from the Western Division, Vice Commander Paul Espinoza, $859 was raised for Operation Comfort Warriors.

DELEGATE KILE (WV): The Southern caucus, the best caucus in The American Legion, proudly donates $9,240 to the NEF Fund.

DELEGATE ELSTON (WA): Wayne Elston, Department of Washington commander, we have a check from Chewela Chapter 54 for $1,000.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER KOUTZ: Good morning. First let me say thank you for all that you departments that are in The American Legion Family does for Operation Comfort Warriors. Thank you. Keep up the great work. From the Department of Indiana, we have some donations. The first one is the Wabash Valley Correctional Facility Post 398, $579; Hoosier Boys State, $1,109.47; Post 200, Booneville, my home post, $500; Ron and Brenda Barley, $100; Newburgh Post 44, $500; Plainfield Correctional Facility Post 198, another $499; and the Wabash Valley Correctional Facility, $372.12. The American Legion Family of Post 42, Floyds Knobs, Indiana, $3,500; American Legion Family, Post 42 again, $1,002.18; Richard and Andrea Wooley, Logansport, Indiana, $50. I received $20 cash from Jerry Flores from Colorado. For a total $8,431.77. Thank you very much. I missed the most important one here. Our department commander, Marty Dziegloowicz, and his wife, $200 cash. Thank you.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (OR): Hi. Department of Oregon, from our District 10 commander, gives $250, Operation Comfort Warriors.

...National Commander Schmidt resumed the Chair.

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: Let’s give them all a hand for their contributions. (Applause)

Our Operation Comfort Warriors program does so much good work for those men and women who have represented us, you and I, on the global war on terror in their recovery and their rehabilitations. That’s what we do, The American Legion Family. The Chair recognizes Ralph Bozella of Colorado, chairman of the National Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation, for the purpose of report. Mr. Chairman.

Report: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

Ralph P. Bozella, Colorado, Chairman

127 members of your Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation met at 9:00 a.m. on August 20, 2017, in Reno-Sparks Convention Center, Rooms D4-5, First Floor, Reno, Nevada which is respectfully submitted for your consideration.

The Committee was called to order by Louis Celli (MA), Liaison Representative appointed by the National Adjutant to act as temporary chairman. Melvin Brown (VA), Assistant Director for Health Policy, VA&R Division, acted as temporary secretary and called the roll. A quorum being present, nominations were received for permanent chairman. Ralph P. Bozella (CO), Chairman of the Standing National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission, was unanimously elected Chairman of the Convention Committee.

Exercising the authority granted to him, the Chairman accepted nominations for secretary to the Convention Committee. Kelly Ackerman (MT), was voted as Committee Secretary. During their breakout sessions the subcommittees elected William J. Smith (PA), Chairman of the Claims and Rating Subcommittee and, Patrick Rourk (NY), as Secretary; Phil Youngblood (GA), Chairman of the Health Administration Committee, and James Stanko (CO), as Secretary; Richard Neville (NC), Chairman of the National Cemetery Committee, and Daniel Seehafer (WI), Secretary.

Subcommittee liaison assignments were as follows: Louis Celli. Jr. (MA), Director, Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Division and Zachary Hearn (PA), Deputy Director for Claims to Benefits Administration and Roscoe Butler (MD), Deputy Director for Health
Policy to Health Administration and Alex Zhang (NJ), Assistant Director for DoD Boards to National Cemetery.

A screening committee comprised of Department Service Officers in a preconvention meeting, screened and grouped the resolutions. A report of their action, with recommendations, was presented to the Convention Committee for consideration.

The Screening Committee conserved the time of the Convention Committee substantially. It was chaired by Ralph P. Bozella, Chairman of the Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission and was composed of the following Department Service Officers:

- REGION 1 – Ronald Lavesseur (RI)
- REGION 2 – Scott D. Tafoya (OK)
- REGION 3 – Adrian G. Gamboa (MD)
- REGION 4 – Gary D. Easterling (MI)
- REGION 5 – Mike Mader (NV)

The 29 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 w/Amendment.................................13
- Consolidated with Resolutions Approved............................0
- Referred to the Standing Commission .................................3
- Received and Recorded....................................................7
- Rejected ............................................................................6

A motion was made and seconded to authorize the Chairman and Secretary to sign and deliver the report on the Convention Committee’s behalf.

A report of action taken on the (3) 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.

**Approved Resolutions or Approved with Amendment**

**Resolution No. 3: WWII Veterans Hospital and Medical Eligibility**

**Origin: Kentucky**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

WHEREAS, Through working with World War II veterans throughout the Commonwealth of Kentucky, the department service director has discovered a disservice to the veterans who served during that war; and

WHEREAS, Of the sixteen million Americans serving in World War II, less than one million survive today; and

WHEREAS, Those World War II veterans served honorably and continue to serve us today; and

WHEREAS, Many of those veterans were in the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) system prior to activation of a means test or the setting up of the priority groups and some have subsequently been dropped from the VA system or are now being subjected to a means test; and

WHEREAS, HR 3118, Veterans Health Care Eligibility 1996, was passed exempting all Spanish American War and World War I veterans from the means test required by the VA; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By the American Legion in National Convention assembled in Reno, Nevada, August 22, 23, 24, 2017, That The American Legion shall support legislation to amend HR 3118, Veterans Health Care Eligibility 1996, to extend the exemption from a means test to World War II veterans; and, be it finally
RESOLVED, That the Department of Veteran Affairs be urged to place all World War II veterans in Category 5.

Resolution No. 8: Expand the Presumptive Period for Veterans Who Served in South Korea
Origin: Maine
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation
(As amended)

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has determined the presumptive end date for Agent Orange in Vietnam is based on one fact only; there were no U.S. forces in the Republic of Vietnam on the end date of May 1975; and
WHEREAS, The end date in Vietnam was not based on the half-life of Agent Orange or soil or water concentrations or any real scientific data; and
WHEREAS, Vietnam Operation Ranch Hand ended in January 1971 but the end date was extended to May 1975 is not based on scientific data; and
WHEREAS, More than 21,000 gallons of toxic defoliants were spread by American troops along the Korean DMZ in 1968 and 1969; and
WHEREAS, The half-life of Agent Orange (dioxin) in the environment varies depending on soil type, how deep it lies, when in bodies of water and can be more than 100 years; and
WHEREAS, Currently VA will presume herbicide exposure for any veteran who served in Korea between April 1, 1968 and August 31, 1971, in a unit determined by VA and the Department of Defense to have operated in an area in or near the Korean DMZ in which herbicides were applied; and
WHEREAS, U.S. Military forces were sent to Korea in the numbers ranging from 30 to 40 thousand in the 1970's until now and it is estimated a minimum of 4 thousand are stationed on the DMZ at any one time; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Reno, Nevada, August 22, 23, 24, 2017, That The American Legion urges the Department of Defense and Department of Veterans Affairs to conduct a scientific study to determine the environmental exposure to herbicides for all Department of Defense personnel serving in South Korea from September 1, 1971 to current date; and, be it finally
RESOLVED, That based on study results, Congress enact and approve a veterans benefit act to expand the eligibility of the presumptive period for those who have served in South Korea.

Resolution No. 13: Improve VA Communication with Service Officers
Origin: Minnesota
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, Prior to 2012 the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) was efficient in communicating with power of attorney (POA) and veterans service offices (VSO) while adjudicating veteran benefits; and
WHEREAS, VA correspondence including, yet not limited to, notices to the claimant, rating decisions and appeals notices were in paper form and a copy was delivered in every case to the POA or VSO of original regional office jurisdiction; and
WHEREAS, In 2012 VA announced, “VA Transformation” and VA’s intention to digitize all information including claims folders and information submitted on behalf of claims and appeals; and
WHEREAS, Scanning of information post 2012 was mandatory for all cases being initiated or considered; and
WHEREAS, Since, VA has established an information system in where work is digitized and issue to a National Work Que (NWQ), delivering work to regional offices not of original jurisdiction; and
WHEREAS, In M-21-1MR1, I.3.B.1.b, "Notices that must be provided to the Representative: Unless representation is limited by the claimant, power of attorney (POA) representatives are entitled to notice of any VA decisions affecting the payment of benefits or relief sought by the claimants whom they represent. Representative also must receive other forms of correspondence sent to claimants. These include, decision notices, statements of the case and supplemental statements of the case, notice of certification and transfer of appeals to the board of veteran appeals (BVA), intent to file a claim notice and requests for information and evidence needed to substantiate a claim (e.g. development letters); now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Reno, Nevada, August 22, 23, 24, 2017, That The American Legion hereby endorse efforts to establish provisions in law enforcing the mandatory issuance of all correspondence, both electronic or in paper form, to the original Power Of Attorney (POA) of submittal; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That correspondence from the Department of Veterans Affairs to the claimant be copied to the original regional office of jurisdiction and to the applicable POA authorized to represent the claimant.

Resolution No. 14: Extend Allotted Time for Claims Review by Service Officers
Origin: Minnesota
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, Prior to 2012 the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) was efficient in communicating with power of attorney and veterans service offices while adjudicating veteran benefits; and

WHEREAS, VA correspondence including, yet not limited to, rating decisions in paper form in which a copy was delivered in every case to the power of attorney or veterans service office of original regional office jurisdiction; and

WHEREAS, In 2012 VA announced, “VA Transformation” and VA’s intention to digitize all information including rating decisions; and

WHEREAS, Scanning of information post 2012 was mandatory for all cases being initiated or considered; and

WHEREAS, Since, VA has established an information system in which work is digitized and issued to a National Work Queue (NWQ), delivering work to regional offices not of original jurisdiction; and

WHEREAS, Rating decisions are issued to the NWQ for a period of forty eight hours for power of attorney review; and

WHEREAS, In M-21-1MR1, I.3.B.1.d. Providing notice to Power Of Attorneys: VA must use Veterans Benefit Management System (VBMS) to provide adequate notice that correspondence is available for review; and

WHEREAS, In M-21-1MR1, I.3.B.3.b. Establishing time limits for Veterans Service Officer review: Veteran Service Center Managers (VCSMs) will provide Veterans Service Officers 48 hours, from the time the VA activates the Veterans Service Officer Review Status work que, to review a rating decision prior to promulgation. If the Veterans Service Officer does not review and approve the decision within 48 hours the decision is automatically expired and the decision is promulgated by VA; and

WHEREAS, In M-21-1 MR1 I.3.B.3.c. Veterans Service Officer Review at Redistributed-Work Sites, if no authorized Veterans Service Officer is available at the redistributed- work site, the completed rating decision is promulgated without Veterans Service Officer review and the case is then returned to the station of origination (SOO); now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Reno, Nevada, August 22, 23, 24, 2017, That The American Legion hereby endorse efforts to establish provisions in law allowing for rating decision review to be defined as 48 “Business Hours” before any rating may be automatically expired and then
RESOLVED, That in M-21-1 MRI L.3.B.3.c. Veterans Service Officer Review at Redistributed-Work Sites, if no authorized Veterans Service Officer is available at the redistributed-work site, the completed rating decision is promulgated without Veterans Service Officer review and the case is then returned to the station of origination (SOO) to be reevaluated and rewritten to state the information must be returned to the work queue or mail box of the Power Of Attorney or Veterans Service Officer of original submittal or jurisdiction.

Resolution No. 15: Department of Veterans Affairs Pharmacy Medication Dispensing Requirements

Origin: Pennsylvania

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

(As amended)

WHEREAS, Veterans enrolled in Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health care are eligible for prescribed medication in their assigned VISN; and

WHEREAS, In today’s society, many veterans travel many miles from their home and away from their VISN; and

WHEREAS, Although outside the jurisdiction of veteran’s respective VISN, a veteran enrolled in the VA health-care system is eligible for treatment, and

WHEREAS, While the VA enrolled eligible veteran receives treatment at a VA facility, the veteran is not eligible to receive medication while outside the veteran’s VISN; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Reno, Nevada, August 22, 23, 24, 2017, That a Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) enrolled eligible veteran receiving treatment must also receive medication to resolve health issues; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion petition the Department of Veteran Affairs to authorize, without delay, medication to veterans enrolled in the VA health-care system no matter what the location is of the VA health-care facility; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That a copy of this resolution be forwarded to the secretary of the VA.

Resolution No. 16: Department of Veterans Affairs Automobile Allowance Program

Origin: Pennsylvania

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

(As amended)

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) provides an automobile allowance for servicemembers and veterans for a one-time payment, in accordance with 38 USC §3903, toward the purchase of an automobile or other conveyance for those suffering from certain service-connected disabilities; and

WHEREAS, Eligibility requirements to receive the grant are the result of service-connected conditions to include loss, or permanent loss of use of one or more extremities, severe burn injuries, or Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis; and

WHEREAS, A 2012 CNBC reports the average American purchases a vehicle every six to eight years; and

WHEREAS, The Center for Disease Control reports the average American’s life expectancy is 78.8 years; and

WHEREAS, Innovations in technology may improve the veteran’s ability to operate or ride in a vehicle since the original awarding of the automobile allowance grant; and
WHEREAS, A veteran’s service-connected conditions may increase in severity requiring additional adaptations to vehicles; and
WHEREAS, A veteran may live in excess of a half century beyond the initial receipt of the automobile allowance grant and would be likely required to purchase numerous vehicles during the veteran’s lifetime; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Reno, Nevada, August 22, 23, 24, 2017, That the U.S. Congress is urged to pass legislation to permit veterans to receive automobile allowance grants every 10 years from the original application for the benefit or when a medical professional provides documentation indicating certain adaptations or improvements in current adaptations are required; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That a copy of this resolution be sent to the U.S. Congress for their action.

Resolution No. 28: Permit VA Providers to Discuss the Use of Medical Marijuana in Those States that have Legalized Marijuana

Origin: Ohio
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation
(As amended)

WHEREAS, Dr. William Woodward, representing the American Medical Association (AMA) testified as an opponent of the 1937 Marijuana Tax Act, due to the use of cannabis in medicine; and
WHEREAS, Congress authorized a study of marijuana that culminated in a report by the Pennsylvania Republican Governor Shafer that was titled, “Marijuana: A Signal of Misunderstanding”; and
WHEREAS, The United States government has been shipping tins containing 300 marijuana cigarettes per month to Federal Investigational New Drug Program patients for decades starting in the 1980s; and
WHEREAS, Medical studies from Israel have revealed positive use of marijuana in medical applications specifically in adult patients sustaining Traumatic Brain Injury type injuries; and
WHEREAS, The United States government, in October of 2003, issued U.S. Patent #6630507 for marijuana’s medical use, specifically claiming that cannabinoids are found to have application as neuroprotectants; and
WHEREAS, The National Academy of Medicine and Science report in January 2017 shows conclusive evidence that cannabis or cannabinoids are effective for treatment of chronic pain in adults, as anti-emetics in treatment of chemotherapy-induced nausea and vomiting, and for improving patient reported multiple sclerosis spasticity symptoms; and
WHEREAS, At the 98th American Legion National Convention resolution No. 11 was passed to support the growth of marijuana at more locations, to remove it as a Schedule I controlled substance and to conduct more medical studies; and
WHEREAS, More than half of the states in the union have passed medical marijuana laws to date; and
WHEREAS, VHA Policy 2011-004 Item 3, prohibits Department of Veterans Affairs providers from completing forms seeking recommendations or opinions regarding a veterans participation in a state marijuana program; and
WHEREAS, In 2016 Ohio passed HB523 the Medical Marijuana Control Program that includes a program for military veterans; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Reno, Nevada, August 22, 23, 24, 2017, That the American Legion urge the United States government to permit Department of Veterans Affairs medical providers to be able to discuss with veterans the use of marijuana for medical purposes and recommend it in those states where medical marijuana laws exist.
Resolution No. 41: Radiation-Exposed Veterans  
Origin: Washington  
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation  
WHEREAS, Servicemembers who cleaned up various nuclear testing sites, including the Marshall Islands, during the 1970s and 1980s and received a significant radiation exposure from their duties deserve the same benefits that U.S. law guarantees to other servicemembers who were exposed to dangerous radiation and nuclear waste; and  
WHEREAS, The servicemembers who participated in cleaning up these nuclear testing sites suffer from high rates of cancers due to their exposure to radiation and nuclear waste, but are currently unable to receive the same treatments and service-related disability presumptions that other “radiation-exposed veterans” receive from the Department of Veterans Affairs; and  
WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs should be responsible for the care of these atomic cleanup veterans; and  
WHEREAS, The Mark Takai Atomic Veterans Healthcare Parity Act was introduced in February 2017 to designate veterans who participated in the cleanup of these various nuclear testing sites as “radiation-exposed veterans,” and make them eligible to receive the same health-care benefits given to other servicemembers who were involved in active nuclear tests; and  
WHEREAS, The American Legion believes the Department of Veterans Affairs should acknowledge the high levels of radiation and nuclear waste exposure of these atomic cleanup veterans as service connected and should be responsible for their care and treatment; now, therefore, be it  
RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Reno, Nevada, August 22, 23, 24, 2017, That The American Legion urge the president of the United States and the U.S. Congress to designate these atomic cleanup veterans as “radiation-exposed veterans” and ensure that they are eligible for the same health care and other benefits as other servicemembers who were involved in active nuclear tests; and, be it finally  
RESOLVED, That The American Legion continues to exert maximum effort to ensure that these atomic cleanup veterans receive the proper and necessary care, treatment, and benefits that they deserve and have earned.

Resolution No. 47: Research into Hearing Loss Due to Loud or Constant Noise Exposure in the Military  
Origin: Illinois  
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation  
(As amended)  
WHEREAS, The American Legion is a national organization of veterans who have dedicated themselves to the service of the community, state and nation; and  
WHEREAS, The Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Chicago American Legion office and other Legion offices nationwide have seen a substantial increase in service-connected compensation claims for bilateral hearing loss coming from our older veterans of the Korean and Vietnam era; and  
WHEREAS, The majority of these veterans did not develop bilateral hearing loss until much later in their lifetime; and  
WHEREAS, All of these veterans were exposed to loud or constant noise exposure in the military; and  
WHEREAS, The most recent study done by the Institute of Medicine in 2005 did not find sufficient evidence of noise-induced hearing loss developing later in life; and  
WHEREAS, Since there are no good and current studies showing such a link the Department of Veterans Affairs is consistently denying these claims; now, therefore, be it  
RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Reno, Nevada, August 22, 23, 24, 2017, That The American Legion strongly supports
funding by Congress or the Department of Veterans Affairs to support more detailed research into this area of delayed hearing loss due to loud or constant noise exposure in the military.

Resolution No. 58: Expansion of Presumptive Conditions Associated with Camp Lejeune Contaminated Drinking Water

Origin: New York

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, Military personnel and their families were exposed to contaminated water supply at Camp Lejeune, N.C. from August 1, 1953 to December 31, 1987; and

WHEREAS, The Honoring America’s Veterans and Caring for Camp Lejeune Families Act of 2012 established fifteen different conditions where the exposed military personnel and their families were eligible to seek treatment at Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health facilities at no cost; and

WHEREAS, The conditions identified for cost-free health care were listed as: esophageal cancer, lung cancer, breast cancer, bladder cancer, kidney cancer, leukemia, multiple myeloma, myelodysplastic syndromes, renal toxicity, hepatic steatosis, female infertility, miscarriage, scleroderma, neurobehavioral effects, and non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma; and

WHEREAS, The secretary of the VA established the presumptive list for service connection for diseases associated with said water supply exposure as of January 2017 included only eight conditions to include; adult leukemia, aplastic anemia and other myelodysplastic syndromes, bladder cancer, kidney cancer, liver cancer, multiple myeloma, non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma, and Parkinson’s disease; and

WHEREAS, The secretary will continue to review relevant information to support the creation of additional presumptive conditions, as it become available; and

WHEREAS, An estimated 900,000 servicemembers were potentially exposed to the tainted water; now, therefore, it be

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Reno, Nevada, August 22, 23, 24, 2017, That the secretary consider expanding the presumptive list to include all conditions set in the 2012 act for health care that were not previously included.

Resolution No. 74: Air Carrier Access

Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The Air Carrier Access Act was signed into law by President Reagan in 1986, to prohibit commercial airlines from discrimination based on disability in air travel; and

WHEREAS, Since the signing of the law significant progress has occurred, however, many disabled travelers, including veterans and servicemembers, still encounter significant barriers while traveling using air transportation, such as, damaged assistive devices (e.g., wheelchairs), inaccessible aircraft, lavatories, and communication media (e.g., websites and kiosks), delayed assistance, inequitable treatment of service animals, inadequate disability cultural competency, and a lack of suitable seating accommodations; and

WHEREAS, Disabled air travelers have experienced damaged equipment, poor customer relations with airline personnel, inaccessible aircraft, missed flights, injuries and delays in travelling; and

WHEREAS, People with disabilities should enjoy the same opportunities for travel as all United States citizens, including the opportunity to travel for business or pleasure without issue; and

WHEREAS, Access for all travelers, including disabled veterans and servicemembers must be modernized to meet 21st century needs; and
WHEREAS, Modernizing travel for people with disabilities meets the standard of reasonable accommodation, which will not pose any undue hardship on the commercial airline industry; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Reno, Nevada, August 22, 23, 24, 2017, That The American Legion urge Congress to pass legislation that better protects the rights of passengers with disabilities in air transportation, which includes a significant number of veterans and servicemembers.

Resolution No. 75: Department of Veterans Affairs Rural Health Care Program
Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, One out of every three veterans treated by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) lives in rural communities; and
WHEREAS, Rural veterans have been underserved due to a lack of access to health care, which can be attributed to greater travel barriers and a lack of public transportation; and
WHEREAS, Under current law, VA physicians can only provide telehealth treatment across state lines if the veteran and the physician are located in federal facilities; and
WHEREAS, This limits the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) from contracting with non-VA health care providers for telemedicine in states outside of where the veteran lives; and
WHEREAS, Although VA has established access standards, the standards and definition of rural and highly rural veterans do not take into account the distance and driving time it takes for veterans to be provided with VA care; and
WHEREAS, Rural Health Consultants (RHCs) are located and fall under the Veteran Integrated Service Networks (VISNs), which leads to additional collateral duties, inconsistent with the schedules, ultimately distracting RHCs from needed outreach to facilities within their VISN; and
WHEREAS, The Rural Health Resource Center is advisory in nature and primarily conducts research without providing direct resources to rural veterans or outreach; and
WHEREAS, VA Medical Centers in rural areas have concerns in recruiting and retaining qualified medical and clinical providers, in many cases rural areas do not have attractive resources for medical providers; and
WHEREAS, While the development of Community-Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs) have increased access to health care for veterans in rural areas, communication between the CBOCs and medical centers has decreased, creating communication and managerial difficulties; and
WHEREAS, Telehealth services have more than doubled in the last four years, creating more access to health care for rural veterans, however, space and bandwidth limit the level of service and number of veterans the VA can serve; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Reno, Nevada, August 22, 23, 24, 2017, That The American Legion urge Congress to allow Department of Veterans Affairs health professionals to practice telemedicine across state lines if they are qualified and practice within the scope of their authorized federal duties regardless of where the covered health-care professional or patient is located; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge Office of Rural Health (ORH) to centralize and consolidate the Rural Health Consultants (RHC) under the ORH; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge ORH to ensure Rural Health Resource Centers provide service to rural veterans from surveys, national hotline and connecting veterans living in rural communities with providers; and, be it further
Resolved, That The American Legion urge Congress to develop a recruitment and retention strategy to incentivize medical providers to practice in rural communities; and, be it further

Resolved, That The American Legion urge Congress to ensure each Community-Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) has adequate staff and direct communication between the CBOC’s and medical center’s RHC; and, be it finally

Resolved, That The American Legion urge the ORH to search for opportunities to expand telehealth services by collaborating with local offices in rural areas that can share space.

Resolution No. 76: Veterans Emergency Room or Urgent Care Facility Relief

Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

Whereas, On occasion, a veteran may need emergency care for an injury or illness due to a threat to life or health; and

Whereas, The cost for an emergency room visit can vary depending on whether the patient has a health insurance plan or is uninsured and the severity of the injury or illness being treated; and

Whereas, The cost for an emergency room visit can run into the thousands of dollars; and

Whereas, At other times the need for a visit to an emergency room is unnecessary due to the condition of the injury or illness being less severe; and

Whereas, In those instances of less severe conditions, a veteran patient may visit an urgent care center and receive treatment without excessive waiting or high cost; and

Whereas, As health-care systems in the United States deal with issues of access to care, increasing patient needs, growing demands on primary and emergency care and increasing costs, urgent care centers provide another option for veterans to use; and

Whereas, Veterans should have the option to use either emergency room or urgent care when traveling to a Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical facility would not be practical; and

Whereas, Veterans should not expect to suffer financial hardship due to a visit to either an emergency room or urgent care center; and

Whereas, It is reasonable to expect the VA to assist in sharing the burden of paying either some or all of the cost for emergency room or urgent care in either a VA or non-VA facility for certain veterans as defined by Title 38 U.S. Code; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Reno, Nevada, August 22, 23, 24, 2017, That The American Legion support legislation to amend Title 38, United States Code, to require the secretary of veterans affairs to pay the reasonable costs of urgent care provided to certain veterans; and, be it finally

Resolved, That the Department of Veterans Affairs establish cost-sharing amounts for veterans receiving care at an emergency room of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Referred Resolutions

Resolution No. 51 (NY): Department of Veteran Affairs Numerical Rating System
Resolution No. 57 (NY): Increase Oversight Department of Veteran Affairs Contracted Compensation and Pension Examinations
Resolution No. 72 (CA): Department of Veteran Affairs Drug Pricing Policy

Received and Recorded Resolutions

Resolution No. 2 (NE): Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2017
Resolution No. 7 (ME): Research the Potential Soil Contamination at Camp Edwards
Resolution No. 52 (NY): Expand Department of Veteran Affairs Caregivers to All Eras
Resolution No. 53 (NY): Expand Department Veteran Affairs Extended Care Service for Women Veterans
Resolution No. 62 (NY): Authorize Child Care Service for All Veterans Receiving VA Health Care
Resolution No. 64 (NY): Oppose Any Budget Proposal that Would Take Funding from Other VA Programs to Support the Budget
Resolution No. 65 (NY): Call on Congress to Pass the Covers Act

Rejected Resolutions

Resolution No. 39 (WA): In-State Licensure for VA Health-Care Providers
Resolution No. 49 (IL): Elimination of the Nation Work Queue
Resolution No. 54 (NY): Call on the Department of Veteran Affairs to Eliminate Third Party Administrators to Serve as Choice Contractor
Resolution No. 55 (NY): Improve Use of Disability Benefits Questionnaires
Resolution No. 56 (NY): Increase Transparency and Improve Efficiencies in Department of Veterans Affairs Appeals Process
Resolution No. 59 (NY): Full Staffing of Compensation and Pension Examiner Positions

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN BOZELLA: Mr. Commander, I, Ralph P. Bozella, Colorado, as a duly elected and registered delegate to this Convention, move for the adoption of this report respectfully submitted. ....Second.

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: I heard the motion and I also heard the seconds. Is there any discussion? All in favor say aye. Opposed? The report of Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation is adopted. (Applause)

Presentation: William F. Lenker National Service Trophy

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: With the adoption of the Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation report, it is time to announce the winner of the William F. Lenker National Service Trophy. William F. Lenker was the chairman of The American Legion National VA&R Commission from 1967 until 1988. He was a true champion for America's veterans. This trophy is awarded annually to the department that best supports and implements programs to benefit veterans, their families and their survivors. For the 2016-2017 program year, the trophy is awarded to the Department of Montana. (Cheers and Applause)

I'm sure Montana will leave room on the wall for next year as well.

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: Our Operation Comfort Warriors donations today total $81,614.55. Which brings our year's total to $546,527.18. Fantastic! This year, you, The American Legion Family, has been so generous, so compassionate of supporting our charities, our programs so that we may help others. Our total donations this year: $8,225,108.59. (Applause)

Special Presentations

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: I've always said The American Legion Family is amazing. I'm proud to be one of your relatives. And speaking of family, I would now like to call my family to the stage. (Applause)

You know, in the words of Lou Gehrig: I'm the luckiest man in the world. I have a huge family, you out there. You are awesome, as I just said, and I can't thank all of you enough. You have made this year great. You have left your footprints, and together we're carrying the legacy forward.
However, our job is not done when we leave this hall. When we leave this hall, we still have veterans who need our help, who need our assistance, who need our voice on Capitol Hill. Yesterday we saw the results of our voice. But our voices still need to be heard, a strong voice. We're going to do it. We're going to keep this legacy going because the next generation is right behind us, and we want to pass a great legacy, a strong legacy, to them. I'm confident we're going to do it in the time we all have left on this Earth. So, my Legion Family, I can't thank you enough. You've been so hospitable. As we came to your departments, and, yes, we came to every one of your departments, such wonderful hospitality. (Applause)

You showed us what you're doing. We went from the small posts to the large posts. I'll never forget the post in Pinedale, Wyoming: "Mr. Commander, why did you come to our post?" "Well, you're not in trouble. I'm here on behalf of over 2 million Legionnaires to say thank you, thank you for what you've been doing." "But, Commander, we've never had a national commander here." "Again, well, first of all, you cannot say that again. Second of all, as far as I know, you're not in trouble. I don't make the agenda, I just follow the agenda, and somebody has thought within your department you have been doing great things, just like all the posts in this great organization have been doing good things and will continue to do things."

I am proud and honored again to be an American Legion relative to you, my American Legion Family. God bless each and every one of you. I have been blessed to be in this position, honored and humbled. After all, if you look at our history, I think it is about only 107 or so individuals that got to serve in this position. It's a position that I have didn't put on my bucket list to do, but it just happened. I am so honored. I thank you for your support. I thank you for the support of our great American Legion staff at our national headquarters in Indianapolis and also in Washington, D.C. (Applause)

Yes. They work very, very, very hard for you and me in both offices. I tell you what, all of us are lucky to have a staff that we do have, because when either you or I walk into any of those offices, they know who they're there to support: you, us, Legionnaires. It starts in the front office with National Adjutant Dan Wheeler; the executive directors, Verna Jones and Jeff Brown; and it goes on down to the directors, the committees, the commissions; also the past national commanders and also our national vice commanders.

But there's a group of individuals that has, I think, had the toughest job of all, and that has been taking care of me. The ladies in the front offices, Patti, Jennifer, Mary, Mary Kay. And my executive assistant, Debbie. And in the meeting and convention office, Bridget, Andrea, Ellen, and Marti. I think all of them have done an exceptional job, especially Debbie. Debbie has kept me on the road about 330 days or so, thanks to Marti's scheduling that I know gave her headaches at times. But they've all done an excellent job, and I couldn't be more honored to have worked with them, and they are a part of our American Legion Family. Also our commission chairmen and committee chairmen, and also all of you that have served on those groups to ensure that we take care of veterans and take care of families and take care of America. To all of you, I thank you.

Of course, the other part of my family, I haven't got to see them too much lately, but they're here today. On my right is my baby brother, David, and his wife, Gloria, from the Department of Missouri. You know, David is the current commander of Story-Hardin Post 164, which was my first post back in Missouri when my big brother, who was also the post commander at that time, signed me up into The American Legion. If it wasn't for Alfred, I probably would not be talking to you here right now. So David is continuing on the legacy in our little town in Craig, Missouri, in northwest Missouri. So, brother, keep it up. (Applause)

Also a couple daughters that Linda and I are so blessed to have. Of course, Cori, she's the youngest here. Cori continued her military service to the United States Air Force recently by enlisting in the Georgia Air National Guard to continue to serve. (Applause)

Her husband, Tony, Senior Master Sergeant Tony, is back home still working still on active duty. I suspect one of the three boys there might have some Air Force opportunities
to either enlist or I'm hoping maybe one of them possibly be the first one in our family to go to the United States Air Force Academy. You never know. (Applause)

If you recall in Cincinnati, Cori gave my nomination speech. I tell you what, as I said then and I'll say it now, she could not have made this dad any more proud than she did on that day. (Applause)

Our other daughter here from San Antonio, Andria. And Andria, she, as I said before, in Cincinnati, she married an Air Force fellow, Peter. Peter served his time and got out and is now working for AT&T and is going to be relocated to Georgia. So I suspect, Texas, you're probably going to lose her and Georgia is probably going to gain her. But Andria's oldest, Alex, is serving in the United States Air Force at Ramstein, Germany. He is our first grandson to serve our country. (Applause)

The next family member is my love, my wife, Linda. She has supported me from day one. And she said, "Well, I might as well because it's in your DNA." But she has supported me and been by my side for 27½ years in the United States Air Force. And getting here today at this job, you know, the national commander serves one year, but the preparation is two years in advance. She has held the fires burning at home, and particularly this last year when Oregon had more than it really wanted of snow, she shoveled more snow than she ever wanted to shovel, and also all the outside chores in addition to the inside chores of the home. She was there at those various organizations' activities whereas the first lady she performed excellently. (Applause)

While she was doing all of those things, she was also serving Harney County Unit 63, District 10, and also the Department of Oregon with The American Legion Auxiliary. So, my dear, I applaud you. I love you. (Applause)

Now I hope you understand why I say I'm the luckiest man in the world. I cannot help but thank my own department, Department of Oregon. In 2011, we had a vision, and I happened to be a part of that vision. Oregon, wherever you're at, I hear you but I can't see you, but that's equally important, I thank you much for your support and confidence in me to represent you and to carry The American Legion legacy forward. I'm also honored in remembering my mentor, T. Les Galloway. Thank you, American Legion Family; thank you, Schmidt family; and thank you, Oregon family. May God bless each and every one of you. I am so honored. And, again, I'm the luckiest man in the world. Thank you. (Applause)

Would my national vice commanders please come forward. Fae, Doug, Paul, Paul, and Jim. All of our national vice commanders have represented us well. You can go ahead and clap. (Applause)

From the time we started out with our orientation at our national headquarters in Indianapolis and also in Washington, D.C., this group that you gave me to serve with went at it with heart, with compassion, and with a mission on their minds: To take care of veterans and take care of families and representing in the highest standards, the highest manners our American Legion. And that they did. You could not have given me a better group of five than these right here, your national vice commanders. (Applause)

I appreciate their devotion and sacrifice to this great organization and also the sacrifice of their spouses. Because they, too, were on the road. They were on the road a lot. In fact, they have done something that hasn't been done for a long, long time. We dispatched them to our overseas departments to help those departments. I am so proud that they represented us, again, in the highest of standards. As my token of appreciation and our appreciation, I would like to present them each with a little gift. (Applause)

Let's give our national vice commanders a hand! (Applause)

I now call on National Historian Paul Bennett of Missouri; National Sergeant-at-Arms Kevin Owens from Oregon; and National Chaplain Harvey Klee of Texas; and the national commander's aide, Don Weber of Oregon. This is another part of our team, your team, and, of course, Historian Paul has been documenting our history, all the good things that we've done as we saw since this convention, the fruits of our labors. Sergeant-at-Arms Kevin has always been there Johnny-on-the-spot. (Applause)
Chaplain Harvey, as I said, his words have inspired us, have given us hope and remind us that there's someone greater than all of us. To my aide, Don Weber, Don stepped up when Dirk had to take leave. I called Don up, and I said, "Don, what are you doing?" He said, "What do you want?" I said, "Don, I've got a deal for you, if Carol approves." And I said, "I would like for you to help me carry the legacy forward of The American Legion." Don met me about three days later in Georgia, and there we commenced to carry on the legacy of The American Legion for the last three months of this year. I've been honored to serve with him, and he's done an excellent job of taking care of me. Prior to Don, Dirk also did an outstanding job of, again, taking care of me, pointing me in the right direction, keeping me on time. I have been so blessed and so honored, once again, and I would like to show my appreciation to these gentlemen for their service to you and I. (Applause)

All right. Let's give our national historian, sergeant-at-arms, chaplain and aide a great hand. (Applause)

And now the Chair recognizes National Vice Commander Paul Espinoza.

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER ESPINOZA: It's my honor this year, this fiscal year, as national vice commander and our, your, national vice commanders, five of us, but first of all, before I commence with this, I would like to bring up our national commander up here, along with his wife, Linda Schmidt, please, and his aide, Don. Would you please come up here.

First of all, all of us national vices got together a year ago. Hardly knew each other. And now we're like brothers and sisters, along with all of you brothers and sisters out there. We did as best as we could and as much as we can, and I believe us five, we tried 110 percent. I believe in our eyes that we put a stop to the slide and now all we're going to do is move up forward from here on out. Anyways, we put together a little bit of something for our national commander and his wife and his aide.

First of all, to the national commander's wife, we thank her for lending the national commander to us for a whole year. Very great man to work with. We thank her very much. We got her a little gift, a jewelry box from the southwest. (Applause)

Now, for the very hard work Dirk Levy and Don Weber have done for our national commander, now they could take a little break, and we got them a gift from the five national vice commanders, two fishing poles. Let's give the national commander's aides, Dirk Levy and Don Weber, a big hand, please. Thank you. (Applause)

All right. To the one we all looked up to as us five, followed him and very proud to serve under him and represent him everywhere we went, our national commander, Charlie Schmidt. We got him three gifts. Let me start off with one. We talked to his wife. We talked to Dirk Levy. He's a bow hunter. He's had that bow for many, many years. It's already starting to go to the wayside, so we decided together and got him a compound bow for hunting with our national vice commanders' names on it as well as his name on it as well with The American Legion. (Applause)

National Commander, it's not over yet. We also put together two deep-sea fishing trips. They're both out of Oregon. Two deep-sea fishing trips for you and your spouse or whoever you want to go with you. Captains Reel Deep Sea Fishing and the other is the Yaquina Bay Charters. (Applause)

Again, national commander, from all of us national vice commanders, it's been an honor and a pleasure. I think we're the lucky ones to work under you. Thank you very much for everything you've done. God bless you, and thank all of you. (Applause)

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: How do they know next week archery season opens? Thank you, all. Really, you had a great corps of national vice commanders, worked very hard for all of us. (Applause)

I now recognize National Historian Paul Bennett of the Department of Missouri, Paul.

NATIONAL HISTORIAN BENNETT: Sir, it's a pleasure having served with you, and it's been a distinct honor this past year. I remember your little trip up to Craig, your homecoming. It was quite a trip you got there. You know, we tried for the last couple of
months to find you something that you could use. Unfortunately, every time we figured something out, we were told "We already got that." So we have tried and tried and tried, and finally we have decided one thing that you could probably use is something where you could go to Cabela's and get what you want to get. *(Laughter)*

So I present to you, sir, this card to go get what you want at Cabela's.

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: Whoa! It's a $500 Cabela's gift card! I thank you, Paul, our national historian; also Chaplain Harvey; Sergeant-at-Arms Kevin; and Dirk and Don, the aides. Wow, this is going to be like a kid in the candy store. Thank you so much. It's been an honor and pleasure to serve with you all. Thank you, all. *(Applause)*

I would like to take a moment, maybe I didn't do it properly, but I would like to recognize the national commander's aide's wife, Carol, who gave Don the green light on a moment's notice to continue helping me carry the legacy forward. Carol, would you stand up, please? Thank you so much. Thank you so much. *(Applause)*

On the Reno Gazette-Journal, there's a picture of what took place on this stage yesterday, and it says: "Bonds of loyalty." That's our American Legion, our commander-in-chief signing the Appeals Modernization Bill. *(Applause)*

How about that? It is amazing what we as a family, when we collectively rally together, to be strong, we can take care of many, many veterans. That's what we've been doing, that's what we're doing now, and that's what we're going to do in the future. That's what The American Legion Family does. There's proof right there. *(Applause)*

Next we have a few words from National Adjutant Dan Wheeler.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WHEELER: Mr. Commander, it's been an absolute pleasure for your staff and me to serve with you this year. We have all felt privileged to work with you and to be taught how to carry the legacy forward. There were great times, and there were not so great, but what's notable is that through them all, we could count on you being calm, thoughtful, polite, and kind. We have never seen any leader who so manifested grace under pressure as you have, and your staff loves you for that. So I want to thank you for a great year. Now it's time for a little R&R. So, ladies and gentlemen, don your caps.

... At this time, National Adjutant Wheeler handed out orange earlap hunting hats; "Sharp Dressed Man" performed by the musical group ZZ Top was played.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WHEELER: Mr. Commander, we understand you're an All-American sportsman. But first you're an American.

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: Yes, I am.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WHEELER: So, for the part of you that is All-American, we have this gift for you. This is a replica of the telescoping flagpole that will be installed in front of your house with the American flag, the Air Force flag, and the POW flag. I think it's about 30 feet tall.

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: Wow. Wonderful. Wonderful. *(Applause)*

Evidently hunting is the theme here. This looks like a binocular harness. This must be the binoculars. Wow. Oh, this is a camera that you hang on a tree and see who passes by. A pair of ultra-light hunting boots. Wow. Thinsulated gloves, and a camo suit and a camo blanket.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WHEELER: That's not all. You get these silly hats. *(Laughter)*

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: Hey, we may have to auction these off for one of our charities. *(Applause)*

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WHEELER: Good idea. Mr. Commander, on behalf of all of your staff who contributed to these gifts for you, they're very small compared to the affection that we've grown to feel for you. I want to tell you it's been a wonderful year serving as your national officers and your executive directors. I just thank you so much for a job well done.

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: Thank you. *(Applause)*
Presentation: Plaque and Colors to Outgoing National Commander
John P. 'Jake' Comer, Massachusetts, Past National Commander (Colors)
Joseph J. Frank, Missouri, Past National Commander (Plaque)

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER CASPER: Before our next presentation, please turn your attention to the video monitor as we reflect on our national commander's year in office. ... At this time the delegation viewed a video.

After serving this past year as your national vice commander, I am honored to represent all members of The American Legion in presiding over our next order of business. This is the time when we present to our national commander, Charles E. Schmidt, the Colors of his year in office and a plaque. At this time I call on Past National Commander John P. "Jake" Comer to present the Colors. (Applause)

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER COMER: Thank you very much. I'm singularly honored to make these presentations. Will the audience please rise at this National Convention. I ask for the National Champion Color Guard from Newport Harbor Post 291, Department of California to bring the Colors of the national commander to center stage. Hand salute! ... At this time, the delegation rendered a salute to the Colors.

Two! Commander Schmidt, on Tuesday you asked: "Who's gonna fill our shoes?" Well, commander, you are going to leave some big shoes to fill yourself. Membership is not as high as we want it to be, but that is not because you haven't worked tirelessly to remind us of how membership is our lifeblood.

You have had an impressive career in the Air Force. That makes me real proud, being an Air Force man myself, having served in Vietnam and risen from an enlisted airman to a field grade officer. You and I stood on the field together at the legendary Fenway Park, home of my Boston Red Sox, as 37,000 fans cheered and told you and 1,400 other Vietnam War veterans: "Welcome home!" Well, commander, The American Legion welcomes you home, and we also welcome your lovely wife, Linda.

We are a better organization because of everything that you have contributed to it. You visited 55 departments, 235 posts, and 10 countries. You have never allowed your high office to affect your humility and approachability. You have the same persona after you have been national commander as you did before you were even a candidate. It's been a pleasure to call you a commander and a friend, and let these Colors always remind you of the class and dignity that you brought to the office.

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: Thank you, Commander Jake Comer. You have been a mentor and a close friend. You and so many other past national commanders have been so helpful to me, simply by providing classic examples on how to represent The American Legion as a national commander.

I only hope to be able to provide the same wise counsel and advice to my successors as my predecessors have provided me. I will always cherish your friendship. To all Legionnaires, my fellow Legionnaires, as we prepare to elect our new national commander, I ask each and every one of you to recruit just one new member and retain one new member to keep our American Legion strong. ... Retirement of Colors.

... At this time, National Vice Commander Espinoza assumed the Chair.

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER ESPINOZA: I now call on Past National Commander Joseph J. Frank to present the plaque to our outgoing national commander. (Applause)

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Commander, you have been a great advocate for our veterans, their families and The American Legion. You have led our organization through important legislative victories in terms of veterans affairs, reforming the outdated appeals process and improving the GI Bill. These victories and other important veterans legislation have been delivered at a time when the public is increasingly
dissatisfied with government inaction in other areas. Under your tenure, The American Legion has had one of its best legislative years. You have carried a great legacy forward.

Commander, I am happy to present you a plaque which attests to your election to the high office of national commander of The American Legion for the year 2016-2017. It is given in appreciation of your dedication and your dedicated leadership and in recognition of your devoted service to God and country, and in token of the high esteem of your fellow Legionnaires. It is presented this 24th day of August, before the delegates assembled here at the National Convention in Reno, Nevada. Congratulations, Commander. God bless you.

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: Thank you, Commander Frank. Your counsel has been truly valued by me. Oregon is my home now, but, like you, my first American Legion home was in the Show-Me State, Missouri-ah, as we say out West. Actually, where I was raised it's "Missouri." While our American Legion is not full of showy people, there is an awful lot to showcase in our great American Legion Family. The devotion, hard work and extraordinary accomplishments of blue-cappers, Auxiliary members and our Sons is something to truly marvel over. If I hadn't witnessed it firsthand, my Missouri roots would insist that these people "show me" the proof that so many good volunteers exist. Commander Joe, your service and sacrifice in Vietnam coupled with your post-war career and accomplishments are nothing short of inspirational. The American Legion is about to make some more history today, but it is the legacy left by leaders like you, Commander Joe, that we shall all try to carry forward. Thank you so much. I am honored. Thank you. (Applause)

Special Order of Business: Election of National Officers

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: My fellow Legionnaires, we have now come to a special order of business, the election of our national officers. National Judge Advocate Phillip Onderdonk, Jr., will read the Rules of Convention governing the nomination and election of officers.

NATIONAL JUDGE ADVOCATE ONDERDONK: The Rules for Election of National Officers of The American Legion.

Rule 15: Last 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 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.

Mr. Commander, that concludes the reading of the rules pertaining to the Election of National Officers.

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: Thank you, judge. As chairman of this convention, I now appoint as judge of election Jared R. Dyer, adjutant of the Department of Oregon, and as tellers of the election: David A. Kurtz, adjutant, Department of Wisconsin; Dale Chapman, adjutant, Department of Virginia; and Randy Cash, adjutant, Department of North Carolina. Will the judge and tellers of the election please come forward. National Adjutant Daniel S. Wheeler 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. As national commander, I deem that two tellers are sufficient for this election.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WHEELER: I will now call the roll for the purpose of nominations for national commander. [The national adjutant call each department in turn.]

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN STACEY (AL): Mr. Commander, I'm Donna Stacey, chairman of the delegation from Alabama. Mr. Commander, Alabama, the Heart of Dixie, yields to Wisconsin, home of many of our snowbird friends.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN CLEWELL (WI): Mr. Commander, Laurel Clewell, the chairman of the delegation from Wisconsin. Mr. Commander, I request that the Chair recognize James Michael Rohan for the purpose of a nomination for the high office of national commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: The Chair recognizes James Michael Rohan of the Department of Wisconsin.

DELEGATE ROHAN (WI): National Commander Schmidt, National Adjutant Wheeler, national officers, past national commanders, delegates, alternates, members of the American Legion Auxiliary, Sons of The American Legion, and the American Legion Riders and guests. We have come to a very special time in our history, a time our forefathers carefully planned for and anticipated, a time where the words "A veteran is a veteran, no matter their race, no matter their religion, no matter their gender," is no longer a slogan, but today a reality. So, my American Legion Family, I stand before you today a very proud Legionnaire and husband to tell you about our candidate for national commander of The American Legion, Denise Helen Rohan of the great state of Wisconsin.

As a young soldier in the United States Army, Denise lived by the seven Army values of loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity and personal courage. She didn't just memorize those words. She lived those values every day. Her military service shows a soldier excelling in every single assignment. It recognizes her leadership starting as early as basic training and advanced individual training where she graduated in the top of her class. She was tested and showed that through hard work and teamwork you can achieve anything. In every single training opportunity, she came out on top. In every assignment, she was selected as the leader.

Denise has and continues to be a role model for our men and women in uniform and the veterans here today. These Army values weren't foreign to her. Her parents, Joe and Dorothy Hulbert, lived those same values in a little town in Elkader, Iowa. They were trusted pillars in their community who served as leaders in their church. Her father, a quiet and humble man, served as fire chief and emergency medical technician. Her mother unsparingly served as an emergency medical technician and as our church secretary. These two hard-working parents raised three wonderful daughters who shared those same values.

Those of you who know Denise Rohan and her two sisters know that you won't find anyone more loyal, more selfless and have more integrity than Denise and her two sisters,
Bonnie and Terry. In her visits to your departments Denise has talked to you about putting our families first and what that means to her. It's not just a theme or words on a poster. It's how she was raised. Her parents moved to Iowa early in their marriage to start a family and a life in a small town. They chose to put their new and growing family first. They chose to focus on the values of community and God and how it would teach their children about right and wrong.

Denise continues her relationship with God as an adult. As a high schooler, Denise taught Sunday school while being very active in her church. She continued that commitment to her church into adulthood while she led her church's strategic planning, then council on ministry and worship committee. As she grew in her church, she led the parish staff relations committee and church counsel and finally served as a lay leader of the United Methodist Church. Her parents and her sisters and her childhood pastor, Reverend Marks, are all very proud of the Christian woman she has become.

As a wife and a mother and grandmother, she's been tested recently in her relationship with God and her family, first with her accident that put her in a wheelchair for three and a half months and a cane for another month. She didn't waver. She used her time in the wheelchair to learn about the obstacles our disabled veterans face every day doing basic tasks like bathing and traveling and getting in and out of a building. When flying became an obstacle to visiting a department, she got in the car and had someone drive her so that she didn't miss an opportunity to visit and share her message. While others might quit, Denise stayed the course, taking one visit at a time until every single invitation was fulfilled.

While still in a wheelchair she was tested in mid-February, in mid-February when we almost lost our son to complications from a simple surgery that had gone wrong. Nick spent the last four months in the hospital enduring multiple surgeries and procedures. I'm here to tell you today that by the grace of God, the loving care of his wife, Angie, and your prayers, he's here with us today. (Applause)

Nick is here with our daughter-in-law, Angie, and our grandson, Sawyer, and our granddaughter, Isla. Most people pronounce it "Is-la," but it's "Eye-la." Yes, it's "Eye-la."

Denise's leadership continued into her professional career at the University of Wisconsin-Madison as the assistant bursar of student loans. She managed the University of Wisconsin-Madison, the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay, and the University of Wisconsin Colleges' $120 million loan portfolio made up of approximately 200 different federal, institutional, and state loan programs in compliance with all laws and regulations.

She was responsible for the efficiency and design of the computerized student loan accounts receivable system, taking the university from a manual loan-repayment system to an automated system, making the process user friendly for both users and staff. In her 29 years of service to the University of Wisconsin, Denise and the university maintained one of the lowest default rates in the country, ensuring students who graduated found employment in their field and made enough money to repay what they borrowed. This allowed the university to re-loan the money to other students who may not have had the opportunity to go to college without the ability to borrow money.

Denise is a graduate of Mount Senario College with an emphasis in accounting and the Collegiate Management Institute with an emphasis in college management. Denise is a veteran who stands for family, both yours and mine. I can assure you that her family is in full support of this opportunity for her to be the leader of the nation's greatest and largest veterans service organization.

Commander Schmidt and delegates to this 99th National Convention of the American Legion, as a duly registered delegate from the Department of Wisconsin, it's my distinct honor and privilege to place into nomination for the high office of national commander of the American Legion a United States Army veteran, a great Legionnaire, and my best friend, Wisconsin's own Denise Helen Rohan. (Applause)
DELEGATION CHAIRMAN WALDHAUS (AK): Mr. Commander, Kirk Waldhaus, chairman of the delegation of Alaska. Mr. Commander, Alaska yields to North Carolina.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN SHORE (NC): Mr. Commander, David Shore, chairman of the delegation from North Carolina. Mr. Commander, I request that the Chair recognize Patricia Harris for the purpose of seconding the nomination for the high office of national commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: The Chair recognizes Patricia Harris.

DELEGATE HARRIS (NC): National Commander Schmidt, National Adjutant Wheeler, national officers, past national commanders, delegates and guests, I am Patricia Harris, delegate from North Carolina, and it is my privilege to second the nomination of Denise Helen Rohan of Wisconsin to the high office of national commander of The American Legion.

Make no mistake about it, Denise Rohan is a dedicated wife and mother. Family first. It is more than a phrase or slogan for Denise; it is a way of life. You are aware of the many challenges she's faced in the past year, and despite these trials and, fellow Legionnaires, they were trials, she maintained her professional deportment as well as her love and devotion to family. That in and of itself is a sign or indication of true leadership, a leader who is also a servant to all, to her faith, her family and her country.

Denise loves nothing more than spending time with her grandchildren, whether it's at the kitchen sink with Isla wearing their special aprons, creating potions out of Kool-Aid, lemonade or tea, or having snowball fights with Sawyer. And then, of course, there's the dancing and watching movies. And I understand that their favorite is Beauty and the Beast.

All of these activities demonstrate what she really stands for and who she really is, a wife, mother, grandmother. Family first. What is true for her own family is equally true with her American Legion Family: She is a mentor and leader and has inspired others to give of themselves in service.

I am but one example. She has truly inspired me to become more involved in service to my community, to reach out to those who are not as privileged as ourselves and share our talents with those around us in order to make a positive change to our community and our world. Is that or not what The American Legion is all about?

Again, I am merely one of the many lives she has influenced throughout her time in our American Legion. Whether it's her emphasis on training of Legionnaires or service to the community and nation, Denise Rohan is the leader The American Legion needs today, skilled listener, devoted wife and mother, leadership by example. Denise Rohan is all of these. She is the leader we need today. As a duly registered delegate, I proudly second the nomination of Denise Rohan for national commander of The American Legion. (Applause)

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN BUGH (AZ): Mr. Commander, Charles Bugh, delegate and chairman, Arizona. Mr. Commander, Arizona yields to Connecticut.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN ROBINSON (CT): Mr. Commander, Louie Robinson, chairman of the delegation of Connecticut. Mr. Commander, I request that the Chair recognize Jim LaCoursiere for the purpose of seconding the nomination for the high office of national commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: The Chair recognizes Jim LaCoursiere.

DELEGATE LACOURSIERE (CT): National Commander Schmidt, National Adjutant Wheeler, national officers, past national commanders, delegates, alternates, members of the American Legion Auxiliary, Sons of The American Legion, American Legion Riders and guests. It is with great honor and pride which I stand before you today to give you a little insight into the career which has led to the great journey for Denise Rohan as a candidate for the high office of national commander of The American Legion.

A Vietnam-era veteran, Denise joined the United States Army in 1974, attended basic training. She was an honor graduate of the Repair Parts Specialist Course, a distinguished graduate of Stock Control and Accounting Course, Instructor Training Course, where she finished in the top of her class and was chosen as an instructor in the Quartermaster Corps
in Fort Lee, Virginia, separating at the rank of specialist in 1976. This alone shows her true commitment and integrity, considering there were only a few women going into the military back then, compared to what there is today.

After separating from the military, Denise and Mike struggled a little bit financially due to his low military pay and minimum wage income from Denise working at a cheese factory. So Mike jokingly came across and told Denise, "You need to get a real job," as they also had their baby son, Nicholas, to care for. She took that commitment to heart, as the lady she is, got out of the factory, and she got a position as a lower-level clerk at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. There is where she also continued to push herself hard and excel in every way possible studying and learning. She earned the highest respect of others through her character and achieved the position as assistant bursar of student loans until her retirement in 2012.

Denise and her husband, Mike, have both served as Family Readiness Group volunteers for the Wisconsin Army and Air National Guard as well as providing their services for the United States Marine Corps and the Naval Reserve. Denise is a 2006 graduate of the National American Legion College and has either been a member of or chaired numerous national committees and commissions.

As you can see, and you know Denise, she's a true leader in every aspect. Some say she's a little soft spoken or quiet, but that is not true; for I myself, I am the same way. As a true leader, she listens first and wants to hear and know what you have to say. She's all about putting family first, her family and The American Legion Family.

National Commander Schmidt and delegates to this 99th National Convention of The American Legion, as a duly registered delegate from the Department of Connecticut, it is with my personal great pride and honor that I, too, second the nomination for the high office of national commander of The American Legion for the years 2017-2018 a true leader, a true lady, a true friend and a true American hero from the Department of Wisconsin, Denise Helen Rohan. (Cheers and applause)

... At this time, a demonstration of support ensued.

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: The convention will come to order. The adjutant will continue the roll call.

DEPARTMENT COMMANDER CASTRO (CA): My name is Art Castro. I'm the state commander for the Department of California, home of Past National Commander Bruce Thiesen, and I'm a delegate to this Convention. We cast all our votes for Denise Rohan and for all uncontested offices.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN BOWEN (CO): Mr. Commander, Jay Bowen, delegation chairman for the Rocky Mountain State of Colorado, home of Past National Commander Tom Bock and the Denver Broncos. On behalf of the Department of Colorado, it gives me great pleasure to second the nomination of Denise Rohan for national commander.


DELEGATE MALONEY (FR): Mr. Adjutant, I, Nola Maloney, a duly elected delegate from the Department of France, birthplace of The American Legion and to the 99th American Legion National Convention support and second the nomination of national commander and proudly cast its nine delegate votes for Denise Rohan for Wisconsin for national commander 2017-2018. Thank you.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN PIZZO (GA): John Pizzo, duly elected delegation chairman, casts all its votes for Denise Rohan.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN SIEGFRIED (HI): Marvin Siegfried, the delegation chairman from the great state of Aloha Hawaii. I have the honor and pleasure to second the nomination of Denise Rohan for national commander.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN STANTON (IL): Cheri Stanton, chairman of the delegation for Illinois. The proud state of Illinois that has the only state of The American Legion that has a past national commander and a past national president, the Conatser, proudly seconds the nomination for Denise.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN DZIEGLOWICZ (IN): Marty Dzieglovecz, delegate chairman, great state of Indiana, the home of Past National Commander Jim Koutz, home of the Indiana Hoosiers, the Purdue Boilermakers, the Fighting Irish of Notre Dame, casts all its 90 votes for the first female national commander, Denise Rohan.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN ROCHHOLZ (IA): Ken Rochholz, delegation chairman, cast all of its votes for Denise Rohan.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (KS): Kansas casts all its delegation votes for Denise Rohan.

DELEGATE FISHER (KY): Kentucky, Commonwealth of Kentucky, Randall Fisher, seconds the motion for Denise Rohan for national commander.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN BOURG (LA): Rudy Bourg, department delegation chairman for the state of Louisiana seconds and casts all its delegation votes to Denise Rohan.

DELEGATE HARGREAVES (ME): John Hargreaves, NEC from the Department of Maine, proudly casts 26 votes for the first female national commander for The American Legion, Denise Rohan.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN MARCHINKE (MD): Mr. Chairman, Department of Maryland Commander Marchinke, chairman of our delegation, Maryland, home of nationally recognized veterans homeless program MCVET, the Baltimore Ravens, the Baltimore Orioles, and the Maryland Terrapins sports teams. Maryland seconds the nomination to cast our 62 delegates to Wisconsin's own Denise Rohan for the high office of national commander.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN DAVIS (MA): Good morning. Mike Davis, department commander, Convention delegation chairman for the Department of Massachusetts, home of Past National Commanders Jake Comer and Paul Morin, home of the reigning Super Bowl champion New England Patriots, and the Boston Red Sox. We cast our entire delegate strength of 45 votes for Denise Rohan of Wisconsin for national commander.

DELEGATE WOOD (MX): Mike Wood, Mexico. We cast all of our delegates for Denise Rohan.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (MI): Mr. Chairman, Michigan, home of Past National Commander Tom Cadmus, birthplace of the American Legion Riders, casts all of its votes for Denise Rohan.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN MILTON (MN): Denise Milton, delegate chair from the great state of Minnesota, home of the first National Convention, and we proudly welcome you all to the 100th, seconds the nomination of Denise Rohan for the office of national commander.

DELEGATE GOSA (MS): Robert Gosa, the NEC from Mississippi, the Hospitality State, casts all 20 votes for Denise Rohan for the national commander for 2017-2018.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN GONZALES (MO): Betty Gonzales, the delegate chairman for the great state of Missouri, the Show-Me State, birthplace of Harry S. Truman, the first president Legionnaire, we cast all of our votes unanimously for Denise H. Rohan.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN RICE (MT): Hal Rice, delegate chairman from the great Big Sky Country of Montana, proudly casts all our votes for Denise Rohan.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN LINN (NE): Mr. Commander, I am Beth Linn, delegation chair for the Department of Nebraska, home of Past National Commander Mike Helm and the current SAL National Commander Danny Smith, the Cornhusker State, your favorite military home, proudly seconds the nomination of Denise Rohan for national commander of The American Legion.
DELEGATE MICHALSKI (NV): Ron Michalski, NEC for the Department of Nevada, host of your 99th Convention and also the home of the World Series champs for American Legion Baseball. We cast all of our votes for new female commander of The American Legion, Denise Rohan.

DEPARTMENT COMMANDER MEANEY (NH): Dave Meaney, department commander. New Hampshire, the Granite State, proudly casts its 23 delegate votes for Denise Rohan of Wisconsin for national commander.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN GENGARO (NJ): Roger Gengaro, delegation chairman, New Jersey, seconds the motion.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (NM): New Mexico, the land of enchantment, the home of red and green chili, casts all its votes for Denise Rohan.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN SAMPSON (NY): Mr. Commander, John Sampson, chairman of the delegation from the great state of New York, casts its 120 votes for Denise Rohan for national commander 2017-2018.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN KILEN (ND): Orletta Kilen, delegate chairman from North Dakota, casts 20 votes for Denise Rohan.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN CHAPMAN (OH): Mr. Commander, Ron Chapman, delegation chairman from the Department of Ohio, proudly seconds the nomination of Denise Rohan.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN BLOXOM (OK): John Bloxom, delegation chairman, Department of Oklahoma, casts all 25 votes for Denise Rohan.

DEPARTMENT COMMANDER HELLICKSON (OR): Gene Hellickson, department commander of the great state of Oregon, casts all of its votes for Denise Rohan.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (PA): The great state of Pennsylvania, home of the Past National Commander Dominic DiFrancesco and Past National Commander Ron Conley proudly seconds the nomination with 167 delegates for Denise Helen Rohan for the high office of national commander.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN WADE (PI): Lawrence Wade, delegate chairman for the Department of Philippines. We cast our seven votes for Denise Rohan.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN RODRIGUEZ (PR): Isaac Rodriguez, delegation chairman. Mr. Chairman, the delegation of the Department of Puerto Rico casts all our votes to Denise Rohan.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN TACK (RI): Neil Tack, delegate chairman for the Department of Rhode Island, the Ocean State, proudly casts all its votes for Denise Rohan.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN SCHERER (SC): Bob Scherer, chairman of the delegation for the greatest little state of South Carolina, home of the Clemson Tiger National Champions, 2015 national champion for American Legion Baseball, casts all of its 29 votes for Denise Rohan for national commander.

DELEGATE DUNHAM (SD): Charemon Dunham, from the great state of South Dakota, the home of Mt. Rushmore and the birthplace of American Legion Baseball, seconds the nomination of Denise Rohan of Wisconsin to the high office of national commander.

DEPARTMENT COMMANDER FARRELL (TN): Mr. Commander, Department of Tennessee, Bobby Farrell, wants to nominate and send all our delegates to Denise Rohan for the Department of Tennessee.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN IVIE (TX): Walter Ivie, delegation chairman for Department of Texas. Texas proudly seconds the nomination of Denise Rohan.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN STEPHENSON (UT): Mr. Chairman, Chuck Stephenson, delegation chairman of the great state of Utah, is proud to cast its 14 votes for our next national commander, Denise H. Rohan.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN STEWART (VT): Huzon "Jerry" Stewart, delegate chairman for the great state of Vermont, the home of the best maple syrup in the world, casts all votes for Denise Rohan.
DEPARTMENT COMMANDER LEE (VA): Mr. Adjutant, I'm Tommy Lee, department commander, Virginia, duly elected delegate to this Convention. I proudly cast all our votes to Denise Rohan of the Department of Wisconsin.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN ELSTON (WA): Wayne Elston, delegation chairman, Department of Washington, seconds the nomination for Denise Rohan.

DEPARTMENT COMMANDER COOLEY (WV): Frank Cooley, department commander for the state of West Virginia, the home of the Mountaineers, casts the unanimous vote for Denise Rohan.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (WY): The Equality State, the Department of Wyoming, seconds the nomination of Denise H. Rohan.

DELEGATE WESTERGREN (AR): Mr. Chairman, Michael Westergren, commander of the Department of Arkansas, the Natural State, we proudly cast our 20 delegate votes for Denise Rohan.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN CROUSER (DE): Jeffrey Crouser, delegation chairman for the Department of Delaware. Delaware seconds the nomination of Denise Rohan from the Department of Wisconsin for national commander of The American Legion.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WHEELER: I did not hear a response from District of Columbia. District of Columbia? Mr. Commander, that completes the roll call.

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: At this time, I recognize from the floor microphone one.

DELEGATE FLORES (CO): Mr. Commander, Tom Flores, delegate from Colorado. Mr. Commander, 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 nominations and that the national adjutant be authorized to cast one vote for the entire delegate strength of this Convention and that Denise H. Rohan 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 reinstated at the conclusion of the election for national vice commanders. Thank you, sir.

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: There is a motion before us to suspend the rules of this Convention pertaining to the election of the national commander and the nomination and election of national vice commanders, which rules shall be automatically reinstated at the conclusion of the election of national vice commanders. Is there a second? ...

Second. Hearing a second, this motion is non-debatable and requires a two-thirds vote. All in favor of this motion signify by saying aye. Opposed. The ayes have it. I now recognize from the floor, microphone two.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN CHAPMAN (OH): Mr. Commander, Ron Chapman, delegation chairman from the Department of Ohio. As a duly elected delegate to this Convention, I move that the nominations for the high office of national commander be closed.

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: We a motion that nominations for the office of national commander be closed. Is there a second? ...

Second. Hearing a second, the motion to close nominations is a non-debatable motion and requires a two-thirds vote. All those in favor signify by saying aye. All opposed? The ayes have it. I now recognize from the floor microphone one.

DELEGATE PAJAK (MA): Mr. Commander, Jodie Pajak, delegate from Massachusetts. Mr. Commander, with great pride and honor, I move that the national adjutant be authorized to cast one vote representing the entire delegate strength of this Convention and that Denise H. Rohan be elected national commander by acclamation.

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: Is there a second? ...

Second. Hearing a second, this is motion before us that the national adjutant be authorized to cast one vote representing the entire delegate strength of this Convention and Denise H. Rohan be elected
national commander by acclamation. All those in favor of the motion signifying by saying
aye. Those opposed? The ayes have it. I now call on the national adjutant.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WHEELER: As national adjutant, I cast one vote
representing the entire delegate strength of this Convention for the election of Denise H.
Rohan as national commander of The American Legion. (Cheers and applause)

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: I declare Denise H. Rohan elected national
commander of The American Legion! (Cheers and applause)

Will the sergeant-at-arms assist the new commander of The American Legion to the
platform. She will be escorted to the stage by her husband, Mike Rohan, members of her
family, and NEC member from the Department of Wisconsin, Ken Rynes.

... "Count On Me" performed by Bruno Mars was played. (Cheers and applause)

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: The Chair recognizes Past National
Commander Fang Wong of New York for the purpose of administering the oath of office
to the new national commander of The American Legion. Commander Wong.

Administering the Oath of Office to the National Commander

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Denise, first
I would like to thank you for the honor and privilege for me to take part in this historical
event. Second, as you wish, I will try to do it best I can in the official language of English.
(Laughter) She asked me that. Now, please raise your right hand and repeat after me.

I, Denise H. Rohan, 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 Bylaws of The American Legion. I do not subscribe to the
principles of any group opposed to our form of government, so help me God. (Applause)

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER WONG: Congratulations!

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: Ladies and gentlemen, the 2017-2018
national commander of The American Legion, Denise H. Rohan. (Cheers and applause)

NATIONAL COMMANDER ROHAN (via video): I have two older sisters. Both of
my sisters knew exactly what they wanted to do when they got out of high school and what
their careers were going to be. When I was in high school, I was a junior in high school
thinking: I don't have a clue what I want to be.

I knew that my parents didn't have a lot of money. We weren't rich. One of my really
good friends decided she was going to go in the Army, but she didn't want to go to Des
Moines, which is where you had your physical and stuff. She didn't want to go to Des
Moines by herself. So she convinced me and another person that we should go with her for
this adventure to Des Moines. So the three of us went with the Army recruiter down to Des
Moines, and we did our physicals. She failed, and the two of us passed. Went in, joined the
military on the buddy system. So we went to basic training together, just to give me the
time to figure out what I wanted to do with my life. And then I met the love of my life.

My theme for my year is Family First. When I look back at my military career, I had
my relationship with God, but then I had my family, my sisters and my mom and my dad.
I have my extended family, my cousins and my aunts and uncles. You start realizing that
you have another family, and that family are all the women that I was in basic training
with. They had my back, and they made sure I was taken care of. We became sisters.

Every place you go in the military, you get that new family. Then you get out, and
you just get that feeling like, okay, I'm out, and I'm not part of the community, but you still
have that pull of: I need to be part of something. You said you were going to defend the
country for the rest of your life, and so you need to be part of something.

Then I found The American Legion Family, and it really is a family. My son's
grandparents were in different states. So with The American Legion, he had like 20
grandmas and grandpas. We would take him down to The Legion, and it was a family. We
did things together. We took care of each other. If there was a problem, we took care of it.
We started getting more active with the National Guard and reserve, and as we see that, and families were being deployed, it's just one extended family. Really, when you look at The American Legion and what we all do and we look at our Children & Youth programs and our Americanism programs, The Legion is all about taking care of families across the globe.

As I've traveled for the two years' worth of campaigning, I've met so many fantastic people. It just makes you appreciate everything and everybody you meet, because every person has a place in history and every person touches somebody somehow, and I get to meet so many of those people. (Cheers and applause)

**Acceptance Speech: Newly Elected National Commander**

Denise H. Rohan, Wisconsin

Thank you. Past Commander Schmidt, officers, guests, my American Legion Family, thank you for this amazing opportunity to serve as your national commander. I am honored and humbled to have all of your support and your trust.

Commander Schmidt, thank you for your year of dedication and service to our great organization. As you pass the torch on to me to carry the legacy forward, I will do my best to fill your shoes. President Duscheck, Commander Danny Smith, I look forward to working with both of you in the coming year.

Let me start by introducing my family first. Most of you already know my husband, Mike. He was my campaign manager. He is a past department adjutant. *(Applause)*

Our son Nick; our daughter-in-law Angie; and our grandchildren, Sawyer and Isla. *(Applause)* My two sisters, Bonnie Nuss and Terry Larson. *(Applause)*

And my brothers and sisters-in-laws Steve and Jeanie Rohan and Kelly and Tracy Rohan. I love and cherish each of you, and I appreciate your support in giving me this opportunity to travel in the coming year knowing that you will be waiting for me with open arms when I return after I have completed my mission as national commander.

To the entire Department of Wisconsin, thank you for your faith in me and your many years of hard work and dedication to get me here today. Thank you, Past National Commanders Fang Wong and Dan Ludwig, for your assistance in today's ceremony and to Patricia and Jim for your seconding speeches. As I look around the room, there are so many of you who have had some type of influence on my life. So thank you all for making me the person that I am today.

Now, as I've walked around the convention center this past week, almost everyone I passed has asked me: "Are you ready?" As I contemplate the answer to that question, I reflect on the 51 departments that I visited in the last two years and I remember all of the fantastic American Legion Family members that I met during those visits. I thank you all for your hospitality while I was in your departments. You really did make me feel like part of the family.

During my travels, I learned about some wonderful programs that are unique to your own departments. I recall the history lessons that I've gotten from veterans who have survived major battles and the tragic stories of those who are still suffering internal battles. I continue to learn as much about this organization as I possibly can and how our American Legion Family and how we are leaving a footprint on this great nation.

Now, during my visits, I told you about my theme of Family First. We all know that The American Legion is at its best when we worked together as an American Legion Family, it's The American Legion, The American Legion Auxiliary, the Sons of The American Legion, and the American Legion Riders. I also talked about how my theme is based on The American Legion's foundation for God and country. Because, you see, I believe that we were put here, where you are today and in the positions that you are in currently, for the greater good. We're not here to judge one another. We are here to nurture and take care of one another.
Families grow through love and support for one another. As an American Legion Family, we need to treat each other in that same spirit, like part of our larger extended family. I chose purple this year for the membership shirt to show that we are joining forces as an American Legion Family. Just like all branches of the military started working together and joined forces, they purpiled up years ago, and it is time for The American Legion Family to also purpule up as we work together for the common good. Because as long as this nation continues to have veterans and continues to have military personnel deployed across this globe, The American Legion Family will stand tall next to our heroes and next to their families.

There are National Guard and reserve families living in your hometowns who are feeling alone and afraid. Please, continue to step up and make connections with those families. Whenever possible, make that connection before the unit is deployed. Get to the yellow ribbon events that are taking place in your communities prior to deployments, get to know the Family Readiness Group leaders for your units, and let the families know what we do, who we are, and what assistance we can offer on a daily basis. Make sure to embrace the Family Readiness Group leader because chances are they, too, have a loved one deployed and they are carrying an extra burden on their shoulders.

Now, a few years ago I was at a Veterans Day event at a community center. The middle school band and the middle school choir took part of that program. The main speaker that day was a Gold Star father, and he was sharing the story of his son being killed in Afghanistan. While he was speaking, there was a little girl in the choir who started to cry. As her friends started to console her, she cried even harder. Pretty soon her teacher came and got her and took her to the back of the room where her mother was. I sat there wondering what the connection was between this little girl and the man who was speaking about his son.

When the program was over, the mother, who I had never met, sought me out in the crowd. She wanted to say thank you to The American Legion on behalf of her family. Because, you see, one of the times that her husband was deployed, there was a fire in her home, and they also had a broken water heater. The local American Legion post stepped up, helped her apply for Temporary Financial Assistance, and then came to her home and helped make repairs. The mom said that she's confident that had it not been for The American Legion Family and our Temporary Financial Assistance program and The American Legion Family members who helped repair their home that her husband may not have returned safely. When things were taken care of in her home, she knew that she did not need to trouble her husband with those issues and that he could concentrate on his mission overseas and that he could have one less worry on the battlefield, thanks to The American Legion Family, because that's what we do and that is who we are. (Applause)

Taking care of families here at home is what gets our heroes back home safely. Now this little girl, she was crying because during her father's several deployments over the years, she was asked to be resilient and she needed to step up into a more mature family role. She was being strong for her mom and her siblings. But that day, as she listened to the story of a soldier that did not make it home, a flood of fears and emotions came pushing and bubbling its way to the surface. She had all those fears about her father, but she had stuffed them down way deep in her soul to be strong for the family. Her dad is now home and he is retired. But this little girl, she needed some help that even her family didn't realize was needed. We helped get her connected with counseling, and they helped her realize that it was okay for her to have those feelings. Now she's living life as a normal kid, and she's also helping to support other military children as their parents are being deployed.

Across this nation, we have families who need a hand up during a difficult situation. The American Legion Family is there with their Temporary Financial Assistance funds. But as the war on terrorism continues, there are more and more families that need that extra help, which is why one of my charities this coming year will be the Temporary Financial Assistance fund. There's more need than our TFA Fund alone can cover, and we need to continue to be there. We need to continue to build our TFA so that we can continue to care
for families who need us. As our veterans are returning home with injuries and they need help to continue their lives back here at home, they also need trained service officers to help them through the process of getting their benefits that they earned, the benefits that they deserve, which is why the second part of my charity will be to make sure that service officers get the training that they need to help our veterans.

We witnessed history here yesterday as President Trump signed the VA Appeals Modernization Act of 2017 into law right here on our stage. This will help claims and appeals be processed faster, but we need trained service officers to assist to get those claims properly submitted. The faster we can get veterans the benefits they earned, the faster they can go on to leading happy, productive lives. It doesn't just help veterans. It helps the entire family because that's what we do and that is who we are.

Now, I could be here for hours talking about all of the wonderful, wonderful things that we do. But you've been here this week and you had the opportunity to see our Youth Champions, hear and see all of our award winners, and to help pass resolutions. You know what we do, and you know who we are. I hope you always remember why we are.

Now, let me share one more story with you. It actually took place at our home about 37 years ago when an American Legion recruiter came to recruit my husband, Mike, into the organization. I identified myself as an eligible war-era veteran, and I was told that women joined the Auxiliary. Now, it became very obvious that I didn't have much control over my husband at the time because he joined The Legion and left me behind. (Laughter)

A few years later we moved to Sun Prairie, Wisconsin, and I was asked to join Elmer Peterson Post 333 where the newly elected commander was also looking for a post adjutant. After holding several leadership positions in that post, and the district, and the department, we moved over to Mason-Lindsay Post 385 in Verona, Wisconsin. And here I am today the newly elected national commander of the largest veterans service organization in this nation. (Cheers and applause)

Oh, and I need to tell you about that original post, the post that denied membership 37 years ago. Well, they have a picture of me up in their post with a sign underneath it that says: She could have been a member of this post. (Laughter)

Remember, women are veterans too. (Cheers and applause)

It's a great reminder that since the birth of The American Legion back in 1919, our leadership knew that a veteran was a veteran regardless of race, religion, or gender. Women could vote for national commander before they could vote for president of the United States. (Applause)

I know that women have been and continue to lead this great organization across this nation. So you ask me if I'm ready? Well, I want to ask you: Are you ready? (Applause)

Are you ready to continue to join forces as part of the nation's largest veterans service organization family? Are you ready to purple up and show the nation that we are a family that not just takes care of our own members, we stand ready to take care of our active-duty military and their families; we take care of our veterans and their families. In reality, when you look at our Four Pillars and all of the programs that we have in The American Legion, are you ready to continue to take care of our entire nation's families? (Applause)

Now, for the last two years, Commander Barnett and Commander Schmidt have been doing awareness walks out in the communities, and they have been wonderful awareness walks across this nation. Well, I think it's time for us to start inviting our community into our post homes to show our communities just what we are all about. I ask you to please start planning your Veterans Day events now. As you plan those Veterans Day meals and celebrations, make sure to include current and expired members, members from your holding post, Blue Star and Gold Star mothers, student veterans, military recruiters, members of the National Guard and reserve along with their families, veterans in local care facilities or hospitals that are able to get out and their families. Let's light up social media with the world's largest Veterans Day celebration this nation has ever seen. Let's feed our communities, because putting on community meals is another great part of what we do and who we are.
To make a difference in someone's life, you don't have to be brilliant, rich, beautiful, or perfect. You just have to care enough to be there. Now, each one of you have something very special in your heart that keeps you coming back. I thank God for the person who planted that spark in your heart, and I hope, I hope that you are passing your knowledge and that spark on to someone else. Continue to nurture and mentor those people along. As you watch those members flourish, you are also helping The American Legion Family become stronger and to continue to grow. Every moment that you spend on American Legion Family activities is a statement of faith. It's a statement that you believe in what our organization stands for and what we do. Together we can all stand proud, knowing that we are the ones, the veterans and our families, who are keeping this country strong as we continue to lay the foundation for our future leaders.

God bless each and every one of you. I pray you have safe travels home. God bless this great nation. I thank you all for always putting our families first. (Applause)

First Gentleman Presentation

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: Ladies and gentlemen, as a point of personal privilege, I would like to call on Mary Ludwig, wife of Past National Commander Daniel Ludwig of Minnesota, for a presentation by the First Ladies to the very first First Gentleman of The American Legion! (Cheers and applause)

MARY LUDWIG: Mike, I, along with all of these lovely ladies, also known as Former First Ladies, are proud to invite you to join us, not as a First Lady, but the very, very first First Gentleman. (Applause)... At this time, a musical interlude was played

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: Wow. What a historic convention we are having! (Cheers and applause) Thank you, Mary. I now recognize microphone two.

DELEGATE JACOB HELM (NE): Mr. Commander, Jacob Helm, delegate from Nebraska. Mr. Commander, since the rules of the 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 SCHMIDT: There is a motion before us that nominations for the office of national vice commander be made from the floor. ...Second. Hearing a second, the motion is non-debatable and requires a two thirds vote. All those in favor signify by saying aye. Those opposed? The ayes have it. We will now entertain nominations for the offices of national vice commander from the floor. I now recognize microphone one.

Election of National Vice Commanders

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN CROUSER (DE): Mr. Commander, Jeff Crouser, chairman of the delegation from Delaware. Mr. Commander, I request that you recognize Past National Commander Rick Santos for the purpose of a nomination for the office of national vice commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: The chair recognizes Past National Commander Rick Santos of Maryland for the purpose of a nomination.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER SANTOS: Mr. Chairman, delegates, alternates, and guests to the 99th National Convention, my presentation this afternoon is a nomination of Larry J. Marcouillier from the Department of Delaware for national vice commander of The American Legion.

My first encounter with Larry was in 2007. At a department convention and department executive committee meetings, I heard legionnaires refer to him as "Larry Larry." Eventually I found out that this name of endearment was due to the members' lack of correctly pronouncing or spelling his last name, Marcouillier. So Larry Larry was recorded in the minutes of those meetings.
Larry was born in Groton, Massachusetts, and raised, schooled, and entered military life in Forge Village, Massachusetts. He joined the United States Air Force in 1970. Larry served honorably for 20 years in the United States Air Force as a munitions systems technician. In 1987 with 17 years of honorable military service, he joined The American Legion through James F. Draper Post 255 in Newport News, Virginia.

He attended the United States Air Force Community College and Weber State University. He retired from the Air Force in 1990 with the rank of master sergeant. Following his honorable discharge in 1990, he relocated to Harrington, Delaware, where he transferred his Legion membership to Calloway, Kemp, Raughley, Tee Post 7. In 2011 he retired from International Latex, also known as ILC, in Frederica, Delaware.

As a 31-year member of The American Legion, Larry has served our organization in a committed and dedicated manner. He has served in all capacities, including vice commander, commander of his post, Kent District, and the Department of Delaware. At the national level, he served as department's Alternate National Executive Committeeman and National Executive Committeeman. He has served on the Foreign Relations Council, Foreign Relations Commission, and Media & Communications Commission.

Larry is a man of few words, he's a straight shooter, for what you see and hear are what you get. No mumbo, no jumbo. He is a quiet man, but do not be misled by this demeanor. He is persistent, he's tedious, he's tough. Larry is not short and willpower to say what is right and just for The American Legion. Larry is a commander's dream. When asked, he responds in an affirmative manner. When given a task, he completes his assignment in a timely and thorough fashion.

Larry and I were born and raised in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, but at times we speak different dialects. Examples: He would use a "water fountain"; I drink at a "scuttlebutt." He would say "ice cream"; I would say "geedunk." He eats "candy bars," and I had "pogy bait." Larry ate in a dining facility with chandeliers; I dined on steel-plated mess stacks. As you can hear, at times we converse using language foreign to each other; however, we hear and we say in the same language on promoting The American Legion and its purposes and mission. Larry is a veterans' veteran. As I noted prior, he is not afraid to speak up on behalf of our American Legion, our country, or our veterans. He shall serve The American Legion well. Therefore, as a delegate to this Convention, I place in nomination Larry J. Marcoulier, Larry Larry, from the Department of Delaware for national vice commander of The American Legion for 2017-2018. Thank you. (Applause)

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: The chair recognizes microphone two.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN HENDERSON (IL): Mr. Commander, Bob Henderson, chairman of the delegation from Illinois. Mr. Commander, I request that you recognize PNC Marty Conatser for the purpose of a nomination for the office of national vice commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: The chair recognizes Past National Commander Marty Conatser of Illinois for the purpose of nomination.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER CONASTER: Commander, delegates, guests, it gives me great pleasure to come before the 99th National Convention of The American Legion to place the name of an Illinois Legionnaire for the high office of national vice commander. Illinois last had a national vice commander in 1936.

William "Bill" Flanagan is a 52-year member of Post 321 in New Baden, Illinois. Bill has long served his post and the veterans of Clinton County, serving as a post commander for three years and several years on the Clinton County Veterans Council.

Bill has displayed strong leadership skills at all levels of The American Legion. He has served his commander at the post, county, district, division, and state levels. Bill served on the department Safety Law & Order Committee that oversees our Youth Police School for 20 years and chaired that committee for 15.

Bill is a solid Legionnaire that has taken on many jobs in the organization: department sergeant-at-arms for two years, SAL Liaison Committee, Convention Committee for Distinguished Guests and Department Finance, just to name a few.
On the national level, Bill has served as the National Executive Committeeman for Illinois in 2003 and 2004, serving several years on the National Foreign Relations Committee and serving as its chairman in 2017. One of Bill's greatest challenges was serving as the aide to the national commander in 2007-2008. Believe me, keeping me straight was a major task. And he handled it well.

After 35 years of service to the phone company, he retired in 2003. Bill has been married to his wife, Ann, for 47 years, and they have three grown children and six grandchildren. They are a true American Legion family.

It gives me great pleasure to place into nomination the name of William "Bill" Flanagan for the high office of national vice commander for the membership year of 2017-2018, a great legionnaire, but an even better friend. (Applause)

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: The chair recognizes microphone one.

CHAIRMAN DELEGATION BLOXOM (OK): Mr. Commander, John Bloxom, chairman of the delegation from Oklahoma. Mr. Commander, I request that you recognize Past National Vice Commander Paul Sanford for the purpose of a nomination for the office of vice commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: The chair recognizes Past National Vice Commander Paul Sanford of Kansas for the purpose of nomination.

PAST NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER SANFORD: Good afternoon now. My name is Paul Sanford, past national vice commander, past department commander, and a duly elected delegate from the Department of Kansas. It is my distinct honor and privilege for me to place in nomination for national vice commander the name of Bobby D. Bryant from the Department of Oklahoma.

Bobby D. Bryant served as a U.S. Navy Seabee, both CONUS and combat, deployed twice to Vietnam during the period of 1965 to 1969 and was honorably discharged as an E-5.

Bobby is an eight-year member of Donaldson/Walker Post 108 in Cushing, Oklahoma, where he served as post adjutant, post service officer and post commander. He served District 5 commander during which time the efforts were key elements in the initial phases of department recovery and revitalization. Bobby served as Department of Oklahoma vice commander West and then Department of Oklahoma commander. He is currently serving or has served at 2016-2017 as National Executive Committeeman.

Bobby served at the Oklahoma Employment Security Commission as a local Veteran Employment Representative and was recognized and honored as 2011 Department of Oklahoma American Legion Employment Officer of the Year, and also again in 2012. In 2013, he was the National American Legion Local Veterans Employment Representative of the Year.

He continues to serve on several American Legion and veterans service committees at the local, state, and national levels, including The American Legion national Membership Committee, and served as The American Legion representative to Oklahoma Veterans Council and as director of the Payne County, Oklahoma, Forgotten Warriors Program.

Bobby D. Bryant is married to his wife, Linda, for 53 years. He has two grown daughters, Deidra and Destiny, both of Oklahoma, and a son, John, of Port Richard, Washington, who is also a veteran. They have seven grandchildren and one great-granddaughter.

Therefore, it is my distinct honor to place the name of Bobby D. Bryant from the Department of Oklahoma in nomination for national vice commander for the year 2017-2018. Thank you. (Applause)

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: The Chair recognizes microphone two.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN DUNHAM (SD): Mr. Commander, Charemon Dunham, chairman of the delegation from South Dakota. Mr. Commander, I request that you recognize NEC Paul Evenson for the purpose of the nomination of the office of national vice commander.
NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: The chair recognizes National Executive Committee member Paul Evenson of South Dakota for the purpose of a nomination.

DELEGATE EVENSON (SD): Mr. Commander, past national commanders, fellow delegates and guests, I am National Executive Committee member Paul Evenson, a delegate to this Convention from the Department of South Dakota. It is my honor and privilege to come before you today to place into nomination for the office of national vice commander a person who is highly qualified for this position, Byron I. Callies.

Byron was born on July 30, 1948, in Madison, South Dakota, and earned his membership eligibility by serving for over 41 years in the South Dakota National Guard. Joining at the age of 17 in 1965 and retiring in 2006 at the rank of Lieutenant Colonel, director of personnel.

His American Legion career extends over 45 years. During that time, he held many offices, including post commander, district commander, department Americanism chairman, department chaplain, department vice commander, and department commander in 2013, currently as the chairman of the Internal Affairs Committee for the Department of South Dakota. He attended Legion College in 2009. On the national level, he serves as a consultant on the Children & Youth Committee. He's also a legislative liaison to U.S. Congresswoman Kristi Noem of South Dakota.

If there is a tough job that needs to be done, Byron is the go-to person in South Dakota to get it done. Byron has shown time and time again that he has the expertise to work with people, solve problems, and get the results that are in the best interest of The American Legion. Byron graduated from Howard High School in 1966 and went on later to earn a bachelor's degree in applied management and a master's degree in business administration. His civilian career consisted of over 46 years in the energy industry, culminating in the last 16 years with the U.S. Department of Energy.

He is married to Kaly, and they have three grown children, Melissa, Byron Jr., and Brad, all members of The American Legion Family. He is currently the state director of the U.S. Selective Service System for South Dakota.

As a national vice commander, Byron will be a team player who will do an outstanding job furthering the programs of The American Legion. As a duly elected delegate to this Convention, I place in nomination for national vice commander a great veteran and Legionnaire from South Dakota, Byron I. Callies. (Applause)

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: The Chair recognizes microphone one.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN STEPHENSON (UT): Mr. Commander, Chuck Stephenson, chairman of the delegation from Utah. Mr. Commander, I request that you recognize National Executive Committee member Terry Schow for the purpose of a nomination for the office of national vice commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: The chair recognizes National Executive Committee member Terry Schow from Utah for the purpose of a nomination.

DELEGATE SCHOW (UT): National Commander and national officers, one of the great orators of our time said, "Nothing is worse than doing well that which need not be done at all." Past National Commander Paul Morin has asked us to keep this short, and I know I'm last, and I know you folks have got lots to do.

We place in nomination, proudly, the name of Paula Stephenson, a 30-year member of the United States Army, retired, a more than 25-year member of The American Legion, a past post and department commander, active in veterans military and other civic activities within the state of Utah. We proudly place in nomination the name of Paula Stephenson for national vice commander for the Western Region. (Applause)

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: I now recognize microphone two.

DELEGATE CHIN (NY): Mr. Commander, Arvin Chin, delegate from New York. Mr. Commander, I move that nominations for the office of national vice commander be closed.

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: We have a motion that nominations for office of the national vice commander be closed. Is there a second? ...Second. Hearing a
second, the motion is non-debatable and requires a two-thirds vote. All those in favor signify by saying aye. Opposed? The ayes have it. The Chair recognizes microphone one.

DELEGATE COATS (MO): Mr. Commander, Darlene Coats, delegate from the state of Missouri. Mr. Commander, I move that the national adjutant be authorized to cast one vote for the entire delegate strength of this Convention and that Larry Marcouilliier, William Flanagan, Bobby Bryant, Byron Callies, and Paula Stephenson be elected national vice commander by acclamation.

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: We have a motion that the national adjutant be authorized to cast one vote for the entire delegate strength of this Convention and that Larry Marcouilliier of Delaware, Bill Flanagan of Illinois, Bobby Bryant of Oklahoma, Byron Callies of South Dakota, and Paula Stephenson of Utah be elected national vice commanders by acclamation. ...Second. Hearing a second, the motion is non-debatable and requires a two-thirds vote. All in favor signify by saying aye. Opposed? The ayes have it. I now call on the national adjutant.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WHEELER: Mr. Commander, as national adjutant for The American Legion, I cast one vote representing the entire delegate strength of this Convention for Larry Marcouilliier, William Flanagan, Bobby B. Bryant, Byron Callies, and Paula Stephenson for the offices of national vice commander of The American Legion.

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: I declare Larry Marcouilliier, William Flanagan, Bobby D. Bryant, Byron Callies, and Paula Stephenson for the offices of national vice commander of The American Legion. (Applause)

Will the new national vice commanders come to the platform to be introduced and sworn in ... At this time, a musical interlude was played.

Installation of National Vice Commanders

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: Our national vice commanders. At this time, I am honored to swear you into your newly elected office as a national vice commander. I know you will uphold the trust that has been placed in you by the comrades who nominated and supported you and the Convention delegates that elected you.

I trust you will fulfill every obligation required of you. I challenge you to familiarize yourselves with the duties of your office and carry them out with the same spirit from which The American Legion was founded. The welfare, success, and integrity of this great organization depends on you, as you travel in the departments and throughout this country promoting the mandates of The American Legion as approved by the National Convention and the National Executive Committee. It is your duty to protect the good name of The American Legion with the people of our great nation that you meet as you travel. Help them to know The Legion's purposes and policies. Remember the Four Pillars that motivate us as members to serve this nation. As you serve, always remember there is no rank, for which we all serve as equals. We are all aiming for the same goals, the ideals of justice, freedom, democracy, and loyalty. This means you should always employ the cardinal principles of The American Legion to all of those that we serve: The rehabilitation of all disabled veterans and the care of those who are now suffering from wounds, disease and want, to include the care of their family members; the education of our youth; educating citizens on the ideal of true Americanism; maintaining a strong national defense. In your travels representing The American Legion, always practice these Four Pillars in your promotion of service to the community, state, and nation.

Please raise your right hand and repeat after me: I, do solemnly pledge myself to perform faithfully and impartially the duties of the office of The American Legion I am about to assume. And I further pledge I will uphold the principles outlined in the National Constitution and the Preamble of The American Legion in service to our veterans and their families, their communities, state and nation. Congratulations, national vice commanders!

Ladies and gentlemen, Let's have a big round of applause for our newly elected national vice commanders. (Cheers and applause)
I now call on Past National Commander Daniel Ludwig of Minnesota to present the Colors to our incoming national commander.

Presentation of Colors to Newly Elected National Commander

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER LUDWIG: Thank you, Mr. Commander, Legionnaires and distinguished guests, please rise for the presentation of our National Colors by National Champion Color Guard Post 291 of Newport Beach, California, to our new national commander, Denise Rohan. Color Guard, present the colors. Hand Salute.

... At this time the delegation rendered a salute to the Colors.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER LUDWIG: Two! National Commander Rohan, please join me here at the lectern. Commander, woven in the fabric of the crimson banner of The American Legion are 98 years of Legion accomplishments, from our doughboy founders in 1919 to this very moment, from the care of widows, orphans and the disabled after World War I, to the creation of what would eventually become the Department of Veterans Affairs and later the drafting of the GI Bill. More recently our efforts led to the signing into law the Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act, otherwise known as the Forever GI Bill. Every day The American Legion provides countless contributions from its thousands of posts in cities, towns across America.

You will now lead us as we weave the newest threads in our Legion flag, service to community, state, and nation. And then woven in the fabric of the red, white and blue, the beloved banner of our nation, is the history of we the people, the history of our nation. Woven in our flag are the hopes and dreams of all freedom-loving peoples everywhere. That flag has led and inspired our warriors in battle, and it has been the silent witness to America's finest hours. And now it has witnessed another of America's finest moments, your election to the high office of national commander of The American Legion. I know these colors will always be a source of pride for you and they will be a source of inspiration for you in difficult and challenging times as we continue our service to God and country. Congratulations, Commander Rohan, and God bless you and your family now and always. Commander, your Colors. (Applause)

Color guard, return the colors of the national commander to post. Hand salute.

... At this time the delegation rendered a salute to the Colors.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER LUDWIG: Two! (Applause)

Presentation: Newly Elected National President
American Legion Auxiliary

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: This is an exciting time for any National Convention. We have elected a new national commander and look forward to an exciting and historic time of growth and community involvement. This is also the time when the American Legion Auxiliary elects a new president, as this important part of our Legion Family is also poised to meet the needs of veterans and their loved ones.

The woman chosen to lead the American Legion Auxiliary has worked many years for veterans and their families. She served as the organization's national vice president and has been a member of the American Legion Auxiliary since 1958, eligible for Auxiliary membership through her late father, World War II veteran Roland Duscheck, she has also served as Wisconsin department president in 1994-1995. This is an exciting year for Wisconsin, is it not? (Cheers and applause)

A retired schoolteacher, she is ready to assume the top leadership position of the nation's largest patriotic women's organization. Please give a warm welcome to National President of The American Legion Auxiliary Diane E. Duscheck. (Applause)

NATIONAL PRESIDENT DUSCHECK: Good afternoon. It's very impressive this year to see the installation of the Sons of The Legion commander and now to see the installation of your new commander. We're looking forward to a great year. The thing that
I've noticed over and over is how we're hearing about the servant leadership among the people that we're looking at here to serve first, to listen for understanding, to build trust, and to add value to others. I think it's going to be a great year for The American Legion Family, and I'm looking forward to working with your commander very much. Thank you so much. (Applause)

Presentation: Newly Elected National Commander
Sons of The American Legion

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: The man chosen to lead the Sons of The American Legion was a charter member of Ralston Squadron 27 and is now a member of Papillion Squadron 32, Detachment of Nebraska. He is eligible from his father, Danny L. Smith, an Air Force veteran who served during the Korean War. Our guest has served in numerous capacities at the squadron, detachment, and national levels. He has worked in the construction industry for over 45 years. He and his wife, Donna, have two married children and two grandchildren. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome National Commander of the Sons of The American Legion Danny Smith. (Applause)

SAL NATIONAL COMMANDER SMITH: Good afternoon. Commander Schmidt, National Commander Rohan, national officers and staff, past national officers, delegates, alternates, guests and distinguished individuals to this 99th Annual Convention of The American Legion, American Legion Families, members one and all, I want to thank you for that warm welcome. But to be honest with you, I should stand and applaud you for what you do for this organization, day in and day out, year after year. Your efforts and your service are truly appreciated.

National Commander Schmidt and members of The American Legion, congratulations on another exceptional year. Your service to the veterans of this country, our children and youth and our communities is second-to-none. I hope you all understand and know that your service is appreciated. I know that because I've seen the smiles on the faces of those that you serve, and there is nothing more gratifying than those smiles that you receive for your service. To me that is the truest measure of success and appreciation. Our theme for this coming year is "Following their footsteps, making history." That history has already begun today by electing the first-ever female national commander of The American Legion. (Applause)

Congratulations, Commander Rohan. We are going to continue to make history throughout this year, assisting you, The American Legion, putting family first and concentrating our efforts, supporting the Endowment Fund, the National Emergency Fund, and, of course, the Child Welfare Foundation. I want to thank all of you for providing such an outstanding Legionnaire to work with this coming year, and I do look forward to serving with Commander Rohan and the dedicated and the enthusiastic American Legion Auxiliary National President Diane Duscheck. Let us all work together this coming year to improve the lives of our comrades, our children, and our communities.

I want you to know that the 368,000-plus members of the Sons of The American Legion are here to assist you. So, please, count on us to help you fulfill the ideals and principles on which The American Legion was founded. You know, together we can and together we will make a difference.

I know it's been a long week, and I know you have much business to attend to. So this is going to be brief and I'm going to get straight to the point. I'd like you all to take a quick look around the room. You know, even at first glance, it's easy to see that we are all unique. We all come from all over the country, and even the world, with different individual backgrounds, talents, cultures, political and religious beliefs. But what makes us truly unique are those common bonds that we all share, the belief and dedication in the ideals and principles of The American Legion; love of our country and our flag; and our passion to serve.
I leave you with this thought: Alone we are but one voice. Together, however, we create the thunder of the world's largest veterans organization, The American Legion Family. I thank every one of you for what you do and what you have already done for this country. Thank you so very much. God bless you and welcome home. God bless all of you, God bless the United States of America, and God bless The American Legion Family. Thank you. (Applause)

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: Thank you, Commander Smith. Please remain with us for a few minutes. Also, National Commander Rohan and National President Duscheck, please join us to the front here, if you would. Ladies and gentlemen, National Commander Rohan, National President Duscheck, and Sons of The American Legion National Commander Smith, our dynamic team for the upcoming year. That's Denise, Diane and Danny. Our American Legion Family in 3-D! (Cheers and applause)

... At this time, "We Are Family" performed by Sister Sledge was played.

Announcement

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: Just a reminder that the Post-Convention NEC meeting will occur in the Convention Center, Rooms D, two and three, immediately following adjournment. All the new national officers are to attend. Is there any further business to come before this convention? There being none, please uncover as National Chaplain Klee offers the benediction.

Benediction

Harvey H. Klee, Texas, National Chaplain

Almighty God, all good things must come to an end to make way for better things to happen, because the best is yet to come. And so we part from one another, but not Your presence. And as we express our gratitude to You, may we never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words but to live by them.

As we continue in our fight for veterans benefits and their rehabilitation, may we be a rainbow in someone's cloud. As our concerns center on security, help us to educate and inform the whole mass of people, for they are the only sure reliance for the preservation of our liberty. Lord, help us to expand Americanism across this great land, perpetuate our heritage and ideals, our code and standards, the things we live by and teach our children. May our focus ever remain on our children and youth. As you have stated many years ago: Let the little children come to Me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these. There is no trust more sacred than the one the world holds with children. Now go in peace, serve the Lord, and carry out the mission of The American Legion. May God's protective care see you safely home to your family and to your friends.

In this we pray in the name of all that is holy. Amen.

Retirement of Colors

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: Sergeant-at-Arms, retire the POW/MIA Flag. ... At this time, the POW/MIA flag was retired.

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: Cover. The color guard will retire the flag of the United States of America. Please stand. The delegates will stand and hand salute on my command. Hand Salute!

... At this time, the delegation rendered a salute to the Colors.

NATIONAL COMMANDER SCHMIDT: Two! The time is 12:43. I now declare this 99th Annual National Convention of The American Legion adjourned. Sine die.

... At 12:43 p.m., the 99th Annual National Convention of The American Legion was adjourned.
2017 OFFICIAL AWARDS
ANNOUNCEMENT OF ANNUAL RECIPIENT(S)

The American Legion Distinguished Service Medal Award: Awarded annually to an individual(s) or organization for their outstanding service to the nation and to the programs of The American Legion by nomination by department action or by the National Commander.
RECIPIENT: Dr. Apostolos P. Georgopoulos

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: Brian Dozier, Minnesota Twins

Bob Feller American Legion Pitching 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: Jordan Patty, Post 165, Midland, MI (19 strikeouts)

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: Henderson Post 40, Henderson, NV

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: Zach Luckey, Post 1, Omaha, NE

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: Omaha Post 1, Omaha, NE

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: Department of Missouri

George W. Rulon Baseball Player of the Year: A 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: Shane Spencer, Post 40, Henderson, NV

The Howard P. Savage, Jr. 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: Henderson, Post 40, Henderson, NV
**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: Scott Baker, Post 40, Henderson, NV  
Coaches: Tyler Baker, Essex Burton, Shawn Dickson & Roberto Persona

**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:** Will Hanafian, Post 1, Omaha, NE

**American Legion Junior Shooting Sports Trophy:** Awarded annually in four categories to the top performing Individual and Team in the Sporter and Precision categories competing in the annual USA Shooting National Junior Olympic Air Rifle Championship who are members of clubs and teams affiliated with The American Legion Junior Shooting Sports Program.

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| **RECIPIENT(s):** | **Precision Team:** Arlington Optimist Acorns CJRC - Gold (Virginia) Post 177, The American Legion of Virginia Rebecca Lamb, Amity Ermarth, Elena Kim, Niya Burney  
**Precision Individual:** Sarah Osborn Patriot Shooting Club of Virginia (Virginia)  
**Sporter Team:** Nation Ford H.S MCJROTC (South Carolina) Post 31, The American Legion of South Carolina Marcus Stallings, Levi Carlson, Preston Jaeger, Donte Hayes  
**Sporter Individual:** Hailey Smith Zion Benton Team Gold (Illinois) Post 865, The American Legion of Illinois |

**The American Legion Baseball “Slugger” Trophy:** Plaque is presented to recipient, or designated representative, by appropriate official upon the conclusion of The American Legion Baseball World Series.

**RECIPIENT:** Jordan Patty, Post 165, Midland, MI (.529 batting average)

**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:** Department of Delaware

**The American Legion Baseball “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:** Jack Thomas Wold, Post 40, Henderson, NV (29 total bases)

**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:** Department of Massachusetts
Francis M. Redington Sportsmanship Award: Awarded annually to the athlete competing in The American Legion Junior Air Rifle National Championship who best exemplifies good sportsmanship and fair play.

RECIPIENT:  Grace Taschuk, Post 334, American Legion Post 334 Junior Rifle Club, Andover, Maryland

Daniel J. O’Connor Award: 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. (Originally named the William Randolph Hearst Trophy)

RECIPIENT:  Department of Virginia

The American Legion and Scouting “Square Knot” Award: This award is designed to recognize American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary or Sons of The American Legion members who are actively involved in the Scouting program. This award is not meant to be a selective or limited award, but one that is available to any American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary or Sons of The American Legion member who completes the requirements for the award. The Award is meant to recognize dedication and work required by an American Legion, American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary or Sons of The American Legion member to assist in furthering the Scouting program in The American Legion.


The American Legion National Education Award: Awarded annually to an individual, group or organization that has promoted the education programs of The American Legion, including the promotion of “Need A Lift?”, correspond to the goals of The American Legion or has promoted or advanced education programs at the national level.

RECIPIENT:  Mr. David Azerrad, The Heritage Foundation

The American Legion 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. It shall be awarded to specific individuals who shall be war veterans within the accepted meaning of the term and members of authentic veterans' organization in Canada. It shall be awarded to such individuals in recognition of outstanding service in the field of veterans' affairs and in the development and perpetuation of the spirit of international good will and comradeship between the United States and Canada and between their veterans' organization and The American Legion.

RECIPIENT(S):  ANAVICUS – None Awarded.
INDIVIDUAL - None Awarded

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:  Departments of Delaware, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, New Hampshire, Oklahoma, Virginia and Wisconsin
National Employer of Veterans Award Recipient(s): Awarded to an employer in recognition of outstanding achievement in the employment and retraining of veterans.

RECIPIENT(s): Category I
2016 Precision Moulding & Woodworks, Inc., New Bern, NC
Category II Lowe’s Home Improvement Center, Inc., Rapid City, SD

Winners Category III Sansone Auto Mall, Avenel, NJ

Note: The 2017 National Employer of Veterans Award Recipient(s) will not be announced until 2018 National Convention.

National Employment Service Award Recipient(s): 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: Reginald Parker, Houston, TX
2016 DVOP of the Year: Bradley J. Aune, Fargo, ND
Winners ES Office of the Year: Eau Claire Job Center, Eau Claire, WI

Note: The 2017 National Employment Service Award Recipient(s) will not be announced until 2018 National Convention.

Enhance the Lives of Disabled Persons Award Recipient: The program is a joint project between the National Organization & the AETNA Company, to award those Posts that enhance the lives of disabled persons by providing opportunities for their participation in community activities.

RECIPIENT(s): Lone Survivor Foundation, Houston, TX
2016 Winner

Note: The 2017 Enhance the Lives of Disabled Persons Award Recipient will not be announced until 2018 National Convention.

National Employer of Older Worker Award Recipient: The program provides an Employer of Older Worker Award for a company that consistently hires older workers, especially veterans and serves as an inspirational recognition of a company with a record of support and commitment to the hiring of America’s older workers.

RECIPIENT(s): Ken’s Super Fair Foods & Shell Express, Aberdeen, SD
2016 Winner

Note: The 2017 National Employer of Older Worker Award Recipient will not be announced until 2018 National Convention.

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): Department of North Carolina (One-Year Narrative History)
Department of Nebraska (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): Pony Express Post 359 (One-Year Narrative History)
Saint Joseph, MO
Mukwonago Community Post 375, Mukwonago, WI (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. It shall be awarded to specific individuals who shall be war veterans within the accepted meaning of the term and members of an authentic veteran organization established in the territory of any of the nations associated as war-time allies of the United States of America. It shall be awarded to such individuals in recognition of outstanding service in the field of veterans affairs and for service and contributions made in the development of international good will and comradeship between their organization and The American Legion.

RECIPIENT(s): None awarded for 2017

Distinguished Public Service Award: Awarded annually by the National Commander with the advice and consent of the Commander’s Advisory Committee at the time of the annual Washington Conference. It may be awarded to one or more person(s) of the United States Congress.

RECIPIENT(s): Senator John McCain, Arizona

The Arthur D. Houghton Sons of The American Legion Trophy: Awarded annually to that Detachment of Sons of The American Legion in each of five membership categories (I – 200-1,000 members; II - 1,001-3,000 members; III - 3,001-6000 members; IV – 6001-12,000 members; V – 12,001 or more), of said Detachments attaining the greatest percentage of increase over previous year’s membership when compared with all Detachments in its category.

RECIPIENT(s): Category I Detachment of Nevada
2017 Category II Detachment of North Carolina
Winners Category III Detachment of Missouri
Category IV Detachment of New Jersey
Category V Detachment of Michigan

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 None qualified
Category II None qualified
Category III None qualified
Category IV None qualified
Category V None qualified
Category VI Department of Idaho

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: Department of Kentucky

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: None awarded for 2017
The American Legion National Recruiter of the Year: Awarded annually to the individual certified with the highest number of new members recruited from among all of the departments.

RECIPIENT: Patricia E. Liddell, Department of Georgia

Jerry L. Hedrick Membership Award: 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: None awarded for 2017

O. L. Bodenhamer Trophy: Awarded annually to that Department designated to lead the parade at the time of the ensuing National Convention.

RECIPIENT: Department of Montana

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 Young Wu

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: Ensign Nikole Bareuther Barnes

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 Zachary Charles Dy

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 Edmund P. Mullins, III

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: Ensign Jacob Wirz

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 - Departments with 100,000 or more members:
Post Participation: No Submission
Individual Participation: No Submission

Category II - Departments with 70,000 to 99,999 members:
Post Participation: Department of Minnesota
Individual Participation: Department of Minnesota

Category III - Departments with 40,000 to 69,999 members:
Post Participation: Department of Maryland
Individual Participation: Department of Maryland
Category IV - Departments with 25,000 to 39,999 members:
Post Participation: No Submission
Individual Participation: No Submission
Category V - Departments with 10,000 to 24,999 members:
Post Participation: Department of Montana
Individual Participation: Department of Montana
Category VI - Departments with less than 10,000 members:
Post Participation: No Submission
Individual Participation: No Submission

The American Legion 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: Sgt. Joe Rowley, Michigan State Police Tri-City Post, Gladwin, MI

The American Legion National Firefighter of the Year Award: To recognize an outstanding firefighter as selected from Department 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: Asst. Fire Chief Darren O. Ware, Prince George’s Fire/EMS Department, Waldorf, MD

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): Departments of Alaska, Connecticut, Colorado, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Montana and North Dakota

The American Legion 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: 2017 – Dennis Wagner, The Arizona Republic, Phoenix AZ (print); Simone Aponte, KTVU FOX2, Oakland CA (broadcast); Jerry Mitchell, The Clarion-Ledger, Jackson MS (online)

The American Legion National Commander’s Media and Communications Award: Awarded to an outstanding individual and/or organization for distinguished public service in the field of communications.

RECIPIENT: Mike Rowe, New York, NY

The American Legion Patriot Award: Awarded to an outstanding citizen who has demonstrated a profound and exceptional commitment to military personnel and their families.

RECIPIENT(s): Honorable Robert Gates
The American Legion Spirit of Service Award: Awarded annually by the Department of Defense and the six military departments that have identified the most outstanding men and women that have received press coverage in Armed Service News dispatches, the Pentagon Channel, their military base newspapers and their hometown publications.

RECIPIENT(s):
Army: Virginia Constable
Navy: Robin Stephens
Marine Corps: Justin Alhasteen
Air Force: Kalyoun Mitchell
Coast Guard: Jordan Suchon
Air National Guard: Allanesha Smith

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: N/A

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: Newport Beach Harbor, Post 291, Newport Beach, CA

The Lemuel Bolles Trophy: Awarded annually to that band winning first prize in competition with all other bands during the annual National Convention.

RECIPIENT: N/A

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: Department of Montana
The American Legion 98th Annual Report

FOREWORD

The American Legion continued to have a strong year under the leadership of National Commander Charles E. Schmidt, Oregon. Membership was strong with 2 million veterans in more than 13,000 posts throughout the nation and overseas. We recorded another year of rewarding service to America, her veterans, and their families.

The American Legion National Headquarters is located in Indianapolis, Indiana. In addition to the Indianapolis facilities, offices are maintained in Washington, DC, to house those organizational functions requiring a close working relationship with the Congress and the appropriate agencies of the federal government. The editorial and advertising staffs of The American Legion Magazine are located at The American Legion's Indianapolis Headquarters.

The National Commander's report is published herein as a part of the National Convention proceedings. Reports of the other national officers, the national commissions, financial statement with accompanying data, and a report of the National President of the American Legion Auxiliary are included.

Throughout the year, the two organizations continued to provide vital leadership to the nation and, through our activities and programs, contributed significantly to the preservation of the American way of life. We are proud of our accomplishments and look forward to the challenges ahead in the coming year.

Daniel S. Wheeler
National Adjutant

EXcerpts from Constitution of the American Legion

ARTICLE II

Nature

Section 1. The American Legion is a civilian organization; membership therein does not affect nor increase liability for military or police service. Rank does not exist in the Legion; no member shall be addressed by his military or naval title in any convention or meeting of the Legion.

Section 2. The American Legion shall be absolutely nonpolitical and shall not be used for the dissemination of partisan principles nor for the promotion of the candidacy of any person seeking public office or preferment.

ARTICLE III

Organization

Section 1. The American Legion shall be organized in Departments and these in turn in Posts. There shall be one Department in each state, in the District of Columbia, and there may be one Department in each territory and insular possession of the United States. The National Executive Committee may establish Posts in the territorial and insular possessions of the United States and foreign countries, and shall designate the Department under whose jurisdiction they shall function, but this shall in no way affect the status of Departments already established.
ARTICLE IV
Eligibility

Section 1. Any person shall be eligible for membership in The American Legion who was a member of the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard or Air Force of the United States and assigned to active duty at some time during any of the following periods: April 6, 1917, to November 11, 1918; December 7, 1941, to December 31, 1946; June 25, 1950, to January 31, 1955; February 28, 1961, to May 7, 1975; August 24, 1982, to July 31, 1984; December 20, 1989, to January 31, 1990; August 2, 1990 until a date established by Congress for ending the Desert Storm period; all dates inclusive, or who, being a citizen of the United States at the time of his entry therein, served on active duty in the armed forces of any of the governments associated with the United States during any said periods; provided however, that such service shall have been terminated by honorable discharge or honorable separation, or continued honorably after any of said periods; provided, further, that no person shall be entitled to membership who, being in such service during any of said periods, refused on conscientious, political or other grounds to subject himself to military discipline or unqualified service.

Section 2. There shall be no form or class of membership except an active membership, and dues shall be paid annually or for life.

Section 3. No person may be a member at any time of more than one Post.

Section 4. No person, who has been expelled by a Post shall be admitted to membership in another Post, without the consent of the expelling Post except that where such consent has been asked for and denied by such Post, he may then appeal to the Executive Committee of the Department of the expelling Post for permission to be admitted to membership in another Post, and shall be ineligible for membership until such permission is granted.

ARTICLE V
National Convention

Section 1. The legislative body of The American Legion shall be the National Convention, except as otherwise provided in the Constitution and By-Laws.

Section 2. The time and place of the National Conventions shall be determined by the National Executive Committee, which shall have authority to change such time and place for sufficient reasons to it appearing.

Section 3. In the National Convention each Department shall be entitled to five delegates and one additional delegate for each one thousand members, or major fraction thereof, whose current dues have been received by the National Treasurer 30 days prior to the meeting of said Convention and whose registration fees, as fixed by the National Executive Committee, for its total authorized delegate strength, have been paid, and to one alternate for each delegate. The delegates shall be chosen not less than 2 weeks before the National Convention at Department Conventions or in any other manner specified by the Department Constitution.

Section 4. Each duly registered delegate shall be entitled to one vote. The vote of any registered delegate absent and not represented by an alternate shall be cast by the majority of the registered delegates present from his Department. Alternates for registered delegates shall have all the privileges of registered delegates except that of voting. A registered delegate is one who has received his credentials after his registration fee has been paid.

Section 5. A quorum shall exist at a National Convention when 60 percent of the Departments are represented as provided above.

Section 6. The National Executive Committee shall provide a Uniform Code of Procedure for the orderly organization and operation of National Conventions with continuing power of revision, and said Code shall be applicable at all National Conventions.
unless it is amended, suspended, or repealed by a majority vote of the total authorized representation at a National Convention.

ARTICLE VI

National Officers

Section 1. The National Convention shall elect a National Commander, and five National Vice Commanders, who shall serve without seniority. No two Vice Commanders shall be chosen from the same Department. No person shall be eligible for re-election to the Office of National Commander or National Vice Commander.

Section 2. Such officers shall serve until the adjournment of the succeeding National Convention following their election and thereafter until their successors are chosen. Vacancies in these offices occurring between National Conventions shall be filled by election by the National Executive Committee, and any member of The American Legion, in good standing, shall be eligible for election to such vacancy. Provided, however, that no Past National Commander or Past National Vice Commander shall be elected to fill any vacancy in these respective offices.

Section 3. The National Executive Committee at its first meeting following the National Convention shall appoint the National Adjutant, National Treasurer, National Judge Advocate, National Chaplain and National Historian, such officers to hold office at the pleasure of the appointing power. All persons having the custody of funds shall give adequate bonds, which shall be approved by the National Executive Committee.

Section 4. All Past National Commanders, while in good standing in their respective Posts, shall be members for life of the National Executive Committee, without vote, and shall also be life delegates to all National Conventions of The American Legion, with vote, to be exercised by them with their respective Departments.

ARTICLE VII

National Executive Committee

Section 1. Between National Conventions, the administrative power shall be vested in the National Executive Committee, which shall be composed of the National Commander, the National Vice-Commanders, and one National Executive Committeeman and one alternate from each Department to be elected as such Department shall determine, the alternate to act only in the absence of the National Executive Committeeman.

Section 2. The term of office of such National Executive Committeeman and alternates shall be two years. The term of office of each National Executive Committeeman and alternate shall commence immediately upon the adjournment of the National Convention next ensuing after their election and shall end at the adjournment of the second next succeeding annual National Convention.

Section 3. Members of the National Executive Committee shall be delegates to the National Convention with vote, which vote shall be exercised with their respective Departments, except that the vote of the National Commander shall be exercised only in his capacity as chairman of the National Convention

Past National Commanders

Keith Kreul, Wisconsin  
Clarence M. Bacon, Maryland  
John P. Comer, Massachusetts  
Miles S. Epling, West Virginia  
Robert S. Turner, Georgia  
Dominic D. DiFrancesco, Pennsylvania  
Bruce Thiesen, California  
William M. Detweiler, Louisiana  

Daniel A. Ludwig, Minnesota  
Joseph J. Frank, Missouri  
Anthony G. Jordan, Maine  
Butch L. Miller, Virginia  
Hon. Alan G. Lance, Sr., Idaho  
Richard J. Santos, Maryland  
Ronald F. Conley, Pennsylvania  
John A. Brieden, III, Texas
Thomas L. Bock, Colorado  
Paul A. Morin, Massachusetts  
Martin F. 'Marty' Conater, Illinois  
Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan  
David K. Rehbein, Iowa  
Clarence E. Hill, Florida  
Jimmie L. Foster, Alaska

Fang A. Wong, New York  
James E. Koutz, Indiana  
Daniel M. Dellinger, Virginia  
Michael D. Helm, Kansas  
Harold D. Barnett, Georgia  
Charles E. Schmidt, Oregon

### National Executive Committee

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>State</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Willis Frazier</td>
<td>Alabama</td>
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<tr>
<td>James E. Pisa</td>
<td>Alaska</td>
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<tr>
<td>Richard W. Perry</td>
<td>Arizona</td>
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<td>Mary V. Erdman</td>
<td>Arkansas</td>
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<tr>
<td>Janet M. Wilson</td>
<td>California</td>
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<td>Francis W. McCurdy</td>
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<td>D. Joseph Jackson</td>
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<td>John A. Endres</td>
<td>Delaware</td>
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<td>Bron R. Mogenis</td>
<td>D.C.</td>
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<td>Dennis R. Boland</td>
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<td>Nola L. Maloney</td>
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<td>Charles F. Wessinger</td>
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<td>Marvin R. Siegfried</td>
<td>Hawaii</td>
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<td>Charles D. Aucoin</td>
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<td>Francis J. MacDonald</td>
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<td>Michael D. Wood</td>
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<td>Mervin G. Gunderson</td>
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<td>William D. Crosier</td>
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<td>Luis A. Ayala</td>
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<td>Cecil F. Hennis</td>
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<td>Francis J. Killay</td>
<td>Vermont</td>
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<td>Thomas E. Saunders</td>
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<tr>
<td>William R. 'Bob' Wallace</td>
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<td>William W. Kile</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kenneth J. Rynes, Jr.</td>
<td>Wisconsin</td>
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<tr>
<td>Terry E. Miller</td>
<td>Wyoming</td>
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### Alternate National Executive Committee

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>State</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hardwick “Rico” Hall</td>
<td>Sr., Alabama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steven L. Huisman</td>
<td>Alaska</td>
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<tr>
<td>Judith S. Beischel</td>
<td>Arizona</td>
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<td>C. Jacob Greeling</td>
<td>Arkansas</td>
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<td>Jerry A. King</td>
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<td>VACANT</td>
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<tr>
<td>William C. Barbknecht</td>
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</table>
Steve Sweet, Mississippi
Thomas K. Goodin, Missouri
David A. Driver, Montana
Frederick C. Craigie, Nebraska
John F. Warden, Jr., Nevada
Kenneth B. Maynard, Jr., New Hampshire
Charles K. Robbins, New Jersey
John P. Sterle, Sr., New Mexico
Edward Bertrand, New York
Patricia A. Harris, North Carolina
Don Weible, North Dakota
Robert M. Klostermeier, Ohio
VACANT, Oklahoma
Robert A. Millar, Oregon
E. Michael Stelacio, Pennsylvania

Richard L. Perry, Philippines
Isaac Rodriguez, Puerto Rico
Cory D. Bates, Rhode Island
Gary L. Mitchell, South Carolina
James Huls, South Dakota
Don E. Mathis, Tennessee
Kenneth W. Mueller Texas
Richard G. Fisher, Utah
Marlys A. Lemnah, Vermont
Michael F. Mitrione, Virginia
Ken C. Lee, Washington
William E. Burkett, West Virginia
Robert L. Shappell, Wisconsin
Keith R. Davidson, Wyoming

EXCERPTS FROM BY-LAWS OF THE
AMERICAN LEGION
ARTICLE I
National Executive Committee
Commission, Committee, and Employees


The commissions shall consist of such number of members of The American Legion as the National Executive Committee may from time to time determine. Appointments to such commissions shall be made by the National Executive Committee upon nomination by the National Commander. The National Executive Committee is empowered to assign duties and responsibilities to all standing commissions and committees and to group standing committees with commissions for the purpose of efficient supervision and coordination of activities.

Section 7. The National Executive Committee shall provide for the appointment and employment of such subordinate officers and employees as may be needed for the administration of the affairs of The American Legion, and prescribe their duties and emoluments.

REPORT OF NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER
Paul Martel, Florida

My year as Vice Commander candidate, started with orientation at the Washington, DC National Headquarters for two days, August 1-2, 2016. On August 26 through September 1, 2016, I was in Cincinnati, Ohio for the American Legion National Convention, on September 1, I was elected National Vice Commander.

My year started off with being invited to the department of Michigan, September 23 – 25, 2016, for membership conference.

October 8 – 13, I was in Indianapolis, Indiana for National Fall Conference.

October 20 – 22, 2016, I was invited to the Department of Kentucky for their state convention.

November 4 – 8, 2016, invited to the Department of Wisconsin for a convention.

November 17 – 20, 2016, invited to the Department of Illinois for their convention.

January 13 – 15, 2017, invited to the Department of Indiana for their convention.
January 17 – 21, 2017, Washington for The American Legion Ball in celebration of our new President Trump, Vice President Pence was in attendance.

February 2 -5, 2017, invited to the Department of West Virginia for their conference.

February 17 – 19, 2017, invited to attend the Department of Ohio for their convention.

February 26 – March 1, 2017, attended The American Legion membership meeting in Washington, DC.

March 31 – April 7, 2017, flew to the Department of Germany to help with membership throughout the country. Meet with several Air Force base commanders speaking on how The American Legion can help our service men and women on matters concerning their VA benefits while in service and when they are discharged from the military.

May 9 – 11, 2017, attended National American Legion Spring meetings in Indianapolis, Indiana.

May 17 – 21, 2017, invited to attend the Department of Illinois for their convention.

May 23 -26, 2017, represented The American Legion at the graduation of West Point cadets with an award which we have been giving since 1935.

June 20 – 25, 2017, invited to attend the Department of Michigan for their convention.

June 28 – July 2, 2017, invited to attend the Department of Florida for their convention.

July 13 – 16, 2017, invited to the Department of Texas for their convention.

In all my travels to all of the departments, the main theme was always membership, how to improve with new members and to retain our old members. I addressed questions concerning The American Legion By-laws, what was national’s stand on political happenings at that time and attended numerous meetings, too many to count.

To achieve attending these states and country, I used three modes of transportation, airplane, driving my automobile and train, the amount of mileage was approximately 42,352 miles. It was and is my honor to have served The American Legion and of course my fellow veterans.

REPORT OF NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER
Fae Casper, Georgia

The following is a recap of activities I participated in representing The American Legion on behalf of National Commander Charles Schmidt during the 2016-2017 year while I served as the Southeast Region National Vice Commander.

After election and installation in Cincinnati, Ohio on September 1, 2016 I returned to Douglasville, Georgia. My first speaking engagement was for Patriots Day on September 9. Villa Rica Post 70 combined Patriots Day with a flag retirement and raising ceremony performed by the local Boy Scouts at their Post home on the lake. The event was very well attended and included a write up in the local paper.

October Fall Meetings were held in Indianapolis were October 10-12 and included breakfast session with all Southeast Region Department Commanders, DEC meetings, breakout session with my region and visit with the Historians at their judging of History Scrapbooks and Narrative Histories. I presented an eagle trophy to South Carolina Commander Robert Scherer for his early work on membership.

From October 21-23, I attended the Virginia Fall Conference. NEC Thomas Saunders served as my escort. I spoke at all the breakout session and at the DEC meeting. I was also given the honor of speaking at the Auxiliary session.

On October 26-30, I participated in the Tennessee 5th District Revitalization. This event was well organized and Legion representatives from most of the posts participated. Department Membership Chairman, District Commander, and Auxiliary members made me very welcome.

PNC Dellinger and I flew to the Virgin Islands on October 1-3 to attend the District Meeting and discuss merging VI with Florida. VI was not in favor. They held a very
informative session with emphasis placed on updating the Department Constitution & By-Laws making sure all had input.

November 10-12, I attended the New York City Veterans Day Parade. District Commander Jennifer Napolitano served as my escort. Arrangement were coordinated with PNC Fang Wong and United War Veteran Council member Dan McSweeney. I attended the Mayor’s Breakfast at Gracie Mansion, Opening Ceremonies at Madison Square Park, spoke to on air TV personalities, and participated on the review stand.

This year the National Vice Commanders were invited to attend the Inauguration Ceremonies in Washington, DC. This was first which I hope will be continued in the future. The highlight was the opportunity to meet and greet the 42 Medal of Honor recipients in attendance. The opportunity to meet with leadership of other veterans’ organizations was wonderful.

Arkansas held their Mid-Winter Conference in Little Rock on January 13-15. Department Commander J. W. Smith and NEC Mary Erdman served as escorts. I spoke at all breakout session, the Auxiliary, SAL and Legion Riders meetings. I was also the featured speaker at the General Session of the Legion meetings.

On February 3-5, I attended the Tennessee Mid-Winter Conference in Murfreesboro. My escort was Department Commander Nancy Harper. I spoke at all breakout sessions including the SAL and Legion Riders. Boys Nation Senator Anighya Crocker from TN attended the weekend and presented very inspirational messages. The color guard from Commander Harper’s ROTC presented the colors.

The Washington Conference was held February 27-March 1. In addition to the opportunity to meet with our regional commanders and with the National Commander, the opportunity to attend the Congressional testimony was an educational experience that will not be forgotten. The opportunity serving as a member of the ANIVICUS Board is very uplifting. Shaking hands with the inductees and knowing these are our upcoming leaders has been appreciated.

March 30, I flew to Raleigh, NC to join the Pony Express ride across North Carolina led by the Legion Riders. Department Commander David Shore and NEC Jeff Joyner were my escorts. PNH and current Department Historian Rex McBee also road along to document stops across the state collecting membership for all four organization. Mary Hedrick greeted us at one of the stops. The ride went all the way to Nags Head and a visit to the Wright Brother site and museum. My return flight left from Raleigh.

Alabama held a revitalization for the 33rd District. The coordination was done by Department Sr. Vice Commander Donna Stacy and her husband, a past Department Commander. The revitalization was well organized and many members participated to help make this event successful. My accommodations were in a condo right ion the ocean. It is a very beautiful facility.

I was invited back to Arkansas to assist in a district revitalization. The request was from Department Commander J W Smith. National Adjutant Dan Wheeler approved paying for housing since the Department had not budgeted for this event. NEC Mary Erdman was the coordinator while the Department Commander attended a revitalization in another area. The event was not well organized. The post did not have internet accessibility and the District had another large event the same weekend so participation was limited. We were still able to transfer and/or renew around 50 members.

The Louisiana 3rd District Spring Conference was held in Houma and was sponsored by Post 31. The advertising booklet and registration fee included all meals for attendees. My escort was Department Commander Rudy Bourg, Sr. Again, I spoke at the breakout session including the Auxiliary, SAL and Legion Riders. The Junior Auxiliary also held their meeting where I spoke and was presented with a small gift. On my first evening, we attended a Post Everlasting ceremony held at the local museum. One display was the first Air Force One which was used by President Dwight Eisenhower. I was taken to dinner at the local Boudreau ’n Tibodeau restaurant – a taste of real Cajun food.
May 9-11 were the Spring Meetings in Indianapolis. This meeting also provided the opportunity to testify at the Foreign Departments and Outlying Posts Study Committee regarding my visit to the Department of Puerto Rico (Virgin Islands). I recommended the VI remain a part of PR and also recommended that in the future more emphasis needs to be placed on visiting our outlying departments. Attention to ALL departments is important, but especially to those that might feel like are "Stepchildren".

On May 21-23, I was honored to represent the National Commander at the Air Force Academy graduation and to present to Outstanding Cadet In Academic Performance Award to Young Wu. He also received the Outstanding Engineering Award and awards from Argentina, Chile, Mexico and the Outstanding Cadet in Order of Graduation Award. American Aviator’s Legion Post 743 of New Jersey also presented 3 additional awards to other recipients. The Air Force Academy did not provide any escort services, so I called Department of Colorado. PNC Tom Bock and Adjutant Pat Smith coordinated with Department Commander Jay Bowen. Commander Bowen lives in Colorado Springs and he provided escort services that included a visit to Department Headquarters. In the future, Colorado would like to make their services available to all NVCs attending the graduation ceremonies.

June 1-4, I attended the South Carolina Department Convention. Commander David Scherer is to be commended on his membership ending in the top 5 rankings. Also, the Facebook presence was, I am sure, able to inform members and potential members about The American Legion and our activities. NEC Cecil Hennis and Commander Scherer provided the escort service and I spoke at the General Session, breakout sessions, Auxiliary, SAL and Legion Riders.

June 15-18, I attended the Department of Georgia Convention. Since this is my home state, I was not provided any escort services. Since the Department Convention is all General Session, the only chance to carry the Commander’s message was during that session on Saturday prior to elections. Since there was more than one candidate for the Sr. Vice Commander position there was maximum attendance.

July 13-16, I was scheduled to attend Department of Texas Convention but due to health restrictions Paul Martel represented the National Headquarters. Thank you, Paul.

Although repeated attempts were made with the Departments of Mississippi and Washington DC no invitations or visits were made.

I plan on driving from Fort Campbell, KY to Reno, NV for the National Convention. It has been an honor to serve all our veterans and to provide any assistance and advice along the way.

All speeches presented included National Commanders Schmidt’s projects of fundraising for NEF and more claims officers.

REPORT OF NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER

Douglas L. Boldt, Nebraska

On July 24, 2016 I began a yearlong adventure that would turn out to be an experience of a life time. National Vice Commander orientation took place in Indianapolis, Indiana from 24 July to 30 July, 2016 at National Headquarters. The week of orientation and participation in the membership workshop included me, along with four other National Vice Commander candidates. We received detailed briefings from each of the Division Directors which included tours of the Geiger Center and Emblem Sales Division. We were involved in video-taping an interview and then critiqued as to how well we did. The following week all five National Vice Commander candidates traveled to our National Headquarters in Washington DC. While there we were briefed on current legislative points, Veteran Employment and Education, National Security and Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation.

At the 98th National Convention in Cincinnati, Ohio, I was elected National Vice Commander for the Mid West Region. My first duty was to attend the post NEC meeting
where I was introduced, to the members and guest of the National Executive Committee. At the close of the meeting, we attended a briefing and introduction by all Division Directors from the Indianapolis and Washington DC offices. We attended the reception for the newly elected National Commander, Charles Schmidt of Oregon.

My first official business, as National Vice Commander, was to attend and participate in a baseball game. This is no ordinary ball game this is Buddy baseball. In this game the heroes are Legion baseball players and the All Stars are children with Down syndrome. This turned out to be an experience I will long remember.

On September 5th I attended and participated in the Veterans Parade at the Nebraska State Fair. I was placed on a float where I spent time talking to World War two veterans. On September 23rd the five NVC’s had our first of many conference calls with National Commander Schmidt. During this call Commander Schmidt informed us he would like us to call new members, on our list, to thank them for recruiting one or up to three new members.

I was in attendance at the fall meeting of the NEC, October 10-13, 2016. I attended the National Commanders Banquet, as well as, being in a receiving line for the SAL leading candidate Danny Smith (NE.). I was called on to give a short report on my goals as Mid West Region National Vice Commander for the ensuing year.

On November 11th I represented National Commander Schmidt in Washington DC to participate in Veterans Day ceremony and wreath laying at various memorials. Also I attended breakfast with President Obama and a photo shoot.

My first official meeting was November 13-17th in The Department of Kansas. I met Department Adjutant Jimmie Foster and spent the next four days attending membership drives and recruitment events. The membership tour included 17 post and several hundred members. I had the honor to speak at every event.

On November 18-20th I attended The Department of Missouri membership tour. Sr. Vice Commander Cary was my host and drove me to 12 post meetings where I met and talking to many Legionnaires and answered many questions, regarding the status of our great organization. On October 21st I attended an awards banquet and participated in the event by bringing greetings from Commander Schmidt.

On December 5th I met up with Department Commander Don Kuntze in Edmond OK. This will be the start of a membership/revitalization tour, across the Department of Oklahoma. The Department of Oklahoma has experienced some huge problems. As I brought greetings from Commander Schmidt I also addressed questions as to how to retain the current members, as we made many stops the common theme was, they will get through this. December 07-08, 2016 in Stillwell OK. I participated in revitalization with several post involved. At the end of the two days we recruited and transferred 195 members to local post. December 9 the department provided a meet and greet for the local members, at the Mustang High School where I delivered a short message.

On January 6th, 2017, I arrived in Bloomington MN. Where I met up with Department Commander Denise Milton. We attended a district convention where I delivered a short message on membership. This was the beginning of their membership tour. Weather was bad and had an effect on the success of the tour. On January 8th the Commander and I attended a breakfast at the Legion Post in St. Paul. There I met and talked to many members. Later that day we toured the Cancer Institute and research facility. On January 10th I attended a meeting of the Minnesota Veterans Council and legislatures for a meet and greet. On January 11th I was at the Legion Post in Adrian MN., where the post presented the local Boys Scout troupe, a check for $1656.00. I brought a short message regarding membership. On January 12th I met Mike and the two of us visited the Veterans Home in Laverne MN., Dwayne showed us a great tour where I was able to speak to many Veterans.

On January 13-15th, I was in Nebraska to attend and participate in their Mid Winter Conference. Also attending was The American Legion leading candidate Denise Rohan, SAL leading candidate Danny Smith, SAL National Commander Jeff Frain and National
Commander Charles Schmidt. I brought a membership message to the joint session and then found myself with Commander Schmidt and PNC Michael Helm.

On January 18-21st, Mary Ann and I were in Washington DC to attend the Inauguration of President Trump and to attend the Salute to Heroes Inaugural Ball. Vice President Pence and his wife was featured guest at the ball.

On January 26-29th, I made my unofficial visit to the Department of North Dakota to attend and participate in their Mid Winter Conference. After traveling all day on terrible winter roads, I met with Commander Orletta and NEC Bob Krause for dinner. I attended their DEC meeting and brought greetings from National Commander Schmidt after which I met with District Vice Commanders and talked about membership recruitment. I attended the joint session where we heard from The American Legion’s leading candidate for National Commander Denise Rohan. On January 28th I attended the training session “Know Your Legion” later they held The Department Oratorical contest. The Department Banquet was held that evening where I was the guest speaker. The next day brought a close to their Mid Year Conference and I departed for home.

On February 01-05th, I was in Mesa Arizona, representing Commander Schmidt, at The Son of The American Legion National Commander Jeff Frain’s homecoming event. I was met, at the airport, by Department Adjutant Angel Juarez and drove to the resort where the event was being held. On 4 February I attended Commander Frain’s homecoming where I presented him with a gift from National Commander Schmidt and delivered a short message. On January 5th, Adjutant Angel and I attended a ceremony of the Four Chaplains and later departed for Nebraska.

On February 10-12th, I was in the Department of South Dakota. On February 10th, I arrived in Oacoma, South Dakota. I spoke briefly at the DEC meeting. Later that night I was the keynote speaker at their banquet. Where I spoke on” Carrying the Legacy Forward.” The Joint session was held February 11 where I brought a message forward about getting those members who have let their membership drop for a year or more. I visited some committee meetings and brought greetings from Commander Schmidt. On Sunday February 12th, I attended the memorial service, later; the Department of South Dakota held their oratorical contest featuring some outstanding contestants.

On February 16-19th, I made my official visit to the Department of Missouri. Sr. Vice Commander Carry, NEC Charlie Goodin and I visited many Veterans Memorials, in the Jefferson City area. On February 18th, Commander Gonzales opened the Spring Conference. I was asked to bring remarks and greetings. At the luncheon meeting they recognized the contestants, for the oratorical contest, with a dinner and wished them well. The Department oratorical contest was held that evening and four speakers did an outstanding job. The breakfast meeting, for past District Commanders was held the next day. I spoke on “Carrying the Legacy Forward.” Later that day I departed for the department of Iowa.

On February 20th, I arrived in Des Moines Iowa for a membership tour and post revitalization our first stop was in Ames Iowa, home post of PNC Dave Rebhen. After dinner I was asked to address The American Legion family. Later I granted an interview with the press. On the 21st of February NEC Bruce Feuerbach, Alternate NEC Jerry Sebin and I made our way to several post talking membership. Our group stopped at the Corral County Veterans Memorial, West of Mt. Pleasant. On February 22nd, we traveled to Council Bluffs where we met for lunch and a short program. I was asked to make a few remarks and to address questions. In Corall Iowa we toured their CBOC, what a great facility. I departed Iowa for Omaha NE. On February 23rd.

On February 24-March 01st, Mary Ann and I traveled to Washington DC for the annual Washington Legislative Conference. The first day was spent attending various workshops and the Nebraska Caucus. On Tuesday I attended the Commanders call for briefings prior to going to Capitol Hill where the delegation, from Nebraska, had made appointments to meet with all five of Nebraska's elected officials. Wednesday February 28th, I and the other four National Vice Commanders were honored to join National
Commander Charlie Schmidt as he gave his testimony to the joint committee on Veteran Affairs. Commander Schmidt, along with DC national staff, did an outstanding job.

On March 2nd, I made my unofficial visit to Nebraska where District 4 scheduled revitalization, several posts were involved. The 3rd and 4th, of March were spent touring several post, in Western Nebraska. March 5th I attended District 6 convention there I brought greetings from Commander Schmidt and reported on membership and National events. On March 6th, I attended school in Arapahoe, Nebraska where I talked to the general assembly about The American Legion and my time in the military.

On May 5th, Mary Ann and I drove to Indianapolis Indiana to attend and participate in a hospitality event for The Sons of American Legion leading candidate for National Commander, Danny Smith. I met with the committee and hearing on foreign outreach departments where we heard from Larry Wade NEC from the Department of the Philippines and Commander Gordon Grubb, Jr. regarding their plan as to revitalize the department. Later, Matt Herndon, I and NEC Larry met to go over our visit to his department. The National Executive Committee meetings were held at National Headquarter on May 9-11th, I attended the National Commanders reception for Distinguished Guest, Wednesday evening. After the final session of the NEC I departed for Nebraska.

On May 19-21st, I made my official visit to the Department of Kansas to attend and participate in Kansas's 99th annual convention in Topeka. The joint session of American Legion Family was opened and I was asked to give remarks to the membership. The evening concluded with open hospitality rooms and dinner. The next day I listened to reports from committee chairs and attended the awards ceremony. On Sunday I stayed for election results, after expressing my thanks, I left for Nebraska.

On May 24-26th, Mary Ann and I were honored to represent National Commander Schmidt at the awards ceremony at the Naval Academy, in Annapolis, MD. It was my honor to present a check and plaque to MIDN Jacob Wirz. Mary Ann and I returned to Nebraska on May 26, 2017.

On May 28-June 04th, National Staff member Matt Herndon and I was in the Department of the Philippines. We arrived May 30th, where I was scheduled to deliver the keynote address at Clark Veterans Cemetery Angeles City, Pampanga Province, Philippines. Later that day I toured The American Legion Auxiliary Department of the Philippines headquarters. The Department of the Philippines held their pre-convention DEC at post 123. After the dinner meeting I was the installing officer for the post newly elected officers.

The next day we visited the city of San Fernando where we followed the trail of the Bataan Death March. Later in the day Matt Herndon and I returned to post 123 for a meeting with NEC Larry and Department Commander Grubb. Later I met with the membership and we talked about the reason we are visiting The Department of the Philippines.

The next day Matt and I, along with a host of legionnaires were on a membership drive that took us to Alongapo City and a town hall meeting (of sorts) at post 4.

On June 01-03rd, The Department of the Philippines convention was held, where I listened to reports and witnessed the election of officers, after which I preformed the installation of officers.

On June 4th, I departed the Philippines in route for Nebraska. I arrived in Omaha, Nebraska and drove to Lincoln Nebraska.

On June 4-10th, I made my official visit to the Department of Nebraska where I was to attend and participate in The American Legion Cornhusker Boystate. I was honored to deliver graduation diplomas, to the citizens, on Saturday.

On June 22-25th, I made my official visit to the Department of North Dakota, where I was met by NEC Robert Krause and Department Commander Orletta Kilen. I attended the pre-convention DEC meeting where I was asked to give remarks. The next day I participated in a few committee meetings. I was invited to be a guest at the Past Department
Commanders Dinner. The joint session of The American Legion Family started the convention. I was on the program to give a report on the happenings at National.

Saturday June 24th, I listened to committee reports and participated in awards. Later, at the Department Convention Banquet, I was the keynote speaker. The next day I attended the Department Joint session Memorial service. I departed for Nebraska at the close of the convention.

On July 12-15th, I was invited to attend and participate in The Department of Minnesota's annual convention, held in Mahnomen, Minnesota. I was greeted by NEC Marland Ronning, Department Adjutant Randy Tesdahl and Commander Denise Milton. The opening session was just with The American Legion. I was asked to give a report, on National events and to bring greetings from National Commander Charlie Schmidt. The session ended and they went into their joint session and memorial service.

Thursday I attended a workshop on gambling and how to handle the revenue it generates. On Friday I listened to more reports and participated in the awards ceremony. On Friday July 14th, I attended the general session and participated in the final membership awards ceremony. That evening I participated in the Department parade, along with PNC Dan Ludwig of MN.

Saturday July 15th, I gave a report on activities at National, I asked for a point of personal privilege where I offered my appreciation for the generous hospitality extended to me, during my visit.

On July 20-23rd, I made my official visit to the Department of Iowa where I was met by Department Adjutant John Derner, NEC Bruce Feuerbach, and Alternate NEC Jerry Sebbin. On July 21st, committee and convention meetings were in session. I attended the Iowa American Legion Press Association luncheon and brought brief remarks. The general session opened at 4:00 pm with reports from several committees. The joint session opened at 7:00 pm where I was the keynote speaker on “Carrying the Legacy Forward.”

On July 22nd, I attended the Foundation Breakfast and gave a short report. The NEC and Alternate NEC escorted me to the ladies Auxiliary where I gave remarks. I then attended the Son of the American Legion convention where I offered remarks. Then it was off to the American Legion Riders where I took a few questions and briefed them on current happenings at National.

On July 23rd I attended Past District Commanders breakfast. I was asked to bring remarks from National. I attended Memorial Services and later was asked to join the head table, during the general session where I received a gift of a coin display case. I gave my final talk in terms of thank you to the officers and staff for all the kindness they provided for my wife and me during our visit to Iowa.

REPORT OF NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER  
Paul L. Espinoza, New Mexico

Back at our 98th National Convention in Cincinnati, Ohio on September 1st 2016. I was elected National Vice Commander of The American Legion (Western Region). Where there’s just under 260,000 members and 15 Departments in the Western Division with plenty of territory to cover with lots of traveling.

After the 98th National Convention in Ohio I was honored to receive this National position. Right away in September I reached out to all 15 Departments in the Western Region either by mail outs, e-mail or phone calling the Department Commanders, Adjutants, District Commanders and Membership Chairmen to let them know who I was and our expectations for the fiscal year.

Soon after I started my appearances within my own Department of N.M. as much as I was home in New Mexico. I attended District Meetings, Job Fairs, State Fairs, Roundhouses with Legislative, visiting VA Hospitals, and many more Veteran Events in N.M. Also having a chance and getting invited to attend New Mexico Mid-Winter
Conference in February 2017 and their Department Convention in late June 2017 where there was a very good turnout in members.

Soon after the National Convention I received my first travel authorization in October to the Department of Alaska. It was a success attending this Fall Workshop with a strong Membership appearance. Soon after I traveled out to Montana for their Fall Conference in October this was a big turnout and on another occasion traveled on the east side of Montana visiting many posts and picking up new members and renewals as well as hosting a Town Hall Meeting with a big turnout of people. Right after traveled to Arizona for their Fall Conference as well as visiting the Department of Arizona several other times to assist with Revitalizations, also visited the VA hospital with The National American Legion team, along with The American Legion hosting a Town Hall Meeting to the public and veterans about their VA Hospital in Phoenix Arizona.

I was honored to represent our National Commander of The American Legion for Veterans Day in Los Angeles California where The American Legion got highly recognized through the media for always being there for our veterans. During the year I had three invites in different occasions to visit Colorado where I participated with their revitalizations, Boys State planning, and visiting many American Legion Posts. I had a chance to see the new V.A Hospital in Denver where it well helped our veterans tremendously. The American Legion is highly involved in its process.

I did get a chance to visit the Departments of Idaho, Washington, and Oregon where they hosted their Mid-Winter Conference and with other visits helping them with memberships and revitalizations. While visiting those departments events it turned out a great success for The American Legion with great leadership and friendly members in the Departments.

It was a great honor to attend the Inauguration of President Donald Trump and to be involved with The American Legion hosting the Salute to Heroes Inaugural Ball in Washington DC in January. We had the opportunity to meet many Medal of Honor Recipients. It was great event that The American Legion did for our Veteran Heroes. I had a chance to meet and hear the Vice President of the United States Mike Pence speak.

I returned to California, Utah and Nevada several times to attend their Department Executive Conference, the Department Conventions and Revitalizations. The membership and the Leadership of California, Utah and Nevada is very strong on all their programs and events they do for our American Legion. I also attended an official visit to the Department of Wyoming in August 2017 to promote membership through Posts visits and The American Legion Programs. With many senior members getting involved in many programs.

For the first time The American Legion allowed the National Vice Commanders to visit a Department outside of the United States. I had a chance to receive a visit to the Department of Mexico in April 2017. I and a National Staff member (Billy Johnson) visited and witnessed many ways The American Legion helps out veterans, communities and the families within their reach by helping with the orphans, the first response teams with donations from fire engines, medical equipment, and running American Legion Programs, along with getting certified service officers for our veterans in need.

It was an honor to help with and attend the Oratorical finals in Indianapolis in April 2017 which was a fabulous event for what we do for our youth from 55 departments in The American Legion. Like our other American Legion Youth Programs, this group proved to be smart, patriotic and enthusiastic. I attended The American Legion Baseball World Series in Shelby North Carolina in August 2017 and was impressed by the talent of these young ball players. On several other occasions made trips to the Indianapolis American Legion National Headquarters for the NEC Fall Conference in October 2016 and the NEC Spring Conference in May 2017.

I traveled back to Washington D.C. in May and June 2017 to represent our National Commander for Memorial Day weekend at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and the Vietnam Wall to lay a wreath on behalf of The American Legion and for our veterans. In
June we attended the Samsung American Legion Scholarships Recognition, which continues to reward deserving youths from around the Nation representing The Korean War. I was also able to visit a Veterans Retirement Home in DC. Later in June 2017 I had a great honor to attend the Awards Ceremony of the US Merchant Marines Academy in Kings Point, New York. While there I was able to recognize and give a scholarship to a Cadet on behalf of The American Legion and witness what great work they do for our Military and our Nation.

At the same time during the fiscal year I stayed in contact with the Philippines and Hawaii and all the other 13 Departments within the Western Region at least twice a month by phone or by e-mails. In March, April, May, June and July we started having phone conferences twice a month with the liaison National Staff Membership (Michele Steinmetz) and the Leadership from each Department (Department Commander, Adjutant, and Membership Chairmen) to assist and help each Department with Membership and Programs along with receiving different ideas from them.

It has been my great honor to serve this fine organization for The American Legion in this high position has a National Vice Commander 2016-2017. In the last fiscal year it has been eye opener, proving time and time again on how important The American Legion is around the Nation to our Veterans, families and our Communities. Every Department has their own way on working hard for our American Legion and yet we are all here for one reason to help our Veterans like we have been doing for 99 years. From all Four Pillars, to our communities we strive and always will be there as a strong organization for our United States of America. We are THE AMERICAN LEGION and it has been a pleasure advancing National Commander Schmidt’s message to “Carry the Legacy Forward” to departments, and posts throughout my region. Thank you and God Bless our POWs, MIAs, Veterans, and our American Legion.

Thank You

REPORT OF NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER

Vincent James Troiola, New York

I was installed as the National Vice Commander of The American Legion for the Northeast Region on September 2, 2017 at the 98th Annual National Convention held in Cincinnati, Ohio. The Northeast Region consists of the following Departments: Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland and France.

Immediately after the adjournment of the convention I attended a National Executive Committee meeting.

My year was spent visiting the states in my region promoting the programs, legislative agenda, the National Commander’s message to “Carry the Legacy Forward, recognizing grass root Legionnaires for their hard work and supporting membership drives through revitalizations at the Post and District levels.

I have had a busy year with visits to Departments (States) within my region and beyond as well as other events assigned to me. In chronological order they are listed below.
10/8/2016-10/13/2016
I attended the National American Legion Fall meetings at the Sheraton City Centre in Indianapolis, IN. While there I attended the National Executive Committee meeting at National Headquarters and gave remarks to the attendees regarding plans for improving membership in the upcoming year. I also attended National Commander Charles E. Schmidt’s Homecoming reception.
10/24/2016 – 10/28/2016
I went to the Department of Delaware to participate in the Kent County American Legion membership revitalization held on October 26th, 27th and 28th. The PNC/Department Adjutant Richard Santos, Department Commander, Jeff Crouser, National Headquarters staff member Matt Herndon, National Executive Committee
John Endres and Alternate National Executive Committeeman Robert Michael and 18 volunteers were on hand at Post 2 in Dover. A training session was held on how to conduct a revitalization and The American Legion’s Strategic Plan. Ninety Nine members were transferred to local Posts throughout the Kent District and three new members were recruited. An American Legion Service Officer was on hand and assisted nine veterans with VA claims or advice.

I also visited several Post homes during my visit to talk with the members.
I hosted a breakfast for the Department Commanders in my Region to discuss their plans for membership growth for the coming year.
I attended the testimonial dinner in Connecticut for Department Commander Louie Robinson on November 5th at the USS Chowder Pot IV located in Hartford. I was the guest speaker at the event.
I visited Rhode Island to participate in a membership revitalization at Department Headquarters, take part in the Veterans Day Parade in East Greenwich, RI, attend the Department Commander Testimonial Dinner held on November 12th and visit Post 2 in Warwick and a tour of Fort Adams. The membership revitalization was successful and several members were transferred into local posts. I was a guest speaker at the Veterans Day Parade as well as the Testimonial Dinner for Department Commander David A Williams. My visit to Post 2 resulted in some members eagerly showing their pride for all of the things they do for their community.
11/19/2016 – 11/20/2016

Attended The Department of Massachusetts testimonial dinner honoring Department Commander Ken Starks in Marlborough, MA at the Best Western Royal Plaza Hotel where I was the keynote speaker. I also had the opportunity to do a meet and greet at the brand new Shane P Duffy American Legion Post 500 in Taunton, MA on November 20th. The parents of the deceased service member for whom the Post was named were there as well. Shane was killed by an IED in Tikrit Iraq in 2008 at the age of 22 years old. His parents were deeply humbled and proud to have the Post named after their son and I was proud to be there with them.
1/19/2017 – 1/21/2017
I attended a reception on January 20th hosted by the American Legion National staff to watch President Donald Trump’s Inauguration ceremony. That evening my wife and I attended the Salute to Heroes Veterans Inaugural Ball honoring our Medal of Honor Recipients. Later that evening Vice President Mike Pence saluted the Medal of Honor Recipients for their heroism. Speaker of the House Paul Ryan also addressed the audience and thanked the American Legion for hosting the dinner and promised to address the American Legion’s legislative priorities of fixing the VA Health Care System.
1/24/2017 – 1/29/2017
I attended and participated in a District 2 revitalization hosted by John H Collins American Legion Post 24 located in Derby, CT. There were 20 volunteers on hand to make this a successful event. Department Commander Lou Robinson, Department Adjutant Butch Hansen and National Headquarters Assistant Membership Director Sean Sparks were on hand to assist. Members of the community were send postcards as part of the American Legion awareness campaign to transfer members of the Department Headquarters Post into the local community posts. Ninety-two members were transferred into local Posts in District 2. An American Legion Service Officer was on hand to help veterans in need of help with VA claims. He assisted one veteran over the two day period of the revitalization.
I was invited to attend the Department of Connecticut annual Mid-Winter Conference located in Trumbull, CT but was not able to attend due to feeling ill.
02/9/2017 – 02/13/2017
I attended the Department of Delaware Sussex District membership revitalization held at the William T Spooner Post 17 located in Lewes, Delaware. There were 15 volunteers at the event. Out of 209 active members of the headquarters post combined with DMS members, a total of 42 members were transferred to local posts plus 2 inactive members that renewed into the event host Post 17.

On February 13th I attended the Change of Command Ceremony at the Delaware National Guard where Major General Carol Timmons was promoted to Brigadier General and assumed Command of the Delaware National Guard. I attended with The Department of Delaware American Legion Commander Jeff Crouser and National Executive Committee John Endres.

2/25/2017 – 3/1/2017
I attended and participated in several meetings at the American Legion Annual Washington DC Legislative Conference held at the Washington Hilton. I attended a meeting that was held by National Commander Charles E. Schmidt on Saturday evening February 25th in his hotel suite to discuss membership to date. Attendees included National Headquarters Membership Director Billy Johnson, National Membership Chairman, National Membership and Post Activities Chairman, Randy Moss (GA) and the four other National Vice Commanders.

A membership meeting was held by National Commander Charles E Schmidt on February 26th at 12:00 PM with attendees of the Washington Conference regarding our membership goals. I hosted a breakout session immediately after the session with the Department Commander’s and Membership Chairpersons for all Departments within my Region. Each Department was asked to present their plans for achieving the agreed to goals for their respective departments.

On Monday, February 27th, I attended the annual Army Navy Air Force Veterans in Canada and US (ANAVICUS) breakfast at the Washington Hilton. I also attended the meeting of The National Security Commission.

On Tuesday, February 28th at 8:00 AM, I attended the “Commander’s Call” and “Know before you go” session until 11:15 AM. The session included discussions about our legislative agenda and prepared attendees for visits to their representatives on the hill later that day. I did accompany several Legionnaires from my membership state to representatives both in Congress and the Senate.

On Wednesday, March 1st, I attended the National Commander’s testimony on Capitol Hill at the Dirksen Senate Office Building. Commander Schmidt testified to the Joint session of the House and Senate Veterans Affairs Committees.

03/4/2017
This was the day of my Homecoming Testimonial Dinner hosted by The Department of NY at the Joseph E Zaloga Post 1520 in Albany NY. Departments represented were Delaware, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey and Vermont.

03/6/2017 – 03/7/2017
I attended Legislative Hill Day in Albany New York at the Desmond Hotel in Albany, NY. I attended a legislative breakfast held at the State Capitol Building followed by visits to representatives for the assembly and senate.

03/10/2017 – 03/11/2017
I attended a membership revitalization in the Department of New Jersey held at Frobisher American Legion Post 99 located in Kearny, NJ that is part of Hudson County. Three posts participated in the event out the seven posts in the county. There were about 10 volunteers at the event including the Department Commander, Roger Gengaro and National Headquarters Assistant Membership Director Sean Sparks. Twenty Two members were transferred to local Posts. I was also given a tour of a unique part of the Post called the Veterans Clothing Closet where veterans in need can come and pick out clothing and other necessities at no cost to them. This is administered by an SAL member from the Post squadron and the Catholic Charities in a joint venture.
03/24/2017

I attended a cocktail reception at the French Consulate in New York City to welcome the “Patrouille de France” (French Air Force Demonstration Team) to the United States. The team was in the United States to participate in the Kansas City World War One Centennial Commission event. France participated in America’s commemoration of the Centennial of the US entry into World War One. I was introduced to the French Pilots and other guests and thank the French Air Patrol for their participation on behalf of the American Legion.

04/1/2017 – 04/02/2017

I attended an American Legion Department of Pennsylvania Executive Committee meeting held at the Red Lion Inn located in Harrisburg, PA on April 1st. I also attended a Past Department of Pennsylvania Department Commander’s Club Meeting. I attended the Department Commander Carl Olshefskie’s Testimonial Dinner where I was the guest speaker for the event.

04/5/2017

I represented National Commander Charles E Schmidt in the Department of New York at a testimonial dinner in his honor held in Rome, NY that is located in the fifth district. I was given a tour of The Eastern Air Defense Command located on the grounds of the now closed Griffiss Air Force Base. I addressed the attendees of the testimonial dinner on behalf of the National Commander and accepted his gifts and donations to his projects.

04/6/2017

I represented National Commander Charles E Schmidt in the Department of New York at a testimonial dinner in his honor held in Saratoga Springs, New York that is part of the third and fourth districts. I was provided a private tour of the US Army Watervliet Arsenal and briefing by Arsenal Commander Col. Joseph Morrow. I addressed the attendees at the testimonial dinner on behalf of the National Commander and accepted gifts and donations to his projects.

04/7/2017

I attended the National Commander’s Testimonial Dinner for Charles E Schmidt in the Department of New York located at Antun’s Banquet Hall in Queen Village, NY as a guest. The dinner was hosted by the 1st, 2nd, 9th and 10th Districts in Downstate, NY.

04/29/2017

I attended the testimonial dinner for the Department Commander of Maine, Peter B. Johnson. I was the keynote speaker for the evening.

05/7/2017 – 05/12/2017

I attended the spring meetings for The American Legion held in Indianapolis, IN at the Sheraton City Centre Hotel. In the course of my days there I attended the National Executive Committee meeting and gave a report based on how my year was progressing and my thoughts on membership progress.

05/16/2017

I attended the United States Coast Guard Academy Individual Proficiency Awards Ceremony on May 16th in New London, CT. The American Legion Award was presented by me to Nikole Bareuther Barnes as Female Athlete of the year. She is ranked number one competitively in the ICSA Women Sailing Team. I joined Nikole and her family at lunch in the cadet dining hall.

05/17/2017 – 05/22/2017

I attended the 99th annual New Hampshire Department Convention located at the Indian Head Resort in Lincoln, NH. I was a guest speaker at the convention and attended a banquet at the convention where I was a guest at the Dias.

06/8/2017 – 06/11/2017

I attended the Department of Massachusetts 99th annual convention located in Plymouth, MA at the 1620 House hotel. I was a guest speaker at the convention and attended several banquets. I also attended a Department Executive Committee meeting.
06/13/2017 – 06/18/2017
I was invited to attend and participate in a training session, Department Convention and a briefing for the military in Honolulu, HI. Upon arriving I joined Michele Steinmetz who is the assistant membership director for the American Legion National Headquarters. Her and I taught classes to post membership on the first day consisting of basic membership, filling out forms, mylegion.org, the strategic membership 5 year plan and leadership training. We both attended the Department Convention and were guest speakers. The training classes were held at Department Headquarters in Honolulu and the Convention was held at the Pagoda Hotel and Resort also in Honolulu.

06/22/2017 – 06/24/2017
I attended the American Legion Department of Vermont’s annual Department Convention located at the Holiday Inn Rutland. I was the guest speaker at their convention. I attended a banquet on the last night of the convention agenda.

07/12/2017 – 07/14/2017
I attended the 99th Annual American Legion Department of Delaware’s Convention located at the Dover Downs Casino in Dover, DE. I was the guest speaker at the convention.

07/17/2017 – 07/22/2017
I attended The American Legion Department of New York’s 99th annual Department Convention located in the One Center Convention hall in Syracuse, New York. I was a guest speaker at the convention. I also addressed the Department of New York American Legion Auxiliary convention attendees and the Detachment of New York Sons of the American Legion Convention attendees.

Overall, my year as National Vice Commander has been rewarding. I am so proud of the countless volunteer hours contributed in our communities by Legionnaires to enhance the lives of those veterans in need, promoting programs for our youth and improving their chances of becoming effective leaders in the future, prioritizing our legislative agenda to provide for the needs of our active duty service members and veterans, participating in Americanism programs and our work in Washington as proponents of a strong National Defense.

REPORT OF THE NATIONAL CHAPLAIN
Harvey H. Klee, Texas

On September 1, 2016 at the Post National Executive Committee meeting following the 97th National Convention held in Cincinnati, Ohio. I was honored and blessed to be appointed National Chaplain of The American Legion for the year 2016-2017. My first official duties were to offer the invocation and benediction at the Post NEC meeting, while many of my Texas comrades stood in the wings giving me moral support.

I firmly believe if God didn't want me in this position, I wouldn't have been selected. I felt both honored and blessed by my appointment. My personal prayer was, with God's help, I perform the duties and responsibilities as National Chaplain to the very best of my ability, and not disappoint. My gratitude extends to the Department of Texas and its leadership for their endorsement and support as well as all those in the background who were instrumental in bringing my appointment about.

Having attended the National Department Chaplains Conference several times in the past (I have been appointed Texas Department Chaplain ten times), I found myself with the shoe on the other foot. I was called upon to preside over the Chaplains Conference scheduled for September 23-25, 2017 in conjunction with the 19th annual National Combined Americanism Conference.

Working with the National staff, I set the agenda, choose work shop themes, conducted and led discussion groups, held a short devotional at the Protestant religious service, and conducted a joint memorial service, I enjoyed re-acquainting myself with old friends and acquainting my self with new ones, I chose as my theme for the year, “In His service, serving others.” Thanks to an incredible staff, all went smoothly.
One of the highlights of the Chaplain's Conference was the visit and time spent by National Commander Charles E. Schmidt with the chaplains in attendance. Commander Schmidt is obviously a man of faith and very supportive of the work we do as Legion Chaplains. I am proud to serve with him.

Next on the year's itinerary was the Fall National Executive Committee meetings held in Indianapolis October, 2016. I was blessed with the opportunity to meet many of the National Executive Committee members and their Alternates, as well as the Department Commanders and their Adjutants from every Department. It gave me the opportunity to get to know my new “congregation” so to speak. I also met many of the Commission members, attended and offered prayer at the Steivos Play Day and Dinner, listened to inspiring speakers and, in the process, learned a great deal concerning The American Legion that I hadn't realized before.

A joy for me then, and throughout my term in office, were the many prayers I offered. First, praying for guidance and the divine dialogue that ensued, putting the thoughts down on paper and, secondly, the hope that something within those words would touch the hearts of those who heard them and be personally meaningful. Let it be God's message, not mine.

One touching encounter for me was when an NEC member spoke to me about her sick husband suffering from a non-diagnosed ailment and, as one might expect, an unknown prognosis. We prayed together right in the NEC meeting room as members were coming in. This impromptu prayer meeting was to be experienced throughout my term in office. It just goes to show, any time, any place, any circumstance, you are always in His presence. To Him be the glory.

Shortly thereafter I started sending in monthly articles to be posted on the Legion's web site under the heading, “The National Chaplain's Message.”. Hopefully this will become a standard practice by all future National Chaplains. I learned a lot about the subject matter in the process and, at the same time, hoped it helped fulfill my duties to render spiritual guidance to the membership.

No formal call-in activity was planned for me the rest of the year. However, I remained active in other ways. I presented a Veterans Day speech at an event hosted by the city of Granite Shoals, Texas and later gave speeches and made presentations on Memorial Day, Flag Day, and other veteran related holidays throughout the year within my home state.

I concurrently serve as the Texas Department Chaplain. As such, I conducted a Chaplains Workshop in Austin, Texas, served as President of the Texas Chaplains Association, an association I founded several years ago with a current membership of 225. I serve in an Honor Guard as its Chaplain wherein I participated in rendering 42 formal military honors this past year. Since the Guard's inception, I've participated in 470 military funeral and memorial services.

Throughout the year, I was active in many church activities, both locally and conference-wide, bringing the Sunday message, attending to administrative matters and serving as Associate Chancellor of the Rio Texas UMC Conference.

Attending the Washington D.C. Conference from February 26 to March 1 was an adventure. I was honored to give the opening prayer at the Commander's Call and the opening prayer at the VA & R Committee meeting, attended the Foreign Relations Committee Reception at the Department of State, installed into ANAVICUS, offered the opening prayer at a session of the House of Representatives and spent 2 ½ hours with my Congressman, Mike Conaway, encouraging his endorsement of certain veteran-related Bills pending before Congress as well as The American Legion Centennial Coin.

One of the many highlights for me was the presentation by National Commander Schmidt and other high level Legion representatives on veterans matters before a Joint Subcommittee on Veteran Affairs. Most impressive was Commander Schmidt calling upon me to say a prayer for the small group of Legionnaires who would be giving testimony that day. This was unexpected and I rejoiced in it. As scripture tell us, “Without Him (God) we
can do nothing!” As for “the rest of the story,” the Congressional Conference was very well received and in all practical ways, a great success! During the year.

The Spring NEC meeting from May 9 to May 11 was similar to the Fall NEC meeting – only fewer days were involved. I got to meet more people, whom I didn't get a chance to meet before and some to whom I had written letters following their recent surgery, illness or accident.

I wrote personal letters to all those with health or medical problems or to the families of deceased members of whom I was aware. In a strange way, I felt I had known them all – and in a sense, I did.

July 22-24, 2017 I attended Boys Nation. Having served as Texas Boys State Chaplain it was an absolute thrill to attend Boys Nation. Sunday I presented a memorial service entitled, “On Behalf of a Grateful Nation...” Later I was told the flag folding narration incorporated in my presentation will be a part of future Boys Nation programs. A trip to the Washington Mall was scheduled following Legion Night that was held at the Greenbelt Legion Post 136 Home with National Commander Schmidt as the guest speaker. I offered the invocation.

The next morning, together with the National Commander and two boys chosen from Boys Nation, I participated in placing a wreath before the Tomb of the Unknowns in a very moving military ceremony. A visit to the Iwo Jima Memorial preceded the wreath presentation where I had a chance to explain to some of the Boys Nation Senators the WW II history of the Battle for Iwo Jima.

Spending just those few days with the Boys Nation Senators and Staff was priceless and inspiring to continue in my chaplaincy with renewed dedication and purpose.

REPORT OF THE NATIONAL HISTORIAN
Paul D. Bennett, Missouri

It has been a great honor and distinction to serve National Commander Charles E. Schmidt as his national historian, during the 2016-2017 American Legion year. It also was a fun time to travel with him during his visit to the Department of Missouri, and join him at his “Hometown Reunion Party.” Serving him there and during his visit not only as national historian, but also as the Department of Missouri historian and photographing his many stops.

After receiving much requested and needed advice and assistance from The American Legion Library and Museum Director Howard Trace and Ms. Lynda Lydick, the national historian’s point of contact for assistance, I felt ready to oversee the Annual National History Book Contest. However, before the judging was conducted we discussed and changed the judging procedures and tabulating process, which was considered a tremendous success. The tabulating process now considers all judges scores. Also successful was the addition of the newly trained department historians sitting sidesaddle with the judges to be exposed first hand to the judging process.

This year’s winners by category are listed herewith:
One-Year Department Narrative History: Department of North Carolina
One-Year Department Yearbook History: Department of Nebraska
One-Year Post Narrative History: Pony Express Post 359, St Joseph, Missouri
One-Year Post Yearbook History: Julius L. Shryer Post 430 Durant, Iowa.

There are a number of personnel that need to be thanked before I go any farther. Legiionnaires Lynne Rollins and Mary Smith of Georgia and Ms. Nellie DeBaker of Wisconsin for their fine training of the new department historians; to Past National Historians Frazier Brinley and Larry Rozier for handling the adjusted tabulating duties. Throughout the contest, a big thanks to Library and Museum Director Howard Trace and Ms. Lynda Lydick for their awesome assistance. A much discussed problem with getting requested comments/suggestions back to the post/department historians was corrected with the exceptional help of Ms. Lydick in her devising a computer program that made a serious
problem into a simple solution. Now, the historian will receive the comments on their contest entry by those judges involved immediately with the return of their books.

As is the normal practice, I communicated with all department historians concerning the attention to detail and the guidance available in the national “Officer's Guide.” Additionally, I maintained communications with the department and past national historians throughout the year, reminding them of the importance of maintaining post and department histories. Also reminding all of the upcoming 100th Commemorative Anniversary and the importance of enrolling all their posts at the Legion's website, http://centennial.legion.org. Another subject of importance has drawn our attention to possibly creating a computerized version of the history books. With the advancement in information technology, this is a subject that demands our attention now. There will be much discussion on this subject in the coming days.

During the year it was my honor to attend national’s Spring and Fall Meetings, reporting to the National Executive Committee, and additionally attending the Washington Conference and participating in the national commander’s testimony before Congress.

As the National Convention in Reno, Nevada arrives upon us, I find myself devoting time to the National Historian's Luncheon, while still answering questions as they pertain to history and or NADHAL (National Association of Department Historians of The American Legion). I thank NADHAL President Jennifer Salak for her assistance this past year.

REPORT OF THE NATIONAL JUDGE AVOCATE
P . B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

Contracts

The following one hundred and fourteen (114) contracts have been reviewed or prepared:

(1) A Memorandum of Agreement by and between The American Legion and National Veterans Legal Services Program, whereby National Veterans Legal Services will provide consultations, informal training of Department Service Officers, BVA staff and claims/representatives, case work review, briefings on proposed changes in law and regulations and assistance in methods for prompt adjudication of veterans’ appeal cases.

(2) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Enterprise Holdings (EAN Services, LLC), to cover vehicle rentals to Legion employees.

(3) A Service agreement by and between The American Legion and Communications Products, Inc. (CPI), for a maintenance agreement for one year for our phone systems.

(4) An Agreement by and between The American Legion (Emblem Sales) and Wilson Sporting Goods. This agreement replaces the previous agreement for customized baseballs and baseball uniforms bearing The American Legion emblem.

(5) A Service Agreement by and between The American Legion and Fuller Engineering Service Corporation, whereby Fuller Engineering will provide maintenance on the Liebert Equipment in the computer room.

(6) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Dell Marketing L.P., whereby The American Legion will market the Dell Federal Member Computer Discount Purchase Program to its various associations, employees, members and affiliates.

(7) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and KBM (KnowledgeBase Marketing-Mutual of Omaha) for marketing of insurance products for Legion members.

(8) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Norlight Telecommunications, Inc., whereby Norlight Telecommunications, Inc. will provide a dedicated internet port and service of same for The American Legion’s computer system.

(9) Housing contract between The American Legion and Marymount University to provide for lodging and food service for American Legion Boys Nation held in July 2017.

(10) A Memorandum of Understanding by and between The American Legion and The United States Army Recruiting Command (USAREC), whereby The American Legion
will assist the United States Army Recruiting Command to improve the recruiting environment for Army recruiters and USAREC will provide information regarding American Legion activities and special community events to local units, bulletins and newsletters.

(11) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and the James G. Elliott Co., Inc. for integration into the JGECO M-PANEL Services software.

(12) A contract by and between The American Legion and the Moore Group (Edge Direct, LLC) for direct marketing and direct response fundraising.

(13) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Samsung Electronics America, Inc. to establish a Samsung American Legion Alumni Association.

(14) Maintenance Agreement by and between The American Legion and Comtech Group for the IBM Software subscription for the AS400 and RS6000 computer software.

(15) A Memorandum of Understanding by and between The American Legion and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation for web-based information portals on TAL website.

(16) A Contract by and between The American Legion and Defense Mobile Corporation which offers wireless and mobile application products and services to its members, specifically designed and solely offered to veterans and military service members and their families.

(17) Maintenance and Sales Agreement by and between The American Legion and US Automatic Fire and Security for fire protection for the Geiger facility.

(18) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Dydacomp Development Corporation for an updated version of mail order manager software used by Emblem Sales.

(19) Annual Maintenance agreement by and between The American Legion and Eaton Power Quality Corporation to provide maintenance and perform preventative maintenance checks on the Uninterruptible Power System (UPS) which regulates the power spikes to the AS400 and is the battery backup in case of a power outage.

(20) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Caremark Pharmacy Discount Prescription for discount prescription program.

(21) A Purchase Agreement by and between The American Legion and Managing Editor, Inc. (MEI) for K4 Publishing System software to be used by the Magazine Division.

(22) A Service Agreement by and between The American Legion and Koorsen Fire & Security for fire alarm and detection systems.

(23) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Pitney Bowes Software, Inc. for software products.

(24) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Lindenmeyr Central for the purchase of paper for national headquarters.

(25) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Time Warner telephone and data lines services which includes firewall management, internet “pipe,” main voice lines, data line to DC office and data line to the Geiger facility.

(26) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Holiday Inn Express for 2017 World Series staff and team housing.

(27) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and USA Shooting for use of their range and meal tickets for participants of the 2017 Junior Air Rifle National Championship.

(28) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Honeywell Building Solutions for integrator and/or digital video manager software products.

(29) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and USAA to provide financial products and services to members of the U.S. military and their families.

(30) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and White & Company to produce two publications for the Legion.

(31) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Hedges & Associates for proposed grant-related services for TAL.
(32) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Sheraton Indianapolis City Centre Catering for catering the 500 Festival Lanai Deck event.
(33) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and HearPO Corp. to provide discounted hearing care products and or services to Legion members.
(34) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Mid-America Elevator Co., Inc. for maintenance of the elevators at 700 N. Pennsylvania Street building.
(35) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Diamond Sports Co., Inc. for academic scholarships to American Legion baseball players.
(36) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and JT Packard for maintenance and break fix for the uninterrupted power supply that handles the servers in the computer room at national.
(37) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Xerox for CF 495 Printer and maintenance services and deliverables of their products.
(38) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and AT&T for mobile device and service plan discounts.
(39) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Manpower for a temporary employee.
(40) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Motel 6 LLC, to promote a member discount program on the Legion website.
(41) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Military Advantage, Inc. (Military.com) for exchanging editorial content for mutual postings on respective websites.
(42) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and DoubleTree by Hilton for meeting rooms and housing during the American Legion Baseball 2017 Northeast Regional Tournament.
(43) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and AnswerNet for call center services.
(44) A Rental Agreement by and between The American Legion and Reliable Water Services for the rental of a water heater for the national headquarters building.
(45) A Licensing Agreement by and between The American Legion and Vermont Teddy Bear for use of the name and emblem as a national corporate sponsor.
(46) A Member Agreement by and between The American Legion and Gigya, Inc. for website software.
(47-48) Agreements by and between The American Legion and the following American Legion posts for the 2017-2018 American Legion Baseball Regional Tournament Agreement: Randolph County Post 45, Asheboro, NC and Leesburg Post 34, Leesburg, VA.
(49) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Colorado American Legion Baseball Commission for the 2017-2018 American Legion Baseball Regional Tournament.
(50) Assignment of Agreement by and between The American Legion and LSC Communications US, LLC for printing and distributing the American Legion Magazine.
(51) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and GfK US, LLC, for software used by the Magazine.
(52) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and North American Van Lines, Inc. providing household moving services to American Legion members.
(53) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and LifeStation, a medical alert service for American Legion members.
(54) A Letter of Agreement by and between The American Legion and Red Bull Media House to screen the film Blood Road at the 2017 national convention.
(55) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and VTV Production LLC to use American Legion licensed material in a production entitled King Of The Road 2.
(56) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Labor Works for temporary help to assist with set-up, tear-down and operations of the Emblem Sales store at the 2017 national convention.


(58) A Lease Agreement by and between The American Legion and Ricoh for copying/printing equipment.

(59) An Amendment #1 to the Agreement by and between The American Legion and Wyndham Indianapolis West, housing for the Oratorical National Finals. The original agreement was for the years 2018-2022. The amendment is for one year from July 1, 2017 to July 1, 2018.

(60) An Amendment to the Agreement by and between The American Legion and Founding Fathers Products, LLC, to terminate the agreement on June 30, 2017.

(61) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Holiday Inn & Suites-Grand Junction Airport for housing for the 2017 Legacy Run.

(62) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and International Cruise & Excursion Gallery, Inc. as a member discount provider.

(63) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Veterans Campaign whereby The American Legion DC office will provide office facilities to support various veteran based activities.

(64) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Amplifon Hearing Health Care, Corp. for discounted hearing aids for American Legion members.

(65) A Maintenance Agreement by and between The American Legion and Opex to upgrade the letter-opener equipment at the Geiger facility.

(66) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Civilian Marksmanship Program for staff and set-up and maintenance for a portable electronic target scoring system for the American Legion Junior Air Rifle National Championships.

(67) A Contract by and between The American Legion and Hilton, DC, for an American Legion Samsung Scholarship event.

(68) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and American Airlines, Inc. for permission to use the emblems of The American Legion in connection with the Veterans Inaugural Ball.

(69) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Callaway Transportation, Inc. to provide transportation at the 2017 national convention.

(70) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and SportsEngine, Inc. for creating and managing websites and mobile sites for the baseball program.

(71) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Directorpoint LLC, for software used by the Finance Division.

(72) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Brinks Armored Transportation Services for armored transportation services for use by the Finance Division at the 2017 national convention.

(73) A Memorandum of Understanding by and between The American Legion and Bergman & Moore, LLC, to provide training and materials for American Legion advocates at the Department Service Officer and Board Unit levels.

(74) An Agreement by and between The American Legion and A.D. Starr for baseball licensing.

Forty (40) Subcontractor Standard List Protection Agreements by and between The American Legion and the following companies have been executed to cover the protection of magnetic tapes used for mass mailings to the general membership of The American Legion:

- Aberdeen American News
- AGIA Insurance Services
- Alliance for Audited Media
American Litho, Inc.
Amplifon
Auto Club Cellular
Axiom
Brickmill Marketing Services
CES Mail Communications, Inc.
Crell Direct Mail
Daily Freeman Journal
Data-Mail, Inc.
DMRA
Edge Direct
Fair Isaac Corporation
Fiserv Solutions, Inc.
Forum Communications Printing
Golden Rule Publishing
HearPO Corp
JH Marketing Services
Kramers Mailing Service
Leader Printing
LifeStation, Inc.
Mainstreet Media
Moore DM Group
Moore Wallace Response Marketing
Print Mail Pro
Response Solutions, LLC
River’s Edge Printing
Royle Printing Company
R.R. Donnelley & Sons Company
SeQuel Response, LLC
Signature Offset
Specialty Print Communications
The Heritage Company
TN Marketing
Torrington Telegram
TransAmerica Life Ins Co-Affinity Markets Group
US Press LLC
VP Database Systems and Services

Litigation

COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA COUNTY OF SCHUYLKILL

Daniel Jeffrey Steich
Plaintiff

v.

THE AMERICAN LEGION
POST NO. 575, ET AL

Defendants

The case was filed in Pennsylvania by filing a Praecipe for Summons. Under Pennsylvania law, a complaint need not be filed for several years unless the defendant insists. We see no reason to start spending the money. Accordingly, we are keeping an eye on the case. It cannot go forward until the plaintiff does file his complaint.
The court has sent notice it intends to terminate this case unless a party fills out a Statement of Intention to Proceed before October 1, 2008. Despite this, the case is still pending.

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**RECORD NO. 15-2597**

**UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS**
**FOR THE FOURTH CIRCUIT**

AMERICAN HUMANIST ASSOCIATION; STEVEN LOWE; FRED EDWARDS; BISHOP McNEILL,
Plaintiffs – Appellants,

v.
MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION,
Defendant – Appellee,

THE AMERICAN LEGION; THE AMERICAN LEGION DEPARTMENT OF MARYLAND; THE AMERICAN LEGION COLMAR MANOR POST 131
Intervenors/Defendants – Appellees

ON APPEAL FROM THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF MARYLAND AT GREENBELT

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**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT**
**FOR THE**
**DISTRICT OF MARYLAND**

American Humanist Association,

Steven Lowe, Fred Edwards,
and Bishop McNeill

*Plaintiffs*,

v.

Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission,

*Defendant*.

The American Humanist Association sued to compel destruction of the “Bladensburg Cross” which is on state land. It was erected on private property that was taken to enlarge a road intersection. It was erected by The American Legion in 1925 as a veteran’s memorial. One of the plaintiffs is “upset” to see it. National, the Department of Maryland and the Bladensburg post are amici and will file to protect the cross.

On September 18, 2014, the U.S. District Court for the District of Maryland, allowed The American Legion, the Department of Maryland and Colmar Manor Post No. 131 to be admitted as intervening defendants.

I was deposed March 4, 2015.

Our brief was filed to seek Summary Judgement. Summary Judgement was granted. The plaintiffs have appealed to the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals.
Our brief has been filed. The Appellants will have a chance to file a Reply Brief, then Arguments will be scheduled.

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CIRCUIT COURT
FOR THE TWENTIETH JUDICIAL DISTRICT, FLORIDA

DANIEL A. BERNATH, No.14-CA-001838
Plaintiff, Judge: Winesett

Vs.

TERENCE B. HOEY, individually,
DAN R. HYATT, individually,
THE AMERICAN LEGION, business
form unknown,
MARK C. SEAVEY, individually

Defendants.

A case filed by the Plaintiff, Daniel A. Bernath, in the Circuit Court of the Twentieth Judicial Circuit, Florida, on June 20, 2014. The case was voluntarily dismissed by the Plaintiff on October 2, 2014. This case alleged causes of action for slander, IIED and negligent infliction of emotional distress and now is over.

CIRCUIT COURT
FOR THE TWENTIETH JUDICIAL DISTRICT, FLORIDA

Daniel A. Bernath, ) Case No. 15 ca 003259 Judge: Krier
plaintiff, ) Appeal #2D16-3259
v. )
YouTube LLC, Mark Seavey, LLL, )
et al. )

A pending case filed by the Plaintiff, Daniel A. Bernath, in the Circuit Court of the Twentieth Judicial Circuit, Florida, on December 28, 2015. The case was involuntarily dismissed by the court with leave to amend, which the Plaintiff subsequently abused. A court hearing was held attended by some of the Defendants. Judge Krier issued an order that a Florida attorney currently licensed in that state must sign any further filings submitted by him. Bernath violated this order repeatedly and Judge Krier dismissed the case. Bernath then appealed to the Florida Second Court of Appeal, however the vast bulk of Bernath’s appeal motion deals with a default by the Shipley’s, a defendant not related to us. In fact, a cursory review doesn’t show any reference at all to The American Legion or Mark Seavey. We await the Court’s ruling on the appeal.

IN THE U.S. FEDERAL DISTRICT COURT
MIDDLE DISTRICT OF FLORIDA
FORT MYERS DIVISION

DANIEL BERNATH,
Plaintiff,

vs. CIVIL ACTION NO. 2:15-cv-358-FtM-99CM
MARK CAMERON SEAVEY
Defendant.

Plaintiff, Daniel A. Bernath sued Mark Seavey, an employee, in Florida alleging many false claims. The case was filed in the US District Ct, Middle District of Florida, on June 16, 2015.

After numerous filing of hundreds of documents by Bernath the federal Court granted Seavey’s Motion for Summary Judgment for Libel and Defamation Per Se, and denied Bernath’s claims of Intentional Infliction of Emotional Distress (IIED) and Copyright Infringement.

Additionally, The American Legion’s Verified Motion for Summary Judgment on Plaintiff’s Intentional Infliction of Emotional Distress and Copyright Infringement Claims, for Declaratory Judgment on Plaintiff’s Claims of Intentional Infliction of Emotional Distress and Copyright Infringement Claims, and for Copyright Infringement, Cybersquatting, and Violation of Federal Statutes Regarding Emblem and Name of American Legion, and Libel and Defamation Per Se were granted.

Documents were filed for damages, attorney fees and naming Bernath a “vexatious litigant.”

On August 8, 2017, the judge ruled he was a “vexatious litigant” and denied the fees and costs without prejudice.

IN THE U.S. FEDERAL DISTRICT COURT
MIDDLE DISTRICT OF FLORIDA
FORT MYERS DIVISION

Daniel A. Bernath )

Plaintiff(s) )

v. )

The American Legion, Don Shipley, Diane Shipley, ) Civil Action No.
Extreme Seal Experience LLC, Mark Cameron ) 2:16CV-596-FLM-99MEM
Seavey, Terrence B. Hoey, Scott Hughes, John )
Lilyea, Sparks )

Defendant(s) )

A case currently on appeal to the 11th Circuit, originally filed in United States District Court for the Middle District of Florida around August 1, 2016. The lower court dismissed the Plaintiff’s case with finality, but without prejudice. It was dismissed both on the basis of lack of diversity of jurisdiction as well as failure to state a claim. Bernath appealed and we responded. The written appeals have been submitted to the 11th Circuit where it is now titled as the 11th CofA Case No 16-17280.

CIRCUIT COURT
FOR THE TWENTIETH JUDICIAL DISTRICT, FLORIDA

Daniel A. Bernath, 17-ca-002126 Judge: Kyle, Keith R.
Plaintiff,

vs.

John D. Mason, Copyright Counselors,
the American Legion, Philip B. Onderdonk,
Mark Cameron Seavey, Terrence B. Hoey,
Defendants.

This Florida state case repeats all plaintiff’s prior charges. It has not been served as of yet. It has been reported to the insurance company. The attorneys from Barnes and Thornberg, LLC and your staff have devised a legal strategy upon receipt of service.

LYNN FLEMING
Plaintiff(s),

SUPERIOR COURT OF NEW JERSEY
LAW DIVISION, OCEAN COUNTY
DOCKET NO.: OCN-L-1705-15

vs.

THE AMERICAN LEGION;
AMERICAN LEGION POST 129
RICHARD MICHAEL GATTO;
JOHN DOES 1-5 (fictitious individuals)
and ABC CORPORATIONS 1-5
(fictitious corporations),

This case was filed in June 2015. Plaintiff claims she was sexually harassed by the post commander while a waitress at New Jersey Post No. 129 while she worked for the catering company hired by the post. She further claims a hostile work environment and retaliation along with negligence and vicarious liability.

We filed a motion to dismiss The American Legion because we do not control the post per our corporate charter. Plaintiff’s attorney has alleged our charter does not mean what it says. We have provided the legislative history to prove it does. The court has not ruled yet.

We have also filed a motion for sanctions because plaintiff’s lawyer keeps trying to insist on dropping the case “without prejudice.” The court has not yet ruled.

Antonio Silva and Kimberlie Silva, H/W
354 Beverly Drive
Cliffwood Beach, NJ 07735
Plaintiffs

v.

American Legion, District 15 Post 311 d/b/a
Wilson-Kelch Post 311
521 Church Street
Hawley, PA 18428
And

The American Legion
700 N. Pennsylvania St.
P.O. Box 1055
Indianapolis, IN 46206
And

Estate of Manuel Mirailh, Deceased
2056 Easton Turnpike

PHILADELPHIA COUNTY
COURT OF COMMON PLEAS
LAW DIVISION
AUGUST TERM, 2015
NO. 02441
Lake Ariel, PA 18436

Defendants

This is a dram shop case involving a car accident in Wayne County, Pennsylvania. The case was brought in Philadelphia because the plaintiffs’ belief the judges are more plaintiff prone and Philadelphia juries award larger judgments.

The plaintiffs have named as defendants “American Legion, District 15 Post 311” and The American Legion. They clearly do not understand the structure of The American Legion. We have filed a motion to send the case back to Wayne County and to correct a number of other defects in the complaint.

For example, the accident occurred a full 45 minutes after the defendant left the post on his 10-12-minute drive home. We do not know why the delay occurred.

The National Judge Advocate was deposed on venue and The American Legion’s Corporate Charter on January 28, 2016.

The American Legion is also filing for removal of the case to Wayne County, Pennsylvania. This was denied. We have asked the court to reconsider. Plaintiff has filed for new deadlines, which will probably not be final.

The American Legion will be filing for dismissal and/or summary judgement once the procedural defects are corrected. We are also filing for removal of the case to Wayne County, Pennsylvania. This was denied. We have asked the court to reconsider. Plaintiff has filed for new deadlines, which will probably not be final.

Plaintiffs did not sue the “Home Association” which holds the liquor license as is required under Pennsylvania Law. The court of common pleas in Philadelphia is so pro plaintiff we have to wait until discovery closes for any satisfaction.

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No. 16-2671
IN THE US COURT OF APPEALS
FOR THE FEDERAL CIRCUIT

RICHARD W. STAAB,
Claimant-Appellee,

v.

DAVID J. SHULKIN,
Secretary of Veterans Affairs
Respondent-Appellant,

Appeal from the United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims
Case No. 14-0957

We were asked by the National Veterans Legal Services Programs (NVLSP) if we would be an amicus in the Richard W. Staab v. David J. Shulkin case. Jones Day is appearing pro se as our counsel.

In this case, the Appellee, Richard W. Staab, had a heart attack and stroke and was treated at a non-Veterans Administration medical facility. Apparently, $48,000 was not covered by his Medicare Plan. The Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims ruled in his favor pursuant to 38 U.S.C. §1725. The Veterans Administration appealed despite the well-reasoned decision in the court below and legal precedent. Briefs have been filed. The case should be argued next fall.

The American Legion convinced the government to drop its appeal. The veterans won. The case is over.
Trademark Report and Use of
The American Legion Emblem by Political Candidates

As you know, The American Legion does not participate in political campaigns for office. This last election year we had a large number of candidates use the emblem to campaign. Every time we learned of one we sent a “Cease and Desist” letter which normally resolved the problem.

However, one candidate in San Francisco took the position he did not have to comply because Indianapolis was too far away. I referred the matter to Winston and Strawn in San Francisco who sent a two-sentence letter which told the candidate to follow the “Cease and Desist” letter. He promptly backed down. At the election, he lost.

In addition, trademarking the mark: “National Poppy Day” and the class year to the Legion College scroll is in progress.

Other Legal Matters

There are a number of other legal proceedings in which The American Legion has been contacted for discovery purposes, which are not part of or named in the particular cause and a number of cases are in the beginning stages but not yet filed.

The National Judge Advocate has rendered 362 written opinions on questions which have been submitted by the several Departments and/or Posts of The American Legion, National Officers, staff members and individual members of our organization. These opinions involved matters legal, such as contracts, probate matters, federal tax questions, torts, insurance matters, Articles of Incorporation, civil rights statutes, retirement benefits under the law and other matters of a legal nature; problems concerning the interpretation and construction of the National Constitution and By-Laws of The American Legion, policy matters, many of which matters required a great deal of legal research.

In each instance, when appropriate, a copy of the opinion rendered was furnished to each of the following so that they would be acquainted with the opinions affecting their Department; National Executive Committee, Department Commander, Department Adjutant, and the Department Judge Advocate of the Department involved.

Many oral opinions were also rendered to the National Officers, National Commission Chairmen, to Department Officers, and to staff Directors of the national organization upon subjects involving matters legal, financial, administrative and policy.

There were 8 written opinions rendered during the year to the National Secretary of the American Legion Auxiliary, in response to queries submitted to her for determination by me.

The National Judge Advocate has also rendered oral advice on matters legal and administrative to the National Officers of the American Legion Auxiliary on many occasions during the past year.

Media & Communications

The American Legion Magazine

The National Judge Advocate in accordance with established policy, has reviewed manuscripts of articles destined for future publication in The American Legion Magazine and the Dispatch, for the purpose of expunging statements or materials questionable in character, contained therein which might subject The American Legion to a suit in libel. To date 818 manuscripts have been reviewed and appropriate comments in connection therewith were transmitted, when necessary, to the Publisher or Editor of The American Legion Magazine. The National Judge Advocate also reviews videos posted on The American Legion website.

Starting in July, the National Judge Advocate and the Assistant National Judge Advocate have reviewed 252 articles and 30 videos for posting on the computer site under the title “Legiontown” and others and 67 identifications of veterans memorials.
The American Legion Retirement Plan for Employees of The National Headquarters and Subordinate Groups Thereof

In accordance with the requirements of law, The American Legion has filed all necessary returns, reports and allied documents for the calendar year 2016 with the Internal Revenue Service in connection with The American Legion Retirement Plan.

The American Legion Retirement Plan for Employees of the National Headquarters

The draft of the Plan approved at the May 2017 National Executive Committee Meeting has been completed and arrangements are being made for the distribution thereof, as required by law, as soon as execution is completed.

Employees' Salary Savings (401(K)) Plan

In accordance with the provisions of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (ERISA) The American Legion has filed all of the necessary Annual Return Reports and allied documents for the calendar year 2016 with the Internal Revenue Service in connection with the American Legion Employees’ Salary Savings 401(k) Plan. The office of the National Judge Advocate also reviewed the Summary Annual Report for the Employees’ Salary Savings Plan and arranged for the distribution thereof as required by law.

Parliamentary Duties

The National Judge Advocate attended the past National Convention of The American Legion and meetings of the National Executive Committee and has served both bodies in the capacity of National Parliamentarian.

Other Duties

The National Judge Advocate also functions as counsel on matters involving labor issues, real estate law, postal regulations, corporate organizations and insurance.

In addition, the National Judge Advocate functions as counsel for and a director of The Citizens Flag Alliance, Inc. and American Legion Charities. In these capacities, the National Judge Advocate has attended all board meetings.

Meetings of the National Retirement Committee and Salary Savings Committee

The National Judge Advocate is a member of The National Retirement Committee of National Headquarters and has attended all meetings.

He has also, in response to requests, drafted legal and other documents for the use of National Officers of the American Legion and Officers of the American Legion Auxiliary.

ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES
Jeffery O. Brown, Indiana, Executive Director

The executive director in Indianapolis has responsibility for overseeing all divisions at the Geiger Operations Center, located on the Northeast side of Indianapolis, and most of the divisions in the administration building located in downtown Indianapolis. Divisions and areas of operation reporting to the executive director in Indianapolis include: Americanism, Convention & Meetings, Emblem Sales, Facilities Management, Finance, Information Technology, Internal Affairs, Membership, Print Production, Youth Education, The American Legion Library, and the E.A. Blackmore Museum. The Human Resources, Marketing, and Media & Communications divisions report to the National Adjutant.
MAIL
June 1, 2016 through May 31, 2017
Incoming letters and parcels (distributed to Divisions for processing) ...........1,014,972
Incoming Parcels ........................................................................................................3,680
Outgoing Letters/Parcels (Exclusive of National Emblem Sales) .......................11,225,024

FREIGHT AND EXPRESS
June 1, 2016 through May 31, 2017
Out - Cartons ...........................................................................................................5,440
Out - Pounds ...........................................................................................................163,492
UPS – In .....................................................................................................................1,473
UPS – Out ............................................................................................................... 5,133

LIBRARY AND MUSEUM
Howard Trace, Director
The mission of The American Legion Library is to provide an information storage and retrieval system for The American Legion. Indexing of documents continues, and internal and external materials are added to the collection regularly.

The Digital Archive continues to grow at a rapid pace and includes more than 5,000 items. Usage of the Digital Archive has increased by 49 percent over the previous year. The most significant additions to the Digital Archive were the national meeting digests, reports to Congress, American Legion News Service, and National Legionnaire. Work continues on organizing the photo collection by subject. Duplication of the microfilm collection was undertaken to ensure there are backups of this material. Divisions are transferring more material for archival storage with forty-three cubic feet of material transferred this year.

Conservation work was done on the Volk bust of President Lincoln and an assessment was done on the uniform collection. A number of researchers made extensive visits to the Library. Areas of research involved post-WWII and post-Vietnam Legion activities, American Legion Baseball, and Legion legislative activities.

Books and Pamphlets cataloged ..................................................................................249
Museum Collection Items Added or Assessed ............................................................1,396
Items added to Digital Archive ..............................................................................1,486
Items Microfilmed .....................................................................................................7,631
Correspondence Written by National Historian ................................................. 485
Correspondence Written by Staff ........................................................................1,096
Prominent Legionnaire Questionnaires Sent ..................................................... 868
Prominent Legionnaire Questionnaires Received ................................................274

Significant Gifts to the National Headquarters Library

Donated by the National Association of Department Historians of The American Legion (NADHAL): The Allure of Battle by Cathal J. Nolan and The Battle for Veterans’ Healthcare by Suzanne Gordon

Donated by Dr. Robert Thune: Ignacy Jan Paderewski: Polish Pianist and Patriot; The Last Stand: Custer, Sitting Bull, and the Battle of the Little Bighorn; Kosciuszko and Pulaski

Donated by author Charles C. Scott: Account of a West Virginia Boy in the Korean War

Donated by author Joel Houglum: Remembering the World War II Sacrifice: Dad’s Letters
Significant Gifts to the National Headquarters Museum

Donated by Dr. Robert Thune: Book, *World War II Remembered*: MOH, Vietnam War (12 stamps); Service Cross Medals (12 stamps); stamp storage album; Doolittle Tokyo Raider Bronze coin with case; 1920 Rotogravure WWI General Pershing Paris Victory Parade; 1942 Into Battle stamps (sheet of 20); Abraham Lincoln stamp (sheet of 50); Korean War Veterans Memorial Stamp (sheet of 20); Alexander Hamilton stamp (sheet of 50); Gettysburg Address, 1948 (50 stamp sheet); Alexander Hamilton, 1957 (50 stamp sheet); Women Airforce Service Pilots medal with case; Tuskegee Airmen medal with case; Korean War Veterans Memorial, 2003 (20 stamp sheet); An American History Album: *The Story of the US Told Through Stamps* book; Boystown Centennial 2017 proof half dollar; Nisei Soldiers of WWII Commemorative Coin (3" bronze medal with case); Classics Forever stamp (set of 6 stamps); Army/Navy National Defense stamp (sheet of 100 stamps) (2¢ anti-aircraft gun); Newsprint page featuring 1921 National Convention in Kansas City, Missouri – rotogravure American Legion parade Pershing and allies commanders; Fort Moultrie, 3-coin set; Fort Moultrie, 5-ounce silver coin in box; General John J. Pershing stamp (sheet of 100); 2017 Hawaii Calendar; Gettysburg Stamp (sheet of 50); US Bicentennial: Herkimer at Oriskany stamp, sheet of 40; Dwight Eisenhower stamp, plate block of 8; 1970 Disabled American Veterans stamp, sheet of 50 and 1920 Rotogravure General Pershing Military WWI Horses; 1990 US Mint Prestige Proof Set – coins in box (Eisenhower Centennial); 1971 Eisenhower Proof Set – coin in box (Brown Ike); 1987 US Mint Prestige Proof Set – coins in box (Constitution Bicentennial)

Donated by Brian C. Foster: Biographical information about Harry L. Foster of California

Donated by Brett P. Reistad: *Le Grande Tourisme* magazine from 1927 American Legion Pilgrimage to France; Squadron of Honor movie poster; *The American Legion Weekly*, September 12, 1919; Article, “The American Legion, 1919-1947”; *American Legion Magazine*, May 1943; *Life Magazine*, American Legion Issue, September 8, 1927; *The Legionnaire*, 1938 (Department of Ohio); *The American Legion and Traffic Accident Problem*, 1935 pamphlet; American Legion calendar, 1948; Elmira Post No. 443 (New York) American Legion cap; Department of Virginia National Commander campaign DVD for Brett Reistad; Cartoon “Least We Forget”, May 1928; Binder containing American Legion patches; Photographs of Legion at Armistice Day ceremonies at Arlington, 1939; American Legion program cards, 1936 - “Not Just Hats Off to the Flag” and 1937 - “Over the Top”; American Legion Rehabilitation stamps, 1948 “Let’s Do the Job Together”; Arthur Poorman campaign brochure (Department of Illinois Commander); Postcards - 1950 Legion meeting postcard, 1930 and 6 scenes of The American Legion building postcards; *Songs of the Legion* songbook; Sheet music – 46 pieces

Donated by Robert L. Morrill: Convention badge-1919; Convention badge-2002; Department of New York History-1942.

Donated by Ron Abbe: Department of Mexico historical material.


Donated by Annabelle Kelly: Two publications: *American Legion, The Veteran’s Pal* and *What Does It Mean To Say, I Am An American Legionnaire*.

Donated by Donald J. Ross: Two steel dies – Founders medal.


Donated by Tierian Cash: Digital objects (577)

Donated by D. B. Watkins: “Hope for America” painting by D. B. Watkins

Donated by Joel Houglum: 150 feet of film taken by Edgar J. Houglum of Twin Valley, Minnesota at the 1959 American Legion National Convention parade in Minneapolis
The Americanism Commission of The American Legion was created by a recommendation adopted by the National Convention of The American Legion held in Minneapolis, Minnesota in 1919. It read: “We recommend the establishment of a National Americanism Commission of The American Legion whose duty it shall be to endeavor to realize in the United States the basic ideal of this Legion of 100 percent Americanism through the planning, establishment and conduct of a continuous, constructive educational system.”

It is the objective of the Americanism Commission to translate Americanism precepts, principles and ideals in a clear and practical manner to Legion posts and other groups and individuals, including young Americans.

While the Americanism program consists of a broad, objective, general plan that features wide-range community service, and sound citizenship and youth development, the efforts of the Americanism Commission are educational in nature and embrace these specific objectives:

- Promote understanding of the principles of democratic governmental problems, and bringing more citizens to think seriously of the duties of citizenship;
- Give sound, practical service in our communities, working to make these communities better and safer places in which to live;
- Emphasize religion, encouraging its continuation in the life of every citizen;
- Encourage education in every possible manner, presenting school awards and scholarships, sponsoring and conducting oratorical contests, cooperating with education and citizenship groups, promoting proper flag etiquette and display, and sponsoring objective youth development programs;
- Do important work for the youth of America, sponsoring American Legion Baseball, American Legion High School Oratorical Contest, American Legion Boys State, American Legion Boys Nation, American Legion Junior Shooting Sports Program, American Legion Youth Cadet Law Enforcement, Boy Scouts of America activities, and many other citizenship and objective training activities;
- Work for the assimilation of immigrants through schools of citizenship and other agencies and stand for the regulation of immigration so that this assimilation may approach perfection.

Additionally, the Americanism Commission has continued to be actively involved in legislative matters affecting our way of life. Among our legislative priorities are voluntary prayer in public buildings, bilingual education alternatives and establishing English as the official language of the United States. Two current legislative initiatives of The American Legion are: (1) the continuing efforts to effect a constitutional amendment that would give Congress the authority to enact flag protection laws, and (2) coordinating a nationwide effort to combat the secular cleansing of our American heritage through Establishment Clause lawsuits.

This commission has the responsibility for supervision and coordination of four standing committees: Baseball Committee, Committee on Children & Youth, Committee on Youth Education and Youth Cadet Law Enforcement Committee.
The following is a summary of several programs, which are the responsibility of the Americanism Commission and have been conducted during the 2016-2017 American Legion program year.

**American Legion Boys State/Boys Nation**

The American Legion believes that if the United States is to maintain its form of government, it must have a citizenry that has a fundamental understanding and interest in its operation. This is what The American Legion Boys State program does for the young men of our nation. It teaches the fundamentals of American government through the state level.

It was 82 years ago that Legionnaires in the state of Illinois first recognized the need for a program that would help high school boys understand and appreciate the government they were learning about in the classroom. It was a time in the history of this nation when un-American ideas seriously threatened its future. Established in 1935, the whole idea of American Legion Boys State, then and now, is to show young people that beyond a doubt, our form of government is good; however, its preservation depends upon intelligent, informed and loyal citizens, in combination with an honest and impartial administration of government activities.

Ten years after the inception of Boys State as a program of The American Legion, the National Organization recognized the need for a similar program at the national level and in 1946, established American Legion Boys Nation. This year, it celebrated its 71st anniversary session.

Both Boys State and Boys Nation are unique programs of The American Legion that emphasize participation and personal experience in a respective model “state” and “nation” that is complete with its governing bodies and elected officials.

Each year, nearly 20,000 young Americans take part in American Legion Boys State, and throughout it’s over 80-year history, the program has graduated well over 1,900,000 young men.

Every year, each Boys State selects two outstanding graduates to represent them at American Legion Boys Nation. In 2017, the program was, again, held in Washington, D.C., July 21-29, and it introduced delegates to the structure and function of the federal government first-hand.

The week of government training in the nation’s capital combines lectures and forums with visitations to federal agencies and institutions, shrines and historical points in and about Washington, D.C. Actual participation in the political process is highlighted through the week to include the organization of party conventions and the nomination and election of an American Legion Boys Nation president and vice president. In addition to federal legislators and representatives of federal agencies, American Legion officials and other leaders of national distinction participate in American Legion Boys Nation. Darius Thomas from Alabama was elected President and Jayson Blackburn from Tennessee was elected Vice President of the 2017 session of American Legion Boys Nation.

**Boy Scouts of America**

The American Legion charters more than 2,400 Scout units in communities across the country involving over 61,000 young people. Its commitment to the principles of Scouting dates back to the Legion's first National Convention in 1919.

The American Legion continues to support the Boy Scouts of America because of its unique ability to provide opportunities to young people for leadership training, peer fellowship, life skills development and community service.

The American Legion selected Scott Moore, Jr. from Clarksville, Tennessee, as its 2017 Eagle Scout of the Year. Selection was based on his outstanding religious, school, community and scouting achievements. He will receive a $10,000 scholarship from The American Legion.
The three runners-up are Mitchell Woods of Hampton, Virginia; Jonathan Huntley of Westfield, Massachusetts; and Koen Weaver of Mount Morris, New York. Each will receive a $2,500 scholarship.

In addition, an estimated 8,000 certificates honoring new Eagle Scout recipients are distributed annually.

Since its inception in 2003, over 624 American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary and Sons of The American Legion members have received the Scouting “Square Knot” award to recognize their dedication and work to assist in furthering the Scouting programs of The American Legion.

Citizenship and Naturalization

Citizenship & Naturalization efforts of Americanism include: (1) promoting grassroots involvement at the post level in understanding, appreciating and actively participating in the rights and responsibilities of American citizenship and American government; (2) developing new ideas and initiatives aimed at promoting grassroots involvement at the post level in assimilating prospective citizens/legal immigrants into local communities and American society; and (3) monitoring and maintaining a portfolio of resolutions specific to the rights and responsibilities of American citizenship and the assimilation and naturalization of prospective citizens/legal immigrants.

The Americanism Commission strongly urges Legion posts, districts and undertake activities and collaborate with the U.S. Office of Citizenship and Immigration Services to help newly arriving legal immigrants and legal residents become assimilated and seek citizenship. To assist with this effort, The American Legion has produced a booklet entitled Citizenship Outreach Guide that is available online at www legion.org/publications.

Flag Education

The American Legion is a nationally recognized authority on the proper display of the United States Flag. Each year, thousands of letters, phone calls and electronic mail messages are routinely answered giving factual information on the display, use of and respect for the American Flag.

The American Legion continues distribution and sale of For Which It Stands, a multimedia instructional resource about the history of the flag of the United States, the significance and meaning of our flag and respecting and caring for our flag. It is intended primarily for use with students in the upper elementary and middle/junior high school grades.

Additionally, over 65,000 copies of the publication Let’s Be Right on Flag Etiquette and more than 100,000 copies of the pamphlet, Flag of the United States — How to Display It, How to Respect It are distributed annually to schools, organizations and individuals. This information is sent at little or no cost to all who request it.

The American Legion continues publication of Our Country’s Flag, an educational comic book for use in elementary schools. Well over one million copies have been distributed since the booklet was introduced in 1988. The educational booklet, I Pledge Allegiance, published in May 1995, is also for use in elementary schools. Our Country’s Veterans was added to The American Legion’s list of educational publications in 2005.

Almost 47,889 subscribe to The American Legion Flag Alert, which provides an e-mail notification when the flag of the United States is to be displayed throughout the entire country at half-staff.

The American Legion continues its campaign to protect the United States flag from physical desecration. All 50 state legislatures have passed memorializing resolutions in support of a constitutional amendment to give Congress the authority to enact flag protection laws. Working with other organizations of the American Legion-founded Citizens Flag Alliance, The American Legion shepherded a flag protection Constitutional amendment through the House of Representatives six times in the past seven Congresses. In June of 2006, The American Legion spearheaded the drive for the amendment in the
U.S. Senate, coming within one vote of passage there. The legislation was introduced, again, in the 115th Congress.

**High School Oratorical Contest**

The American Legion has awarded over three million dollars in college scholarships since 1938 to high school students participating in its annual High School Oratorical Contest.

Each contestant must give a prepared oration on some phase of the United States Constitution, giving emphasis on the duties and obligations of a citizen to our government. The prepared oration must be the original effort of each contestant, taking not less than eight nor more than ten minutes for delivery. Each contestant must also give an assigned topic presentation on a constitutional topic (randomly selected during the contest from the four topics for the contest year) taking not less than three or more than five minutes for delivery.

Funds totaling $138,000 in college scholarships are available to national level contestants from each department, with the top winner receiving an $18,000 scholarship. Funds for these awards are provided by The American Legion. In addition to the scholarships awarded by the National Organization, there are scholarships awarded by intermediate organizations of The American Legion to participants in local levels of competition.

The 80th Annual National Oratorical Finals Contest was held at Indianapolis, Indiana, in April 2017 with 53 department finalists competing. The three finalists were: First place – Andrew Steinberg, Massachusetts, representing Post 440; second place – Robyn Anzulis, Maryland, representing Post 191; third place – Chad Durante, West Virginia, representing Post 3.

The American Legion continues to enjoy a mutually-beneficial relationship with the National Speech and Debate Association (NSDA). The American Legion exhibited during the NSDA National Tournament in Birmingham, Alabama, in June 2017. Nearly 200 elite speech and debate students and coaches provided contact information to The American Legion seeking information on the 2017-2018 Oratorical Contest. In addition, American Legion Oratorical program staff also served as a judge in the Original Oratory category at the National Contest Finals in Birmingham, Alabama.

**Junior Shooting Sports Program**

The American Legion Junior Shooting Sports Program is a national Americanism program administered through post-sponsored Junior Shooting Clubs. The purpose of the program is to provide rifle safety and marksmanship training for young people and to offer a wholesome recreational activity through organized competition. The Junior Shooting Sports Program has more than 1,400 active clubs with almost 15,000 young people participating annually.

The 27th Annual Junior Three Position Air Rifle National Championship was conducted July 18 – July 23, 2017, at the USA Shooting range facility on the campus of the U.S. Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs, Colorado. The tournament climaxed two rounds of postal matches which began in November and involved over 1,300 entrants.

The competition was divided into two categories: precision three position air rifle and sporter three position air rifle. Medals and plaques were awarded in both categories, as well as in each of the prone, kneeling and standing positions.

The 2017 winners were Emily Stith of Colorado Springs, Colorado (precision) and Hailey Smith of Winthrop Harbor, Illinois (sporter). Each received scholarships totaling $5,000 from The American Legion and the Sons of The American Legion.
Service to God and Country

A program of fundamental Americanism, “Service to God and Country,” seeks to prevent the spiritual decay of America by charging the electorate with a spirit of unquestionable Americanism, respect for law, reverence for authority and awareness of our human rights and freedoms.

“Service to God” emphasizes regular public worship, daily family prayer and the religious education of children, while “Service to Country” attempts to inculcate a sense of individual obligation to the community, state and nation. These objectives are aimed at preparing young Americans to take up tomorrow’s responsibilities by teaching them moral and spiritual values, renewed interest in our Country’s history, self-discipline, self-reliance, ideals of loyalty and honesty.

Each year, a conference for the department chaplains of The American Legion is held under the direction of its National Chaplain. Program information is provided for further dissemination to district and post chaplains who coordinate the program at the local level.

Troop and Family Support

The American Legion Operation Comfort Warriors (OCW) program is there to support all wounded, injured, and ill service members and their families during times of recovery and transition and any other time of need. The program fills in the voids of comfort and recreational items that do not show up as a line item on any military or hospital budget spreadsheet. While the care in our military hospitals and transitional units is second to none, the little things can make a big difference. OCW provides things such as loose fitting clothing to ease the pressure on a wound or pool tables and electronic dart boards to offer some distractions and camaraderie building.

Much of the equipment donated is to empower our service members to engage in positive activities that will enhance and expedite their recovery and return to their original duty stations or to transition home better prepared. Some of the equipment donated recently has been, fishing gear, paddle boards, baseball and softball equipment, weights and resistance bands, as well as art supplies and pottery equipment. OCW has also help establish life skills classes at several different VA facilities to aid homeless veterans. Our goal is to support them in any manner we can in their process and to increase their likelihood of better outcomes.

Operation Comfort Warriors staff have provided support to service members and or the Department of Defense medical facilities at; Brooke Army Navy Medical Hospital (TX), Bethesda Naval Hospital (MD) and the Landstuhl Regional Medical Center (Germany). Additional support has been provided at multiple Veterans Affairs Medical Centers across the nation with New York city, San Diego, California, Anchorage, Alaska, Minneapolis, Minnesota, Albuquerque, New Mexico and Washington D.C. highlighting several of the locations. This year, we also included an OCW grant to The Armed Forces Retirement Home in Washington D.C. as well with plans to do another grant to its sister site in Alabama. This is not an all-inclusive list, rather a sampling to demonstrate the outreach efforts of the program.

Family is an enormous part of the process for our wounded, injured, and ill service members. OCW provides outings to amusement parks such as Six Flags Fiesta Texas where the service member is encouraged to bring their spouse and children or significant other to the outing and enjoy the day away from the hospital and recharge themselves with some fresh air and fun activities. OCW also hosts quarterly dinners in Washington DC in which we bring approximately 25 patients and their families out to a steak dinner typically held at the National Press Club. Along with the steak dinner we have door prizes for the patients and their attending family members to show our appreciation for their service and sacrifices.

The most important detail about Operation Comfort Warriors is that 100% of all donations go to support the wounded, injured, and ill service members. All administrative, marketing, and travel expenses are paid for by The American Legion, not donations. We
purchase items and outings based upon information from the facility or unit; we do not simply show up with a bunch of random items. OCW staff completes extensive outreach efforts with the facilities and installations to find how we can specifically help them in their missions and how we can support their particular programs. There are no one-size-fits-all solutions for our wounded, injured, and ill service members, there should not be a one-size-fits-all approach in our support of their service and sacrifices.

Family support network (FSN): Since September 11, 2001, the nation has been on high alert and National Guard and Reserve units have been activated in record numbers. As a result, the families of these men and women often find themselves unable to meet normal monthly household obligations. Assistance is needed for a variety of everyday tasks and expenses. These needs range from routine household chores, grocery shopping, and childcare, to ensuring that the grass is mowed for the expecting mother whose husband is serving abroad.

To actively address these issues, The American Legion created the Family Support Network. Military families can request assistance by calling a nationwide toll-free telephone number, 1-800-504-4098, for service personnel and their families to call for assistance. Families can also request assistance electronically through the Legion’s web site at www.legion.org/familsupport. All requests are referred to The American Legion department, or state, in which the call originated. Departments relay the collected information to a local American Legion post. The post then contacts the service member or family to see how assistance can be provided locally. Since the creation of the Family Support Network in 1990, thousands of posts have responded to meet these families’ needs.

As our forces pursue the enemies of freedom around the globe, The American Legion supports our men and women in uniform and their families with the Family Support Network. Those of us in The American Legion, who served our nation in times of adversity, remember how it felt to be separated from those we love. The Family Support Network is successful as a direct result of Legionnaires, at the post level in communities, responding to the needs of our comrades and their families. As the nation’s largest veteran’s organization, our commitment to the men and women of our armed forces and their families is absolute. As a grateful nation, we must ensure that no family endures hardships caused by military service that protects American ideals and freedom.

**BASEBALL COMMITTEE.**

**Gary Stone, Missouri, Chairman**

**Michael D. Buss, Iowa, Deputy Director**

American Legion Baseball’s 91st World Series took place August 10-15, in Shelby, North Carolina, on Veterans Field at Keeter Stadium and was hosted by American Legion Post 82. After a tremendously successful year in 2016, ESPNU agreed to expand the live television coverage of the weekend events to include Saturday’s Military Appreciation Day in addition to the previously broadcasted semifinals and championship. The remaining six games were webcast live on ESPN3.

The 92nd season saw 3,588 registered to play American Legion Baseball. Approximately 60,000 players, representing all 50 states and Canada, wore a Legion baseball uniform this year.

More than $7 million in sponsorship fees are spent on American Legion Baseball teams by the local posts. One million dollars is appropriated by The American Legion National Organization to conduct eight regional tournaments and the World Series of American Legion Baseball.

The 2016 George W. Rulon American Legion Baseball Player of the Year was Will Smith, of Texarkana, Arkansas.

Many American Legion players have gone on to distinguish themselves in Major League Baseball and have been honored with election to the Hall of Fame. Seventy-one Hall of Fame members played American Legion Baseball, including the 2017 inductees
Tim Raines, Jeff Bagwell, and Ivan Rodriguez. Other American Legion Alumni inducted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame include Tony Gwynn, Tom Seaver, Johnny Bench, Carl Yastrzemski, Brooks Robinson, and Paul Molitor.

American Legion Baseball became Pitch Smart compliant, following an initiative supported by Major League Baseball and USA Baseball. Pitch Smart features a series of practical, age-appropriate guidelines to help parents, players and coaches avoid overuse injuries and foster long, healthy careers for youth pitchers.

A total of 29 states joined the American Legion Baseball department website network in the first year of the initiative, using the powerful web presence of SportsEngine, an NBC Sports company, to create department-specific websites. This will help departments promote their programs, share information and fundraise.

COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN & YOUTH
Herbert J. Petit, Jr., Louisiana, Chairman
Meagen L. Sweet, Indiana, Assistant Director

The American Legion has been a staunch supporter of America’s children and youth since the organization’s founding in 1919. The young people of our nation continue to be of paramount concern to the Committee on Children & Youth, as its commitment strengthens and it seeks ways to improve the well-being of all children.

Through the decades that followed our founding, The American Legion became a strong advocate for children's rights and has remained at the forefront of the child welfare movement. The early years were devoted to progressive childcare and protection programs. Through the efforts of The American Legion and its affiliated organizations – the American Legion Auxiliary and the Sons of The American Legion, as well as supporting independent organizations such as the Eight & Forty – many states and communities improved their own child welfare provisions.

The development of new and expanded public programs designed to provide economic security for children made it possible for our organization to turn its attention to other problems affecting young people. To date there is no area of child welfare that has gone untouched by the collective hand of The American Legion. The very program of Children & Youth itself is unique from any agency – private or governmental – in its ability to expand into every area of concern for child welfare and child health.

As stated in a 1924 resolution adopted by the National Executive Committee, The American Legion "has and will do everything possible to perpetuate 'A SQUARE DEAL FOR EVERY CHILD.'" This remains our ultimate goal and the definitive challenge for the years ahead.

To attain this goal, The American Legion, in 1925, adopted the "Whole Child" plan, which states: "every child should have a home, health, education, character and opportunity." Its foundation is based on three guiding principles:

1. To strengthen the family unit against the forces of today's complex society, recognizing that the most normal environment for children is a home with their own parents;
2. To commend sound organizations and facilities that provide services for children and youth;
3. To maintain a well-rounded program that meets the physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual needs of today's young people. Stated certainly for future endeavors, this third principle has provided the flexibility to address all matters of child health and child welfare.

While these principles represent the heart of the "Whole Child" plan, the muscle depends on our four Guidelines for Action, working together:

1. PREVENTION – Finding solutions to obstacles before they become long-lasting problems;
2. EDUCATION – Providing information to our members and the general public on timely issues involving children and youth;
3. LEGISLATION – Maintaining knowledge of new and existing laws, needed amendments, and the administration of laws that affect young people at the national, state and local levels;
4. MATERIAL AID – Providing direct assistance in the form of cash, clothing, food and time.

During the past 99 years, The American Legion’s Children & Youth Programs have contributed to significant advancements in the area of child welfare. While our list of achievements is extensive, it is by no means complete. The American Legion has and will maintain a deep, community-centered interest in children in order to find new, and perhaps presently unknown, approaches to child welfare problems. There is no way of knowing what issues will face our youth tomorrow. Our survival may well depend upon the quality of care, education and training that we, as parents and citizens, provide for all children today.

The American Legion is proud of its Legionnaires, and the members of its affiliated and supporting organizations, as well as their achievements on behalf of our nation’s youth. Their efforts in the area of child welfare are a living testament to the ability of an organization of free men and women to adapt itself to evolving needs, while maintaining high principles and taking on increased responsibilities under those principles.

2016-2017 Programs

The American Legion has demonstrated a strong concern for the safety of this nation's young people since the early 1920s. In 1992, the Committee on Children & Youth designated the Child Safety program as one of its annual programs. Legion volunteers regularly disseminate information to parents, children and community leaders regarding the issue of safety. Making children safety conscious, in the home and outside, is necessary to assure that they have an opportunity to play and grow into useful adults and citizens.

As long as Halloween activities are sponsored and promoted in our various communities by duly appointed and elected officials, the Committee on Children & Youth of The American Legion believes that children and parents should know how to make this observance as safe as possible. To assist in this effort, the Committee on Children & Youth produces and distributes a brochure, “Make Halloween a Fun and Safe Night,” to educate children and parents about trick-or-treat safety.

Accidents are the leading cause of death and disability among our nation's youth. Annually, nearly 16,000 children under the age of 21 die in automobile crashes, fires, through the improper use of firearms and drowning. In homes, playgrounds and parks, the potential for serious injury is always present. To help educate the public, the Committee on Children & Youth produces and distributes “Play it Safe,” a brochure to inform parents about the six most common causes of death among children and prevention strategies.

As a major threat to the welfare of our nation’s youth, The American Legion is very concerned about youth suicide. It continues to be the third largest cause of death among 15 to 24-year-olds. The suicide rate among adolescents has grown steadily over the last four decades, quadrupling since 1960, and over 4,000 young people take their own lives every year. Suicide is a senseless tragedy but may be preventable. The Committee on Children & Youth produces and distributes a brochure entitled “Know the Warning Signs of Youth Suicide,” designed to assist youth and adults in understanding some of the warning signs and facts about suicide.

The American Legion is also mindful of the pressures facing young people today, as well as the destructive consequences of drug use. Alcohol, tobacco, inhalants and marijuana are often readily available and considered to be the entryway to a life of drug dependency and delinquency. Gateway drugs are so-called because the use of these drugs often leads to drug abuse, addiction and to the use of other drugs such as heroin, cocaine and LSD. The teenage years are challenging and pressure from peers to use drugs can be
extremely intense; however, individuals are ultimately responsible for their own behavior. Decisions made today can have far-reaching effects on one’s life for years to come. To help combat this problem and educate our nation’s youth about the dangers of gateway drugs, the Committee produces and distributes a brochure titled “Gateway Drugs...Choose not to Use.” This tool can equip parents and children with the facts of gateway drugs and help children lead a healthy lifestyle.

As sure as The American Legion is the largest veterans’ organization in the world, there are veterans’ families who require assistance. Possibly the rent is overdue or the children are hungry because a parent is sick, disabled, deceased or has deserted the family. Whatever the reason, these children become the concern of The American Legion, and the Temporary Financial Assistance (TFA) program is the vital tool our organization uses to help meet the maintenance and health needs of veterans’ children.

Begun in 1925 as a form of direct aid to veteran’s children, TFA remains unique in the social-work field even today and is still a very active program. During the 2016 calendar year program year, in fact, the program aided 1,396 children with over $830,010 in grants. From its beginning to present, this fund has assisted veterans’ families with more than $16 million in non-repayable grants.

Made possible by the American Legion Endowment Fund Corporation, the TFA program is used to assist families in meeting the costs of shelter, food, utilities and medical needs when the parents are unable to do so, thereby helping to keep the child (ren) in a more stable home environment. Through TFA, a post may call upon the Committee on Children & Youth of The American Legion for cash assistance to help meet the basic needs of veterans’ children. Funds can be granted over a temporary period to eligible children when it has been determined by investigation that the child is in need and that no other sources are available, or those that are available are inadequate. It is important to note that while the veteran must have served honorably on active duty during a designated war period, the veteran does not have to be a member of The American Legion in order to receive assistance.

Legislative Efforts

The initiation and support of worthwhile Children & Youth legislation is one means by which the Committee on Children & Youth has attempted to accomplish its goals during the 2016-2017 program year. The following summarized resolutions are a sampling of the children & youth legislative resolutions approved at National Convention in Cincinnati, Ohio, August 27-28, 2016.

Financially Assist Families Faced By Catastrophic Illness Of Their Children: Res. 251. It has long been our position that all children should have adequate health services to assure their physical, mental and emotional well-being. Unfortunately, many of our nation’s children are not receiving the necessary medical care due to the extreme requirements placed on the financial abilities of the average family. Consequently, children with severe catastrophic illnesses are not receiving the needed medical care. The rising cost of medical care in such cases is not covered by even the best medical policies. The American Legion believes that the state and federal governments should enact legislation to financially assist those families faced by catastrophic illness to the end that the family will not be financially devastated.

Support Funding Comprehensive Health Care for Children & Youth Programs: Res. 257. Many of our nation’s children continue to face health needs that are not properly addressed due to the high cost of our health care delivery system. The American Legion continues to support and endorse the programs as outlined by the Maternal and Child Health Bureau as authorized under Title V of the Social Security Act and urges the Congress of the United States to continue its support by adequately funding these programs, including the Maternal and Child Health Services Block Grant, the Healthy Start Initiative, Emergency Medical Services for Children Program and the Abstinence Education Program.
Support Funding For All Drug Trafficking Prevention Programs: Res. 258. We realize that one of the best methods to attack the drug problem is from the demand side, but this resolution urges funding for all necessary areas and agencies that can help reduce the quantity of the substances that are being made available in this country. By working at both ends of the problem, we can make a difference in the number of users and decrease demand.

Oppose Any Attempt to Weaken Present Laws Governing Penalties for the Production, Sale and Distribution of Pornographic or Obscene Materials to Minors: Res. 254. As there have been attempts to eliminate protective laws from the criminal code regarding the production, distribution and sale of pornographic and obscene literature, The American Legion is strongly opposed to any attempt to weaken existing laws.

Urge The President and Congress To Establish “National Family Week”: Res. 265. One of the basic principles of the children and youth program is to maintain the integrity of the family home. In today's fast-paced society, it is critical that we seek to recognize the importance of strengthening the basic unit of our country: the family. No institution can take the place of the family in giving meaning to human life and stability to our society. We urge the President and the Congress to establish National Family Week on a permanent basis during the Thanksgiving holiday week.

Urge Congress To Appropriate Sufficient Funds For School Nutrition Program: Res. 509. The American Legion again reaffirms its position that the Congress of the United States and the various state legislatures be urged to appropriate sufficient funds for school nutrition programs. This is necessary to reflect the increased cost of food and to provide for needed facilities and trained personnel for the purpose of conducting an adequate school lunch program.

These are the highlights of our 2016-2017 Children & Youth legislative program. The American Legion's Committee on Children & Youth continually urges departments to support Children & Youth legislation as it relates to our national objectives. Local posts are also encouraged to support city ordinances that deal with the community's efforts to improve conditions for children and youth. The Children & Youth legislative program is a never-ending struggle, which we eagerly accept for the sake of all children.

Children & Youth Expenditures

Annually, as it has for the past 94 years, the Committee on Children & Youth records activities from The American Legion Family –12,982 posts of The American Legion, 6,136 squadrons of The Sons of The American Legion, 8,821 units of the American Legion Auxiliary, and hundreds of salons of the Eight and Forty. In addition, the expenditures of departments and of the National Organization are obtained for the 12-month period of June 1, 2016 through May 31, 2017, and combined with these reports (see Table No. 1).

During the reporting period, the American Legion Child Welfare Foundation recorded $886,637 in donations from members of The American Legion Family and individuals across the country. During the same period, our Temporary Financial Assistance program expended over $858,870 in grants (see Table No. 2) to 1,373 children of 593 veterans. For the 2016-2017 Children & Youth programs year, including contributions to the American Legion Child Welfare Foundation, posts, squadrons, units and departments of The American Legion and its affiliated and supporting organizations reported a grand total of $18,974,615 in expenditures and contributions to benefit the children of America.

COMMITTEE ON YOUTH EDUCATION
Mike Bredeck, Minnesota, Chairman
Tyler Mitchell, Indiana, Assistant Director

In 2016, The American Legion added an additional class of recipients to The American Legion Legacy Scholarship; the children of Post-9/11 veterans assigned a disability rating of 50% or greater by the Department of Veterans Affairs. With children of
fallen Post-9/11 service members remaining the top priority, the goal of the scholarship was to fill financial aid gaps in education.

With the new class of recipients, 2017 saw the largest increase of awardees with a total of 55 applicants receiving $671,892. The amounts awarded ranged from the highest being $20,000 and the lowest at $586. The first American Legion Legacy Scholarship was awarded in 2004, and since then, 268 scholarship have been awarded totaling $1,164,573.

These awards may be used for undergraduate or graduate-level education at a nonprofit and regionally-accredited institution of higher learning. In addition to the American Legion Legacy Scholarship, our scholarship programs include the American Legion High School Oratorical Scholarship, Boys Nation Scholarship, Junior Shooting Sports Scholarship, Eagle Scout of the Year Scholarship, American Legion Baseball Leadership and All-Academic Team Scholarships and the Samsung American Legion Scholarship.

David Azerrad of The Heritage Foundation was awarded the 2017 National Education Award in recognition and appreciation of his dedication to increasing public understanding of America’s founding principles, commitment to the education of The American Legion Boys Nation delegates on the constitution and continued teachings of the tenets of the American political system.

In 2016, The American Legion’s Alliance with Samsung Electronics was enhanced when Samsung provided a 3-year grant to The American Legion, which during 2016-2017 has allowed expansion of recognition for Samsung American Legion Scholarship Alumni and continued development of a Samsung American Legion alumni association. Samsung gifted The American Legion with a $5 million endowment in 1996 to fund scholarships for decedents of Korean War Veterans. Samsung continues to believe in The American Legion’s visionary leadership for educating and growing patriotism in the youth of America.

The American Legion continues to believe that education is key to a united and informed citizenry. As such, we strive to improve our scholarships, education programs and youth development programs in a manner showing our dedication to the education of America’s youth. The promotion of Americanism to our future leaders threads throughout every American Legion scholarship and program. The resources that we provide to our Legion Family and communities at-large are specifically developed to aid in the expansion and culturing of such values among 21st-century youth.

YOUTH CADET LAW ENFORCEMENT COMMITTEE

Larry L. Price, South Dakota Chairman
Shayne Abrahams, Sr., Indiana, Assistant Director

The American Legion Youth Cadet Law Enforcement (YCLE) program is an excellent vehicle through which young people may be empowered to realize early on that peace officers stand as staunch supporters for moral and legal rights, and that the dedication and impact they have within local our communities, states, and nation should be regarded with respect and appreciation. The YCLE program serves as an influential stepping stone for those high school students considering a career in law enforcement as they become familiar first-hand with professional practices and concepts of policing during a week-long program conducted at a law enforcement training academy.

There are currently twenty-one departments that offer a YCLE program: Arizona; Connecticut; Delaware; Florida; Illinois; Indiana; Kansas; Massachusetts; Michigan; Minnesota; Missouri; Oregon; Nebraska; North Carolina; Ohio; Pennsylvania; South Carolina; South Dakota; Vermont; Virginia; and Wisconsin. The American Legion Youth Cadet Law Enforcement Committee was formed in order to develop strategies and methodologies for promoting the YCLE program and its growth throughout the nation, as well as working toward an ultimate goal of pursuing the development of a national capstone program – the vision is that this national capstone program would be analogous of what
The American Legion Boys Nation program is to The American Legion Boys State program. Materials are available on The American Legion website at www legion org youthlaw providing information for American Legion departments working with law enforcement agencies to adopt and further promote the program.

**AMERICANISM COMMISSION EXECUTIVE SECTION**

Richard W. Anderson, Cromwell, Connecticut – Chairman  
Joseph E. Caouette, Rollinsford, New Hampshire – Chairman Emeritus  
Larry L. Price, Gettysburg, South Dakota – Vice-Chairman  
Robert B. Craig, Lincoln, Nebraska – Commander’s Representative  
Eugene Thompson, Marseilles, Illinois – Consultant  
Steve M. Tatro, Dunkirk, Maryland – Consultant  
Gary Stone, Independence, MO – Chairman, American Legion Baseball Committee  
Herbert J. Petit, Kenner, Louisiana – Chairman, Committee on Children & Youth  
Mike Bredeck, Madison, Minnesota – Chairman, Committee on Youth Education  
Larry L. Price, Gettysburg, South Dakota – Chairman, Youth Cadet Law Enforcement Committee

**AMERICAN LEGION CHILD WELFARE FOUNDATION, INC.**  
* Dennis R. Boland, Florida, President

In 1954 The American Legion endorsed the separate incorporation of the American Legion Child Welfare Foundation. Since then, the foundation has granted over $14.9 million dollars to other non-profit youth-serving organizations. The foundation exists to contribute to the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual welfare of children and youth and to add to progress in the child welfare field through research, studies, surveys, projects or in other ways, including but not limited to all, youth activities now or hereafter sponsored by the American Legion.

At its annual meeting in October 2016, the board of directors approved $618,606 in grants to 20 nonprofit organizations for projects to be completed in calendar year 2017. These grants were awarded to support youth-serving projects that seek to enhance the lives of children by addressing the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual needs of children.

The following is a brief summary of the grants awarded this year:

**American Legion Child Welfare Foundation Grants**

**Angels & Doves** of Indianapolis, Indiana, was awarded $19,900 for their project, “Reduce School Bullying and Youth Violence.” This grant will provide an anti-bullying program for high-risk school districts. The American Legion Auxiliary supports this grant.

**Angel Flight West** of Santa Monica, California, was awarded $10,000 for their project, “Promoting Fly-Anthropy – the charitable use of aviation to help children in need.” This grant will provide outreach and marketing efforts to reach families in need of medical transportation and to potential volunteer pilots. The Sons of The American Legion and the Eight & Forty support this grant.

**Bethany Christian Services** of Grand Rapids, Michigan, was awarded $25,000 for their project, “Post Adoption Support for Military Families Awareness Campaign.” This project will contribute to the mental, emotional and spiritual welfare of children adopted by military families. The American Legion Auxiliary and the Sons of The American Legion support this grant.

**Books Aloud** of San Jose, California, was awarded $10,000 for their project, “Books Aloud Youth Program.” This project will serve children that can’t read conventionally due blindness, visual impairment and/or a physical or learning disability. The American Legion Auxiliary and the Sons of The American Legion support this grant.
Building Better Days of Edgewater, Maryland, was awarded $11,230 for their project, “Benefits of Building.” This project will assist pediatric patients by providing each child with a building toy to take their mind off of the treatments and procedures that they are going through. The Sons of The American Legion and the Eight & Forty support this grant.

Child Find of America, Inc. of New Paltz, New York, was awarded $40,500 for their project, “In Safe Hands Information Kits.” This project will educate and inform parents and professionals about the negative impact of family conflict on a child's learning and emotional health, as well as to prevent conflict leading to parental child abduction. The Sons of The American Legion supports this grant.

Childhood Domestic Violence (CDV) Association of New York, New York, was awarded $20,750 for their project, “Childhood Domestic Violence Toolkit Distribution Campaign.” Through greater distribution of this toolkit, CDV hopes to build an overall awareness of children growing up with domestic violence.

Childhood Leukemia Foundation of Brick, New Jersey, was awarded $60,000 for their project, “Hope Binder.” This project will offer 12 sections of templates and resources to help families begin to feel a degree of control over their circumstances. The American Legion Auxiliary and the Sons of The American Legion support this grant.

Children’s Brain Tumor Foundation of New York, New York, was awarded $20,000 for their project, “Finding Your Way-A Guide for Childhood Brain Tumor Families from Diagnosis & Beyond.” This project will help families understand that the emotions they are feeling are not uncommon and assist in alleviating the isolation often felt by families. The Sons of The American Legion supports this grant.

Children’s Hospital of The King’s Daughters, Inc. of Norfolk, Virginia, was awarded $31,000 for their project, “Educational Materials for Children with Craniosynostosis and Cleft Lip/Palate Deformities.” This project will educate parents about cleft lip and palate, craniofacial conditions and ease their concerns about treatment and correction.

CureSearch for Children’s Cancer of Bethesda, Maryland, was awarded $22,250 for their project, “Childhood Cancer Educational Video and Companion Ebook.” This project will create a video about immunotherapy that features personal stories and educational content. The American Legion Auxiliary supports this grant.

Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance of Chicago, Illinois, was awarded $25,000 for their project, “Online Child Mood Disorder Screeners and Marketing Campaign.” This project will assist families with children living with a mood disorder by aiding in early intervention and detection of symptoms, linking families to resources and education and connecting parents to a support network.

KEYS of Sherrill, New York, was awarded $5,362 for their project, “KEYS Music Toolkits: Delivering Music, Hope and Smiles to Kids Battling Cancer.” This project will provide research and information on the benefits of music and music therapy in the treatment of pediatric cancer patients. The Sons of The American Legion supports this grant.

Mercy Medical Angels of Virginia Beach, Virginia, was awarded $45,000 for their project, "Angel Flights for Children.” This project will increase the number of volunteer pilots available to transport children requiring specialized medical care to health care facilities that provide the treatment necessary for the child. The American Legion Auxiliary supports this grant.

Minnesota Organization on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome of Saint Paul, Minnesota, was awarded $54,735 for their project, “National Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) Educational Equity Project.” This project will provide information to raise awareness, educate and build an interest in gaining competency about FASD and implications for schools, families and students.

National Autism Association of Portsmouth, Rhode Island, was awarded $59,375 for their project, “Big Red Safety Box.” This project will educate, raise awareness and
provide tangible tools that may assist in preventing and responding to dangerous wandering-related incidents in the autism community.

**National Meningitis Association, Inc.** of Fort Myers, Florida, was awarded $29,000 for their project, "Get Vaccinated." This project will raise awareness and aid in the distribution of informational CD packages throughout the country. The Sons of The American Legion supports this grant.

**Our Military Kids** of McLean, Virginia, was awarded $56,055 for their project, "In Their Own Voice: Military Children Tell Their Stories." This grant will enhance outreach and marketing efforts of the organization. The American Legion Auxiliary supports this grant.

**Shwachman-Diamond Syndrome (SDS) Foundation** of Avon, New York, was awarded $4,449 for their project, "I Have SDS." This grant will produce books on SDS and educate hospitals, clinics, physicians and families on this rare bone marrow failure disease.

**The American Legion National Headquarters** of Indianapolis, Indiana, was awarded $69,000 for their project, "American Legion National Oratorical Contest 2017." This grant will provide half of the funds necessary for awarding academic scholarships to fifty-four youth competing as national finalists in The American Legion National Oratorical Contest.

During calendar year 2016, donations exceeded $738,086, with over $490,070 coming from the Sons of The American Legion. Members of The American Legion family are the primary contributors to the success and growth of the American Legion Child Welfare Foundation. Each member and local organization is encouraged to make an annual contribution in support of the foundation. Financial support allows the foundation to continue funding projects that improve the quality of life for our nation’s children. Every dollar given to the foundation is used for grants that assist young people.

At a board of directors meeting in Indianapolis on May 7, 2017, the following officers were elected: Dennis R. Boland of Florida, president; Peggy Moon of Minnesota, vice president; Joseph J. Frank of Missouri, secretary; and Robert S. Turner of Georgia, treasurer. Administrative personnel appointed by the board were George A. Buskirk Jr., assistant treasurer, and Jason R. Kees, executive secretary.

Under the 1969 Tax Reform Act, the American Legion Child Welfare Foundation retains its tax-exempt status. Gifts, therefore, are deductible for federal income tax purposes to the extent permitted by law, and bequests are deductible for federal inheritance tax purposes to the extent permitted by the Federal Tax Act.

**AMERICAN LEGION ENDOENDMENT FUND CORPORATION**

William M. Detweiler, Louisiana, President

In 1925, World War I veterans, widows and children continued to struggle to return to a regular life. The members of The American Legion, aware of the vital responsibilities entrusted to them by those who had served, knew the time had come to take action. More than 900,000 Legionnaires, American Legion Auxiliary members and other American citizens joined the campaign, raising nearly $5 million and establishing the American Legion Endowment Fund Corporation.

Since those early days, over $30 million has been distributed to disabled veterans and the children of those who served our great nation. Your gifts and donations are added to a trust that is administered by the American Legion Endowment Fund Corporation. The corporation, whose members are selected by the National Executive Committee of The American Legion, takes great care to ensure that these gifts are wisely invested. Income from fund investments is then passed on to The American Legion national organization to administer programs of Children & Youth (C&Y) and Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation (VA&R), that include funding for the Temporary Financial Assistance (TFA) program, Department Service Officer school and Board of Veterans Appeals training.
During calendar year 2016, the American Legion Endowment Fund transferred trust earnings of $174,834 to The American Legion to support TFA and VA&R programs. Donations to the American Legion Endowment Fund Donations during this time totaled $281,684. It is important to note that due to the structure of the fund as an endowment, only the earnings on the fund are spent, ensuring that donations will continue to support veterans and their children for generations.

At a board of directors meeting in Indianapolis on May 9, 2017, the following officers were elected: William M. Detweiler of Louisiana, president; Hon. Vincent M. Gaughan of Illinois, vice president; and David P. Rook of Indiana, treasurer. Administrative personnel appointed by the board were George A. Buskirk Jr., assistant treasurer, and Meagen Sweet, secretary.

Under the 1969 Tax Reform Act, the American Legion Endowment Fund Corporation retains its tax-exempt status. Gifts, therefore, are deductible for federal income tax purposes to the extent permitted by law, and bequests are deductible for federal inheritance tax purposes to the extent permitted by the Federal Tax Act.
<table>
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<th>Region</th>
<th>Expenditure (in billions)</th>
<th>Child Welfare Expenditure (in billions)</th>
<th>Direct Aid from Private and Public Sources (in billions)</th>
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**Note:** The total expenditure figures are calculated by adding the Child Welfare Expenditure and Direct Aid from Private and Public Sources. The totals for each region are then summed to get the overall total.
CONVENTION COMMISSION
Michael E. Walton, Illinois, Chairman
Bridget A. Robinson, CMP, Georgia, Director

The 98th annual National Convention of The American Legion convened in Cincinnati, Ohio, August 26 – September 1, 2016. National Commander,

Dale Barnett of Georgia called the National Convention to order at 8:30AM on Tuesday, August 30, 2016, welcoming Legionnaires to Cincinnati and thanking them for their continuing service to our Country and to our veterans. The 98th National Convention began with master of ceremonies, Mr. Larry Gatlin, who addressed nearly 6,000 American Legion Family members on Tuesday morning. Later in the day, The Honorable John Kasich, Governor, State of Ohio; The Honorable John Cranley, Mayor, City of Cincinnati; The Honorable Sherrod Brown, U.S. Senate; The Honorable Steve Chabot, U.S. House of Representatives; 2015–2016 Department Commander of Ohio, James W. Campbell and James C. Morris, President of the 2016 National Convention Corporation welcomed Legionnaires to the National Convention. Other guest speakers addressing the 98th National Convention of The American Legion were Gen. Joseph F. Dunford, Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff; Honorable Robert A. McDonald, Secretary, Department of Veterans’s Affairs; and Command Sgt. Major Robert Winzenried, Military Affairs Relationship Director, USAA.

There were many highlights during the 2016 National Convention, but four events conducted at the National Convention deserve special mention. On Friday, August 26 the Color Guard Contest took place. There were eight color guard units that competed in four categories with Newport Beach Harbor Post 291 from Newport Beach, California, being crowned as National Champions. Additionally, two bands participated in the Competitive Concert Band Contest with American Legion Band of Greater Kansas City from Independence, Missouri, being crowned National Champions. We had one band participate in the Exhibition Concert Band Class which was the 9th District American Legion Band from Minnesota. The Patriotic Memorial Service, featuring the Circle Singers, and the annual parade, both held on Sunday, August 28, 2016, were attended by nearly 2,000 American Legion Family members. On Tuesday, August 30, 2016, the National Commander’s Banquet for Distinguished Guests was held at the Duke Energy Convention Center. The banquet featured Larry Gatlin & The Gatlin Brothers as the entertainment and was attended by over 2,000 Legionnaires and guests.

CONVENTION COMMISSION ACTIVITIES
The Convention Commission conducted three regular meetings during the year. Revisions of our request for proposal (RFP) continued in 2016. This process is extremely important as it provides an equal opportunity for all cities to be judged the same way during the site visit process. It is the commission’s desire to continue to attract new cities that desire to host an American Legion National Convention, providing “blue cap” Legionnaires and their families with varied and enjoyable conventions on an annual basis.

For the 2022 National Convention, the Convention Commission reviewed bids from the following cities: Birmingham, Alabama; Detroit, Michigan; Houston, Texas; and Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Following site visits and after listening to formal presentations from each of these fine cities, the Convention Commission recommended to the National Executive Committee that Milwaukee, Wisconsin, be awarded the 2022 National Convention for the dates of August 26 – September 1, 2022. The National Executive Committee later approved the recommendation.

Future conventions and dates:
Reno, Nevada ........................................................................ Aug. 18 – 24, 2017
Minneapolis, Minnesota ......................................................... Aug. 24 – 30, 2018
Indianapolis, Indiana.............................................................. Aug. 23 – 29, 2019
Louisville, Kentucky ........................................................... Aug. 28 – Sept. 3, 2020
Phoenix, Arizona ............................................................. Aug. 27 – Sept. 2, 2021
Milwaukee, Wisconsin ...................................................... Aug. 26 – Sept. 1, 2022

FINANCE COMMISSION
Gaither M. Keener, Jr., North Carolina, Chairman
George A. Buskirk, Jr., Indiana, National Treasurer
Shawn T. Long, CPA, Indiana, Director

The primary obligation of the Finance Commission is to prepare a yearly budget for the National Executive Committee, handle funds under that budget, and exercise reasonable oversight to see that the various divisions and departments of the national organization operate within appropriations. The Finance Commission includes seven members, with the national adjutant as ex-officio secretary and the national commander and national treasurer as ex-officio members. Also attending these meetings are the executive directors of the Washington and Indianapolis offices and the finance director and liaison observers from the National Executive Committee.

The national organization had an operating deficit of $359,968 for 2016. We received $13.50 dues per member, allocating $10.50 to the General Fund and $3 to The American Legion Magazine. Income of the national organization derives from annual membership dues, interest on investments, magazine advertisements, Emblem Sales, contributions and other approved activities.

A full financial statement is incorporated in the auditor’s report, found in the 2017 National Convention Program and the 2017 Annual Report.

INTERNAL AFFAIRS COMMISSION
Robert E. Newman, Chairman
John W. Querfeld, Illinois, Director

The National Internal Affairs Commission was established by resolution of the National Executive Committee in 1947. The original charge for this constitutional commission still remains: to formulate and recommend policies and to oversee the implementation of adopted policies relating to activities conducted for organizational purposes.

Among those purposes are all those not properly the responsibility of any other national commission, as well as membership strategies, post formation, clerical and records administration for posts and individual members and special projects. The Commission provides guidance and assistance to the National Adjutant on necessary administrative operations. Under the broad interpretation of those purposes not properly the responsibility of other commissions, Internal Affairs oversees awards, constitutional discipline and commemorative activities. The Commission also monitors legislative and other regulatory activities that potentially affect Legion posts and departments, recommending appropriate courses of action.

The Commission has six standing committees assigned to it for supervision and coordination: 50th Anniversary Vietnam War Commemorative Committee, 75th Anniversary of WWII Commemorative Committee, 100th Anniversary Observance Committee, American Legion Riders Advisory Committee, National Convention Resolutions Assignment, Constitution and By-Laws, and Membership & Post Activities. The latter has separate reporting responsibilities to the national convention and the National Executive Committee.

The Internal Affairs Commission also provides guidance for the following programs: Sons of The American Legion — For the 44th consecutive year, the Sons of The American Legion (SAL) are at an “All Time High” in membership. The SAL closed its membership at the end of 2016 with a record 367,948 members. This number represents
1.5% increase over the previous year. A total of 22 detachments achieved 100% membership.

Membership in the SAL for 2017 is expected to surpass that of 2016 and give them another “All Time High” for 2017 prior to National Convention in August.

The SAL continues its support of several American Legion programs and is heavily involved with support to our nation’s veterans in the Veterans Affairs Voluntary Services (VAVS) program. In 2016, the SAL provided over 455,656 volunteer hours in VA homes and hospitals. Donations in cash and goods to these veterans exceeded $1,618,370 nationwide. Other projects include Americanism programs of which $2,441,124 was donated along with 792,121 hours of service. This was remarkable considering only 20% of the Squadrons submitted reports. In 2016, the Sons have raised over $500,000 for the Child Welfare Foundation and provided numerous grants through The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation. The Sons of The American Legion have contributed over seven million dollars to The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation.

The Sons continue to support Legion programs with a major emphasis on VAVS, National Emergency Fund and the American Legion Legacy Scholarship Fund in addition to other vital programs. As a major program and an integral part of The American Legion family, the Sons continue to serve and provide assistance to posts and their communities.

The American Legion Riders — The National Executive Committee established The American Legion Riders (ALR) as a national program in October 2007 to be supported and administered by posts and departments. The American Legion Riders National Advisory Committee is responsible for advising the national leadership on resolutions before the Internal Affairs Commission and to act as sources of information for departments and posts. This committee also provides significant guidance for the planning and execution of The American Legion Legacy Run each year. Of particular importance to the committee is the establishment of program protocols adhering to federal rules regarding The American Legion’s trademarks and proper supervision provided to the ALR programs by the posts.

Members of the American Legion Riders National Advisory Committee also serve as liaisons within six national regions to provide information and support to departments and posts.

The Riders raise money for many charitable causes, most notably for children and youth programs and for wounded or returned servicemen and women. Since 2006, the annual American Legion Legacy Run has conducted ten major cross-country, multi-day motorcycle runs totaling over 14,000 miles and collecting over $6M for The American Legion Legacy Scholarship trust program. The scholarship program is administered by the Americanism Commission.

The American Legion Amateur Radio Club — The American Legion Amateur Radio Club (TALARC) was approved by the National Executive Committee in 2011. This is a rapidly growing new program that has been conducting national nets, special event operations, and membership activities since 2011. Members in local post amateur radio clubs support local emergency management agencies, law enforcement and fire departments, and FEMA in emergency communications “when all else fails.”

Now over 3,000 American Legion family members with FCC ham radio licenses have joined TALARC. The National Headquarters flagship station K9TAL located in the basement of the American Legion National Headquarters has inspired the formation of sister stations K5TAL (Gautier, Mississippi Post 192), K6TAL (Palm Springs, California Post 519), W6TAL (Redlands, California Post 106), AA8AL (Belle Valley, Ohio Post 641), KM4MND (Loganville, GA Post 233), WB4TAL (Fuquay-Varina, North Carolina Post 116), KG7TQX (Washougal, Washington Post 122), K7HLR (Clearfield, UT Post 139), and dozens of other posts that operate under supervision of licensed control operators. The Department of California has established KM6HCQ as their department headquarters amateur radio station.

There is a strong interest in developing local post and regional radio clubs and emergency radio teams, and interest in the FEMA ICS (Incident Command System)
training available from the Department of Homeland Security. Special emphasis of TALARC is placed on local amateur radio emergency communications in support of the National Emergency Fund (NEF) and American Legion post and department support operations before, during, and after natural or man-made disasters and terrorist attacks. The American Legion has maintained a standing Statement of Affiliation with the Federal Emergency Management Agency under the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) since 2006.

**National Emergency Fund** — From January 1, 2016 through December 31, 2016, The American Legion provided $127,194 in grant monies to Legion and SAL members, as well as $54,600 to American Legion posts. During the same period, the National Emergency Fund received donations totaling $462,598. This prepares us to support future natural disasters.

Every dollar contributed to the fund is used for providing financial assistance to members of The American Legion Family. The grants are to be used for immediate needs – lodging, food and clothing – and not as a substitute for insurance. In order to qualify, members must have been displaced or evacuated from their primary place of residence and be a member in good standing at the time of loss. Monies to support the administrative costs of maintaining this fund and to conduct fundraising are absorbed through existing budget areas.

The National Emergency Fund is unique and members know they can turn to The American Legion for immediate financial assistance, without payback. Through the generosity of Legion and Sons of The American Legion members, the National Emergency Fund will continue to meet the needs of our Legion family in the aftermath of local, state and national weather related disasters.

**Consolidated Post Reports** — The Consolidated Post Report was established in 1975 in order to assist departments in the documentation of the various activities a specific post has done during the twelve-month reporting period, June 1st through May 31st. During the 2016-2017 reporting year, seventy-one percent of posts reported some activity.

Throughout the reporting year American Legion post members volunteered 789,047 hours in assisting veterans at VA Hospitals; donated $3,021,666 in emergency aid; 49,282 Legionnaires gave over 79,413 pints of blood; events covered through different media outlets totaled 1151,079; performed 140,288 funeral honors at a cost of $2,691,967; sponsored 1,958 American Legion baseball teams at a cost of $5,531,705; Legion posts sponsored 2,077 Boy Scout packs for a cost of $1,845,361; through various school assisted programs they spend $5,674,691; presented 28,367 American flags at a cost of $295,457; performed 4,100,887 community service hours while spending $3,974,301 in support of those activities; and all other donations to Family Support Network, Cancer Research, United Way, Legion Endowment Fund, Children’s Hospitals, National Emergency Fund, Special Olympics, Temporary Financial Assistance, Children & Youth Programs and other various activities totaled $19,537,185.

**The National American Legion College** — Each November, the National American Legion College (NALC) hosts many talented young Legionnaires at the National Headquarters in Indianapolis for a week of intensive training. These students return to their departments with enhanced knowledge and appreciation for The American Legion. They are taught the core values and contributions of the organization and are challenged to think critically and creatively about issues confronting The American Legion.

Candidates for the NALC must be veterans who served during the Lebanon/Grenada era or later, with demonstrated potential for higher leadership roles. Student candidates are nominated by their respective departments and rank ordered by a selection committee. In 2016 we had 59 students attend the National American Legion College.

Graduates are making a difference in leadership roles and membership teams across the country. Many have already been appointed to department and national level positions
while others are used in various leadership and teaching roles within their respective departments.

Since the National American Legion College was reinstated in 1998, we have graduated 785 Legionnaires ready to assume leadership at various levels.

**Leadership Education and Development Training** — The American Legion’s national organization exists to support its individual members, their families, all veterans and service members, and their communities. The functions at the national level – including membership, communications, training, finance, archives and legal support – serve as foundations for our volunteer leadership. Since “membership in The American Legion is membership in the National Organization of The American Legion by affiliation with posts,” it is essential that members fully understand the programs and practices of The American Legion.

To help educate and provide support for departments, counties, districts and local posts, national headquarters staff has organized and coordinated the Leadership Education and Development (LEAD) program. In 2016, we provided training in 12 departments. The program is a one-day, eight-hour training session designed to provide instruction to departments, county, district and post members. Department leaders are encouraged to take advantage of this opportunity.

There are over 30 modules from which the departments may choose any combination that totals at least eight hours of instruction. National staff experts cover a wide range of topics relevant to the operations of The American Legion. All training can be conducted in conjunction with current planned department functions such as winter/spring/fall, district, county or department conferences and conventions. A cap/lapel pin is presented to each participant that has completed, at the minimum, eight hours of LEAD training.

**NATIONAL CONVENTION RESOLUTIONS ASSIGNMENT COMMITTEE**

*Henry P. Bradley, Massachusetts, Chairman*

The Resolutions Assignment Committee meets at least three days before the convening of the national convention. This committee has the responsibility to receive, consider and transmit all resolutions – with or without recommendation – to the appropriate convention committee for a report to the convention. During an average year, between 200 and 300 resolutions will be assigned.

**CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS COMMITTEE**

*Hon. Vincent M. Gaughan, Illinois, Chairman*

The National Constitution and By-laws of The American Legion can only be amended by the duly elected delegates at a national convention.

However, the Constitution & By-Laws Committee, established by the authority of the National Executive Committee in 1939, authorizes this committee to study and make proper recommendations concerning all of the matters that pertain to the constitution and by-laws, as well as matters relating to the Uniform Code of Procedure, which provides rules and regulations for the revocation, cancellation or suspension of department and post charters of The American Legion.

**MEMBERSHIP & POST ACTIVITIES COMMITTEE**

*Randy Goodman, Georgia, Chairman*

*Billy R. Johnson, Georgia, Membership Director*

Membership and programs go hand in hand to making The American Legion an organization able to provide people and resources to serve the needs of veterans and their families. Membership & Post Activities is pleased to report a continuing membership of over 2 million members worldwide.
Membership - Final 2015 membership – 2,135,965
Final 2016 membership – 2,043,888
Final 2017 membership as of Aug. 1, 2017 – 1,950,209

54th Annual National Membership Workshop — The 54th Annual National Membership Workshop convened in Indianapolis on July 27-29, 2017, with more than 300 department and district officers from nearly all 50 departments in attendance.

Many who attended already had a good understanding of The American Legion’s membership program, especially as it pertains to their departments and districts. When the workshop concluded, they are prepared to face day-to-day membership challenges with a better understanding of the Legion as it relates to potential members.

The goal of the workshop is to provide these essential membership workers with the tools, knowledge and desire to serve The American Legion’s membership. Whether they are involved in recruitment or program implementation, the workshop teaches veterans to help veterans and provide communities the essential programs to maintain a quality of life for which all veterans fought and served to preserve.

New Post Development/Revitalization — The Membership & Post Activities Committee developed a training program in January 1996 designed to assist posts, districts and departments in developing and revitalizing posts. The program provides training workshops to interested volunteers, along with practical, hands on field application.

The success of the program is evident, based on the revitalization and development of more than 4,000 American Legion posts in the past 20 years. Many departments have succeeded in revitalizing posts without any direct assistance from National Headquarters staff. Whether departments request field assistance or just send members to the training workshop, positive results follow if they adhere to the guidelines established.

LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION
James Oxford, North Carolina, Chairman
Matthew Shuman, Arizona, Director

This report covers activities of the Legislative Commission from August 16, 2016 through August 15, 2017. During this period, the Commission met two (2) times to review the legislative program and to make recommendations to the National Executive Committee. Reports of these meetings are contained in the published proceedings of the National Executive Committee.

PURPOSE, PERSONNEL AND ORGANIZATION

The Legislative Commission represents The American Legion before the Congress of the United States on all legislative matters in which The American Legion is officially interested. The Commission also assists the National Executive Committee in formulating an appropriate legislative program for each session of Congress. The Commission consists of 35 members and 5 National Executive Committee liaisons.

To further assist the Commission in its work, the National Executive Committee created the National Legislative Council in 1975, composed of Legionnaires whose judgment and advice are respected by their Members of Congress. There is one council member for each Member of Congress. A Council Chairman heads the Council, and is assisted by a Vice Chairman in each Department. The Chairman, Vice Chairmen and general membership of the Council are appointed by the National Commander upon recommendation by the Departments.

The professional staff of the Commission (the Legislative Division) concentrates on implementing the legislative mandates of The American Legion; these mandates are expressed in resolutions adopted at the annual National Convention and by the National Executive Committee at each of its regularly scheduled meetings. The Legislative Division
is located in Washington, DC and consists of the director, a deputy director, two assistant directors, an assistant director/grassroots coordinator, two administrative assistants, and a research analyst. The director, deputy director, and assistant directors are registered lobbyists and submit semi-annual lobbying reports to Congress, in addition the Legion submits quarterly reports on legislation which our organization lobbies Congress. Because The American Legion is a federally chartered organization, an annual report is also prepared and submitted to Congress.

114th Congress, 2nd Session

The Fiscal Year 2017 (FY17) appropriations process ground to a halt, when the deadline for passage of the 12 appropriations bills to fund federal programs – October 1, 2016 – passed. The House had approved 6 of the 12 spending bills, while the Senate had passed only one.

Since none of the appropriations bills were enacted by the end of September, a continuing resolution was needed to keep the federal government running. Three continuing resolutions kept the federal government operating from October 1 through May 5, 2017.

The American Legion participated in twenty-four congressional hearings during the Second Session.

INTERNAL AFFAIRS

On September 29, 2016 President Obama enacted PL 114-227. This measure amends title 36, United States Code, to authorize the American Battle Monuments Commission to acquire, operate, and maintain the Lafayette Escadrille Memorial in Marnes-la-Coquette, France, in the western suburbs of Paris. The site also includes a cemetery with 68 graves for the pilots of the Lafayette Escadrille and the Lafayette Flying Corps who died during their service in the war.

The Lafayette Escadrille was a squadron of American airmen, formed in 1916, who volunteered for service with the French during the First World War. Serving under French officers and flying French warplanes, it was hoped that the service of these Americans would persuade the American public to push the U.S. government to abandon its policy of neutrality and join the fight with the French against “the Huns” (Germans). When the U.S. finally joined the fight against the Central Powers, many Americans from the Escadrille joined the American forces to continue the fight for freedom.

On December 14, 2016 President Obama signed PL 114-269, the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) Congressional Gold Medal Act. The OSS was the World War II predecessor to the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and Special Operations Command. It was created in 1942 by President Franklin Roosevelt who appointed General William Donovan – a World War I Medal of Honor recipient – as its director. Therefore, Donovan is the founding father of the US intelligence and special operations communities. The Congressional Gold Medal is the highest civilian honor Congress can bestow.

NATIONAL SECURITY

Under the provisions of PL 114-223, the Continuing Appropriations Act for FY 2017 – signed by the President on September 29, 2016 – military construction accounts received a total of $7.9 billion, an increase of $282 million over the administration’s request, for the entirety of FY 17. This amount included $1.27 billion for family housing projects, with another $304 million slated for military medical treatment facilities. It further appropriated $673 million for the construction of or alterations to Guard and Reserve facilities, and $246 million for essential safety improvements and infrastructure work at four DOD Education Activities facilities in the U.S. and overseas.
VETERANS AFFAIRS & REHABILITATION

Under the provisions of PL 114-223, signed by the President on September 29, 2016, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) received a total of $176.9 billion for FY17 funding. Discretionary funding totaled $74.4 billion, an increase of $2.9 billion above the FY 16 level. Included in the discretionary funding accounts are:

- **VA Medical Services** – $52.8 billion, $2.8 billion above last year’s enacted level. Individual accounts which interest The American Legion include: $7.9 billion in mental health care services; $7.3 billion in homeless veterans treatment, services, housing, and job training; $1.5 billion for Hepatitis C treatment; $284 million for traumatic brain injury treatments; $250 million in rural health initiatives; and, $173 million in suicide prevention activities.

- **Medical and Prosthetic Research** – The new law provided $675 million for this account, an increase of $44 million over the previous year’s funding.

- **Advance Appropriations for All Veterans Programs for FY 2018** – $170.3 billion. Discretionary medical programs will be funded in 2018 at $66.4 billion. In addition, mandatory programs will be funded at $103.9 billion. This was done to eliminate the possibility that VA programs would go unfunded in case of a government shutdown.

- **National Cemetery Administration** – This agency received $286 million for its operations, $15 million more than FY 2016.

- **Information Technology (IT)** – This account received $4.28 billion, an increase of $178 million.

- **Disability Claims Processing** – $2.9 billion was allocated to address the burgeoning claims backlog. This amount is an increase of $30 million over the President’s request and $148 million above the 2016 enacted amount. This funding will support 242 new staff to tackle claims and appeals work, $153 million for digital scanning of claims; and $27 million for centralized mail. Funding for the Board of Veterans Appeals was increased by $46 million to a total of $156 million, to address the looming appeals backlog.

- **Construction** – Major construction funding totaled $528 million, $728 million below the 2016 amount. Funds will be used for correcting critical seismic deficiencies, new hospital and clinic construction, and repairing crumbling infrastructure in some of VA’s oldest structures. Minor construction was set at $372 million.

- **Construction Grants** – The state extended care facilities account received $90 million (a decrease of $30 million), with the state cemeteries programs receiving $45 million ($1 million below FY16). Both of these programs have been essentially flat-lined by Congress for a number of years; The American Legion continues to urge Congress to make substantial increases in both grant accounts to allow states to construct state cemeteries and states veterans’ homes.

President Obama on September 29, 2016 enacted PL 114-226, the *West Los Angeles Leasing Act of 2016*. This bill authorizes VA to enter into Veterans Care Agreements with certain eligible providers to furnish hospital care, medical services, or extended care to eligible veterans if:

- Furnishing such care and services at VA facilities or under otherwise authorized contracts or sharing agreements with non-VA facilities is impracticable or inadvisable because of the veteran's medical condition, the travel involved, or the nature of the care or services required; and

- VA determines that the hospital care or medical services to be furnished are not available from a non-VA health care provider under a contract or sharing agreement other than an agreement under this bill.
The new law sets forth provider eligibility criteria and requires VA to establish a process for provider certification. VA may carry out leases at the VA West Los Angeles Campus in Los Angeles, CA:

- For supportive housing for veterans and their families;
- For third party services to veterans and their families for health and wellness promotion, education, employment-related training, peer activities and physical recreation, legal and federal benefits assistance, family support services including child care, and transportation; and,
- To The Regents of the University of California for additional services for veterans and their families.

VA shall establish a Community Veterans Engagement Board for the Campus to coordinate locally with VA to identify community goals and advise the department on improving services and outcomes for veterans, members of the Armed Forces, and their families. Finally, the law amends provisions regarding VA’s enhanced-use lease authority, including to prohibit VA from waiving or postponing the obligation of a lessee to pay any consideration, including rent, under an enhanced-use lease.

On October 19, 2016 the Social Security Administration announced a small raise in the cost living index, the third consecutive year the benefits adjustment will be under 0.5 percent. Since 2009, the cost-of-living increase has been more than 2 percent only once, when it reached 3.6 percent in 2011. Military retirees and individuals receiving veterans’ benefits, including service-connected disability compensation, will see a 0.3 percent cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) increase in their federal benefits next year. The adjustment went into effect December 30.

The Social Security COLA is calculated by the Bureau of Labor Statistics’ Consumer Price Index, a statistical estimate of the anticipated price of a variety of household goods and services. Social Security, military retiree, and veterans’ benefits changes affect more than 70 million Americans, about 22 percent of the country’s population.

According to the Associated Press, the 0.3 percent adjustment will translate into less than $4 more a month for a Social Security recipient who receives the average monthly benefit of $1,238. However, veterans using Medicare for health coverage may not see any increase at all, once those medical costs come into play. The AP reported Medicare Part B premiums, which are usually deducted from Social Security payments before the recipient receives their money, are increasing in 2017, thus effectively wiping out the COLA hike.

On November 28, 2016, President Obama signed PL 114-247, the No Veterans Crisis Line Call Should Go Unanswered Act. It was developed in response to inspector general and media reports that VA crisis line calls were going to voice mail because of mismanagement and lazy employees. It would require VA to develop a plan to ensure each telephone call and text message is answered in a timely manner by an appropriately qualified live person.

On December 14, 2016, the President signed PL 114-273, the Charles Duncan Buried with Honor Act of 2016. This measure authorizes VA to furnish a casket or urn for a deceased veteran laid to rest in a national, state, or tribal cemetery if their family cannot afford it.

On December 16, President Obama enacted PL 114-315, the Jeff Miller and Richard Blumenthal Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act of 2016. This measure would make a number of improvements to VA health care, the disability compensation process, and other veterans’ services. It would:

- Clarify VA’s responsibility to provide treatment to individuals seeking emergency care;
- Expand the amount of time that certain widows and widowers may receive and utilize Post-9/11 G.I. Bill educational assistance benefits under the Fry Scholarship;
• Require the VA Secretary to notify Congress if an employee is placed on administrative leave for more than 14 days in a single year; and,
• Expand eligibility for medallions to mark the graves of our nation’s veterans and Medal of Honor recipients who are buried in private cemeteries.

115th Congress, 1st Session

The First Session of the 115th Congress convened on January 3, 2017. Major issues on the agenda for both chambers revolved mainly around final fiscal year (FY) 2017 appropriations for the entire federal government, especially the Department of Defense (DOD), as well as appropriations for FY 2018 federal spending programs. Final funding for FY17 was approved by Congress in early May, with the House approving the measure by a 309-118 vote on May 3, and the Senate passing the bill the next day by a 79-18 vote. It was signed into law May 5 as Public Law (PL) 115-31.

To date, The American Legion has participated in twenty-two (22) congressional hearings during the First Session.

AMERICANISM

On February 8, 2017 Representative Steve Womack (AR) introduced House Joint Resolution (HJ Res.) 61, a flag protection constitutional amendment for the 115th Congress. It has been assigned to the House Judiciary Committee. The measure currently boasts 24 cosponsors. A Senate companion measure, Senate Joint Resolution (SJ Res.) 46 was introduced on June 14 by Senator Steve Daines (MT). That measure now has 11 cosponsors. The American Legion will continue to seek passage of a constitutional amendment to protect the American flag because it is the right thing to do. Let “We the People” decide.

On May 5, 2017 the President signed into law the final continuing appropriations measure for FY17, as PL 115-31. Under the provisions of the new law, Department of Justice programs received $29 billion in funding for the remainder of the fiscal year (until September 30, 2017). Specific areas of interest to The American Legion include:

• **Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI):** The FBI received $8.8 billion for this year;
• **U.S. Marshals Service:** This agency would receive $1.2 billion;
• **Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA):** $2.1 billion is tabbed for this agency;
• **Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF):** The legislation contains $1.3 billion; and,
• **Juvenile Justice Grants:** One program area that has been a primary Legion concern since 1974 is the account for juvenile justice grants, which totals $247 million for FY 2017. These grants address such concerns as child abuse, youth gangs and violence against children, missing/exploited children, and underage drinking.

On June 28, the full House Appropriations Committee approved HR 3267, legislation to fund the Departments of Commerce and Justice and Science programs for FY 2018. In particular, the Department of Justice (DOJ) would receive $29 billion for his various programs. Areas of DOJ which concern the Legion include:

• **Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)** is funded at $8.8 billion, an increase of $48 million over FY 2017 amounts;
• **U.S. Marshals Service** includes $2.8 billion, an increase of $88 million over FY 17 funding;
• **Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA)** would receive $2.6 billion, $98 million above current year enacted levels;
• **Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF):** The legislation contains $1.3 billion, $35 million more than FY 17;
• **Veterans Treatment Courts grants** will receive $7 million for the upcoming fiscal year; and,

• **Juvenile Justice Grants** programs would be funded at $170.5 million for FY 18.

**INTERNAL AFFAIRS**

On March 28, President Trump signed PL 115-15, the *Vietnam War Veterans Recognition Act of 2017*. The measure permanently recognizes March 29 each year as “National Vietnam War Veterans Day” as an appropriate occasion to fly the American flag. This law added March 29 as a day for displaying the American flag, as enumerated in Title 4, U.S. Code, Section 6(d). With enactment of this new law, there is no longer a need for the President to sign a resolution recognizing this significant date.

President Trump on March 31 signed PL 115-18. This legislation designates a location in our nation’s capital for a memorial to commemorate and honor the members of the Armed Forces who served on active duty in support of Operation Desert Storm or Operation Desert Shield.

On May 18, Rep. Tim Walz (MN), the Ranking Member of the House Veterans’ Affairs Committee, introduced HR 2519, *The American Legion 100th Anniversary Commemorative Coin Act*, with 102 original cosponsors. On the same day in the Senate, Sen. Todd Young (IN) introduced a Senate companion measure, S 1182, with 28 cosponsors. These bills would require the U.S. Mint to strike a commemorative coin to recognize the 100th anniversary of the founding of our organization. The House measure now includes a total of 269 cosponsors, and the Senate legislation has 75 cosponsors, thanks to the work of the Legislative Division. On August 3, the Senate approved S 1182 by a voice vote, sending the measure to the House for action.

On April 24, the Legislative Division began contacting all members of both the House and Senate, seeking original cosponsors for these commemorative coin bills. More cosponsors are being sought for HR 2519. To that end, all members of the National Legislative Council have been contacted, asking them to get in touch with their elected officials and urge them to become cosponsors of the legislation.

The Senate on August 3 passed by voice vote HR 873, the Global War on Terrorism Memorial Act. The measure originally was approved by the House on July 28 by a voice vote. The bill allows the Global War on Terror Memorial Foundation to establish the National Global War on Terrorism Memorial as a commemorative work on federal land in the District of Columbia. The memorial would commemorate and honor the members of the Armed Forces who served on active duty in support of the Global War on Terrorism. The legislation now goes to President Trump for his signature.

**NATIONAL SECURITY**

On March 16, the House voted 240-175 to approve HR 1181, the Veterans Second Amendment Protection Act. The measure now goes to the Senate for consideration. The measure would prohibit the VA from considering any beneficiary assisted by a fiduciary as “mentally defective” without a magistrate or judicial authority ruling that the beneficiary is a public danger for the purpose of reporting their names to the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS), or any other database intended to identify persons who would be excluded from keeping, possessing, or owning firearms. The American Legion supports this legislation.

Final funding for the Department of Defense (DOD) for the balance of FY 2017 was contained in PL 115-31, signed by the President on May 5. The measure allots $593 billion for DOD programs, an increase of $19.9 billion over the FY 2016 enacted level. It includes $76.6 billion in Overseas Contingency Operations funding – including $14.8 billion in supplemental funds requested by the current administration.

Defense spending includes:

• **Military Personnel and Pay**: $132.2 billion for military personnel and pay accounts, including a 2.1 percent pay raise for all uniformed personnel and
civilian employees. This funding level provides for 1.305 million active-duty troops and 813,200 Guard and Reserve troops.

- **Operation and Maintenance**: $223 billion; this category supports key readiness programs to prepare our troops for combat and peacetime missions, including flight time and training, equipment and facility maintenance, and base operations.

- **Research and Development**: $73.7 billion; this area will fund research, development, testing, and evaluation of new defense technologies. It will help to advance the safety and success of current and future military operations and prepare our nation to meet a broad range of future security threats.

- **Procurement**: $123.3 billion; these funds support our nation’s military readiness by providing the necessary platforms, weapons, and other equipment our military needs to train, maintain the force, and conduct successful operations.

- **Health**: $34.1 billion for DOD health and family programs; the legislation includes funding for cancer research, as well as traumatic brain injury and psychological health research and suicide prevention outreach programs.

The final FY17 continuing appropriations legislation (PL 115-31) contained $247.7 million in funding for military construction related to Overseas Contingency Operations. Under the provisions of PL 115-31, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) received $42.4 billion for its various programs for the remainder of FY 2017. Specific appropriations amounts include:

- **Customs and Border Protection** – $11.4 billion in discretionary funding, an increase of $137 million over the previous year;

- **Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)** – $6.4 billion for this agency, a $550 million increase;

- **Transportation Security Administration (TSA)** – $7.8 billion, $331 million above FY 2016 amounts;

- **U.S. Coast Guard** – $10.5 billion, including $1.37 billion for modernization of vessels, aircraft, and facilities;

- **U.S. Secret Service** -- $2 billion, an increase of $113 million over the previous year’s spending;

- **Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)** – $7.3 billion for disaster relief funds, including $2.7 billion in first responder grants; and,

- **Citizenship and Immigration Services (CIS)** – Although most of this agency’s activities are funded through fee collections, $121.1 million was appropriated for the E-Verify program, which allows companies to check the legal work status of their employees.

On July 27, the House approved by a vote of 235-192 HR 3219, a bill to fund the Military Construction programs and the Department of Veterans Affairs for FY 2018.

For military construction programs of the Department of Defense (DOD), this bill would provide $10.2 billion in FY 2018. This amount is an increase of $2.1 billion – or 25 percent – over current year spending. Within that amount, individual program areas include:

- **Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO)** – $638 million for projects directly related to facilities to support OCO;

- **Military Family Housing** – $1.4 billion to fund construction, operation and maintenance of military family housing, an increase of $131 million above FY 2017 level. This funding will ensure quality housing for 1.388 million families served by the program;

- **Military Medical Facilities** -- $737 million for construction and alterations for new or existing military medical facilities, an increase of $433 million above current year level;
• **DOD Education Facilities** -- $249 million for essential safety improvements and infrastructure work at four DOD Education Activities facilities in the U.S. and overseas;

• **Guard and Reserve** -- $575 million for construction/alteration of Guard and Reserve Facilities in 22 states;

• **NATO Security Investment Program (NSIP)** -- $178 million – same as FY 2017 – for infrastructure necessary for wartime, crisis, peace support and deterrence operations, and training requirements; and,

• **Guantanamo Bay** – The legislation continues language to prohibit the closure of the Guantanamo Bay Naval Station and a provision to forbid funding for any facility within the U.S. to house detainees. It also includes $115 million to fund the construction of two new barracks to house servicemembers stationed at Guantanamo Bay.

On July 27, the House of Representatives approved by a recorded vote of 235-192 the bill HR 3219, legislation to fund the Department of Defense (DOD) for FY 2018. Funding for the upcoming fiscal year totals $658.1 billion – discretionary funding is set at $584.2 billion, an increase of $68.1 billion over current year funding – with $73.9 billion for Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO)/Global War on Terrorism funding. Funding totals for major DOD accounts include:

• **Military Personnel and Pay** – The legislation includes $138.3 billion to provide for 1.324 million active-duty troops and 822,900 Guard and Reserve personnel. This category received an additional $1 billion above the request for the additional end strength, and fully funds a 2.4 percent pay raise for the military.

• **Operation & Maintenance** – A total of $241 billion was approved for this account. The amount is $3.1 billion above the request and $24.1 billion above FY17.

• **Research and Development** – The bill contains $84.3 billion for research, development, testing and evaluation of new defense technologies. This funding is $10.3 billion more than current year funding.

• **Procurement** – A total of $149 billion is proposed for this account. This amount is $24.1 billion above FY 17 funding. These funds provide for the weapons and other equipment necessary to train, maintain the force, and conduct successful operations.

• **Defense Health and Military Family Programs** – This account contains $34 billion for the Defense Health Program, an increase of $267 million above the request. Also included in this account are: $282 million for cancer research; $277 million for sexual assault prevention and response; and, $125 million for traumatic brain injury and psychological health research.

The original text of HR 3219 was combined with HR 2998 (MilCon/VA), the Legislative Branch funding measure and the Energy Department and Water Development programs spending bill as a “minibus” to enhance its chances of passage.

**VETERANS AFFAIRS & REHABILITATION**

On July 27, the House voted 235-192 to approve HR 3219 – as cited above – which contained the text of HR 2998, legislation to fund Military Construction, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), and Related Agencies for FY 2018.

Overall spending in the VA portion of the measure totals $88.8 billion in discretionary funding, a $6 billion increase over the FY 2017 spending level. Specific VA accounts would receive the following funding amounts:

• **VA Medical Services** – $69 billion. Individual accounts which interest The American Legion include: $8.4 billion in mental health care services; $7.3 billion in homeless veterans treatment, services, housing, and job training; $751 million for Hepatitis C treatment; $316 million for traumatic brain injury treatments;
$250 million in rural health initiatives; $186 million in suicide prevention activities; and, $50 million for opioid abuse prevention.

- **Medical and Prosthetic Research** – The Bill provided $698 million for this account, an increase of $23 million over the previous year’s funding.

- **Advance Appropriations for All Veterans Programs for FY 2019** – $178.4 billion. Discretionary medical programs will be funded in 2019 at $70.7 billion. In addition, mandatory programs will be funded at $107.7 billion. This was done to eliminate the possibility that VA programs would go unfunded in case of a government shutdown.

- **National Cemetery Administration** – This agency received $306 million for its operations, $20 million more than FY 2017.

- **Information Technology (IT)** – This account received $4.13 billion, a decrease of $15 million.

- **Disability Claims Processing** – $2.89 billion was allocated to address the burgeoning claims backlog. This amount is an increase of $50 million over the President’s request. This funding will support new staff to tackle claims and appeals work, digital scanning of claims; and centralized mail. Funding for the Board of Veterans Appeals was increased by $46 million to a total of $156 million, to address the looming appeals backlog.

- **Construction** – Major construction funding totaled $410 million, $118 million below the 2017 amount. Funds will be used for correcting critical seismic deficiencies, new hospital and clinic construction, and repairing crumbling infrastructure in some of VA’s oldest structures. Minor construction was set at $343 million, a decrease of $30 million from the previous year.

- **Construction Grants** – The state extended care facilities (state veterans’ homes) account received $90 million, with the state cemeteries programs receiving $45 million, both totals equal to FY 2017. Both of these programs have been essentially flat-lined by Congress for a number of years; The American Legion continues to urge Congress to make substantial increases in both grant accounts to allow states to construct state cemeteries and states veterans’ homes.

On June 23, President Trump signed into law PL 115-41, the **VA Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act of 2017**. This legislation, over a year in development, would:

- Create a new streamlined and efficient process to remove, demote or suspend (for longer than 14 days) any VA employee for poor performance or misconduct with a concrete shortened timeline, while still protecting employees’ due process rights, and would provide them with the right to appeal the action;

- Provide expanded protections for whistleblowers and specifically bar VA from using this removal authority if the employee has an open whistleblower complaint/case with the Office of Special Counsel;

- Provide the VA Secretary with the authority to: (1) reduce an employee’s federal pension if they are convicted of a felony that influenced their job at VA; (2) recoup a bonus provided to an employee who engaged in misconduct or poor performance prior to receiving the bonus; and (3) allow the Secretary to recoup any relocation expenses that were authorized for a VA employee only through the employee’s ill-gotten means, such as fraud, waste, or malfeasance; and,

- Authorize the Secretary to directly appoint individuals to the positions of Medical Center Director and Director of Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) if they have a demonstrated ability in the medical profession, health care administration or health care fiscal management. This will make it easier to fill these critical positions quickly.

The bill had its genesis from the VA “waiting list” scandal that erupted in 2014. It was revealed that a number of veterans died while waiting to receive health care. Enactment of this new law will incentivize VA employees to provide America’s veterans with the care
they deserve and hold these employees accountable when they fall short of their responsibilities.

On June 27, VA officials announced that veterans with less-than-honorable discharges will be able to access VA emergency rooms for urgent mental health care starting July 5. This action is a fulfillment of a pledge made by VA Secretary David Shulkin in March to find more ways to help those veterans, even if their status makes them ineligible for traditional veterans’ benefits. The new initiative mandates that the estimated 300,000 veterans with other-than-honorable paperwork (known by many veterans as “bad paper”) may receive care for “a mental health emergency” for up to 90 days. That may include inpatient services, residential care or outpatient options.

Secretary Shulkin in a statement said, “Suicide prevention is my top clinical priority. We want these former servicemembers to know there is someplace they can turn if they are facing a mental health emergency, whether it means urgent care at a VA emergency department, a Vet Center or through the Veterans Crisis Line.” The Veterans Crisis Line is also open to all veterans in need of immediate mental health assistance. To access the program, call 800-273-8255 and press 1, text 838255, or visit https://www.veteranscrisisline.net.

On July 24, several pieces of legislation related to veterans received action on the House floor. These measures now go to the Senate for further action. The measures included:

- HR 1058, the VA Provider Equity Act, which addresses the pay rates and career movement of podiatrists;
- HR 1690, the Department of Veterans Affairs Bonus Transparency Act, requiring reporting of all bonuses paid to Department executives;
- HR 1848, the Veterans Affairs Medical Scribe Pilot Act of 2017, implementing a pilot project to use scribes to assist physicians in a few VA medical centers; and,
- HR 2006, the VA Procurement Efficiency and Transparency Act, to improve the procurement practices of VA.

Also on July 24, the House debated S 114, legislation for funding VA’s Choice program for providing community care, failed on a procedural vote of 219 to 186. The proposition was strongly opposed by many veterans’ service organizations on the grounds that it paid for the extension by reducing funding for other VA programs.

House Veterans’ Affairs Committee members spent the week strengthening the measure. On July 28, S 114 was again presented to the full House. This version of the legislation provides $2.1 billion to continue the Choice Program for six months while Congress works on other reforms to the Choice Program. It would also authorize 28 major medical facility leases (many pending approval for two years) and included an additional $1.8 billion to enhance the recruitment, retention, and training of the VA workforce. The House passed the revised version of S 114 by a 414-0 recorded vote. The Senate passed the measure by a voice vote on August 1, sending it to the White House for the President’s signature.

On August 1 the Senate passed HR 2288, the Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act of 2017. This legislation would reform the rights and processes relating to appeals of decisions regarding claims for benefits under the laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs. The Senate passed the measure with amended text which passed the House on May 23 by a 418-0 vote. As a result, the Senate-passed version must return to the House for approval before it can be signed into law by the President.

VETERANS EMPLOYMENT & EDUCATION

On July 19, the House Appropriations Committee by a vote of 28-22 approved HR 3358, legislation which sets FY 2018 funding for the Department of Labor (DOL). The Veterans Employment and Training Service (VET), which oversees programs which
interest, The American Legion, would receive $284 million, $4.4 million above current year spending. Spending totals for individual programs include:

- **Jobs for Veterans state grants** will receive $175 million, which fund DVOP and LVER personnel;
- **Federal administrative costs** were funded at $42 million;
- **Homeless Veterans Reintegration Programs** would receive $47.5 million;
- **Transition Assistance Program (TAP)** was funded at $16.1 million; and,
- **National Veterans’ Employment and Training Services Institute (NVTSI)** would receive $3.4 million for its operations, which includes the training of DVOP and LVER personnel.

By a recorded vote of 405-0, the House on July 24 passed HR 3218, the *Harry W. Colmery Veterans Education Assistance Act of 2017* – colloquially known as the “Forever GI Bill” – which would make significant changes to the Post-9/11 GI Bill. These include eliminating a requirement that veterans use their benefits within 15 years of active-duty service. It would also expand benefits for reservists, Purple Heart recipients and surviving dependents. The bill would also retroactively restore benefits to veterans affected by recent school closures and provide additional funds to GI Bill users pursuing degrees in science, technology, engineering, and math. The Senate on August 2 passed HR 3218 by unanimous consent without amendments. The legislation now goes to President Trump for his signature.

On July 24, the House passed by voice vote HR 2749, the *Protecting Business Opportunities for Veterans Act of 2017*. This measure improve the oversight of contracts awarded by the VA Secretary to small business concerns owned and controlled by veterans. Later the same day, the House passed HR 2781, the *Ensuring Veteran Enterprise Participation in Strategic Sourcing Act*, by a voice vote. This legislation would direct the VA Secretary to certify the sufficient participation of small business concerns owned and controlled by veterans and small business concerns owned by veterans with service-connected disabilities in contracts under the Federal Strategic Sourcing Initiative.

These bills now go to the Senate for further action.

**MARKETING COMMISSION**

*Kenneth D. Danilson, Iowa, Chairman*

*James Baca, New Mexico, Director*

The American Legion Marketing Commission was formed in October 2015 to strategize and execute the organization’s activities to promote membership growth, strengthen the fundraising program, maximize merchandising opportunities, nurture corporate alliances and achieve greater brand awareness. In its second year, the commission continued to oversee multiple initiatives to better integrate marketing efforts executed by all divisions and to provide professional support for departments, districts, counties and posts.

Effort has been made to upgrade the digital media infrastructure that aims to improve the user experience for those who wish to learn about The American Legion, join, donate, buy merchandise, engage in a corporate alliance and participate in programs.

A new American Legion national website design and architecture was installed in April 2016 to stimulate visitation and access via mobile devices. That effort continues to produce an increase in visitation year over year, and a jump of access to legion.org via mobile devices. Increases in online joining and renewal continue to be reflective of the visitation growth. The new infrastructure is designed in such a way that departments, districts, counties and posts can replicate it to better synergize the user experience and to improve brand cohesion at every level.
As these developments have occurred, the commission has overseen day-to-day
performance in key areas of the organization’s business, including membership,
fundraising, corporate relationships, merchandising and branding.

The American Legion National Headquarters has developed a team of staff members
and agencies to improve brand awareness through high-profile events, such as The Legacy
Run, Salute to Heroes Inaugural Ball, National Convention, American Legion Baseball
World Series and major Veterans Day parades in New York City and Los Angeles, as well
as the 500 Festival Parade in Indianapolis.

Media attention to these and other American Legion activities have been cultivated
through multiple alerts, personal contact with media outlets and message-point strategies
for national participants at the events. Staff and agencies have supported improved
engagement with outside media.

The American Legion Marketing Commission continues it work with staff and
agencies to establish long-term strategic plans to deliver an effective, cohesive and best-

in-class marketing program that maintains the integrity of the organization and its legacy
while applying the most modern tools of communication.

**EMBLEM SALES COMMITTEE**  
Alvan T. Fuller, Massachusetts, Chairman  
Richard B. Keith, Indiana, Director

The American Legion emblem is the exclusive property of the National Headquarters.  
The sale of the emblem, emblem pins, merchandise carrying the emblem and other items
of organizational equipment is the responsibility of the National Headquarters in
Indianapolis. The following tables show gross sales, net earnings, etc., for the entire
calendar year 2016 and for the first six months of 2017.

**January 1 to December 31, 2016**  
(12 months)

<table>
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<th>Gross Sales</th>
<th>$13,058,095</th>
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<tr>
<td>Cost of Goods Sold</td>
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<tr>
<td>Overhead</td>
<td>$4,117,402</td>
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<tr>
<td>Operating Profit</td>
<td>$1,876,724</td>
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</table>

Total number of 2016 orders processed was .................................................. 106,828

**January 1 to June 30, 2017**  
(6 months)

<table>
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<th>Gross Sales</th>
<th>$7,930,483</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Cost of Goods Sold</td>
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<tr>
<td>Overhead</td>
<td>$2,407,684</td>
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<tr>
<td>Operating Profit</td>
<td>$1,291,015</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total orders processed for first six months of 2017 was .......................... 66,490

**MEDIA & COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION**  
Walter Ivie, Texas, Chairman  
R. Jeffrey Stoffer, Indiana, Director

In the past year, The American Legion Media & Communications Commission built
on its successes from its top-rated national magazine, significantly improved website and
booming social media platforms to broaden the organization’s branding and outreach to
internal and external audiences.

Media & Communications staff members have been actively engaged in working to
promote membership. They have worked with members of the Membership Division on
new tools for post members, recruiters and others to use to recruit and retain eligible
members. These include a revitalized web platform, recruitment videos, posters and flyers,
and more.

And in the magazine, we have allocated additional space to promote membership,
including a special 2-page We Are The American Legion feature on two top recruiters from
the Department of Georgia, and more recently a 2-page membership fact sheet and
application forms. The fact sheet/membership forms will continue to be published going
forward as a way to promote and encourage membership growth as we near our centennial
celebration.

Staff members have also worked to produce stories that illustrate the Legion’s
influence in communities across the nation.

Take, for example, White Bird (Idaho) Post 152. Post members revitalized the post,
which now has nearly 50 percent of the town’s 105 residents as members. The post uses
outdoor activities to engage veterans, providing them with camaraderie and ways to recover
from their PTSD.

In Cripple Creek, Colorado, Post 171 led a community effort to return a 100-percent
disabled veteran (who is a single dad) and his 8-year-old son who has MS to their home
after it was condemned. The post raised money, worked with other nonprofits and Home
Depot and donated countless hours of volunteer time to completely renovate the home,
which was rededicated on Father’s Day.

Success stories at Legion posts are not limited to just rural areas. In Chicago, Post 973
is growing and gaining attention. Post 973 leaders have re-energized the 71-year-old post,
coordinating events to attract all types of veterans — comedy night, jazz night and movie
night.

Stories such as these have resonated with our digital audience. We have also seen
success with our registrations online for programs such as American Legion Baseball,
American Legion Riders Legacy Run and others.

By all accounts the website transformation has been a major success. Consider:

• The number of page views grew from 1.3 million in July 2016 to 3.3 million last
  year to just under 3.6 million this year, or an increase of 173 percent.
• The number of unique visitors increased from 318,397 in July 2016 to 455,733
  last year to 476,496 this year, or an increase of 49.7 percent.
• The percentage of page views on mobile rose sharply. In the first six months of
  2015, about 7 percent of all page views were on mobile devices. In the same time
  period in 2016, the percentage was 34 percent. Now, we are seeing an even 50-
  50 split between desktop and mobile visitation.

Some additional highlights from the past year:

• Staff members worked with the Department of Idaho team to modernize its
  website and give it a similar look and feel with the national website. The
department adjutant has deemed the project a success. We are now
communicating with other departments that wish to have a similar website
redesign.
• After the NEC approved a resolution to broaden the applicant pool for the Legacy
  Scholarship, staff worked with co-workers in the Americanism Division to
promote the scholarship to the increased pool of eligibles. Promotions included
testimonial interviews, stories in print and digital, outreach through other
organizations, and a pilot test with posts in four key communities. Through these
efforts, the number of applications grew significantly from previous years.
The American Legion worked with the national World War II Museum in New Orleans on hosting a celebration of the signing of the GI Bill, which debuted an interactive Legion exhibit in the museum. Now, museum visitors will learn about the Legion’s role in one of the nation’s most influential pieces of legislation.

The Media and Communications e-mail newsletter area is growing rapidly. As of the end of July, the number of subscribers year over year has grown from 1.31 million to 1.43 million. Meanwhile, the open rates for each of the dozen e-newsletters fall between 20 and 40 percent – far above the industry standard rate of 14 percent.

Media and Communication staff members have launched Facebook Live coverage at various key events such as the inauguration, Washington Conference, Boys Nation and others. These videos are much more popular, attracting thousands of viewers each, while the previous live video platform rarely exceeded 100 viewers.

The Media Relations team in the Washington office is working hard to get the Legion’s name and brand out in major media outlets. The Legion has appeared on a weekly CBS radio program and has been quoted in major publications such as The New York Times, The Washington Post, NPR, The Atlantic and others.

Financially, the division now stands with an actual budget surplus of $285,384, driven by savings in postage, paper and printing. Altogether, the division is $40,685 behind budget in advertising revenue through the September magazine and July for electronic media. For the magazine, we are $61,992 behind budget for ad sales through the September magazine. Advertising has been hit hard by the membership decrease and will continue to be a challenge until the membership numbers improve.

Through the September issue of the magazine, production and distribution costs were more than $218,000 below budget, led by $66,507 in postage, $17,711 in printing savings and $134,039 in paper costs.

Additionally, the division is working on other key areas such as refining brochures and internal documents; updating mobile apps; support for the 100th Anniversary Observance Committee and Honorary Committee; and many other efforts.

NATIONAL SECURITY COMMISSION
G. Michael Schlee, Maryland, Chairman
Rhonda Powell, Alabama, Director

At 9:00 a.m., Sunday, August 28, 2016, 316 delegates and alternates assigned to the Convention Committee on National Security initially met in the Duke Energy Convention Center, Rooms 200-205, Second Floor. Mr. G. Michael Schlee (Maryland) was elected Chairman and Mr. E.C. Toppin (North Carolina) was appointed Secretary.

After the initial meeting, the following convention subcommittees met, held elections and dealt with the resolutions assigned to them:

Aerospace
Anthony Heath (MA), Chairman
C. R. Craynon (OH), Secretary

Conventional Armed Forces
Charles E. Kruger (MN), Chairman
Edward Mallicoot (NY), Secretary

Foreign Relations
Paul Dillard (TX), Chairman
Jim Hawk (SC), Secretary

Law and Order & Homeland Security
George Wehrli (FL), Chairman
Richard R. Keiser (NY), Secretary
Military Benefits & Quality of Life  Melvin Smullen (MD), Chairman  
   Dianne Boland (FL), Secretary  

National Guard and Reserve Forces  William Goede (MN), Chairman  
   Dennis Duggan (MD), Secretary  

Unconventional Forces and Intelligence  Doug Haggan (FR), Chairman  
   Charles Sharits (TN), Secretary  

At 11:00 a.m., Sunday, August 28, 2016, the delegates and alternates assigned to the Convention Committee on Security reconvened in the Duke Energy Convention Center, Rooms 200-205, Second Floor. Reports of all Convention Subcommittees were read and their recommended actions on resolutions considered. A total of 90 resolutions were assigned to the Convention Committee on National Security or prepared by the Committee to meet issues which were held to be of concern to The American Legion and germane to its principles and objectives. The Convention Committee authorized the Chairman and Secretary to sign the report of the Convention Committee on National Security on behalf of its delegates and make technical and administrative corrections to the resolutions reported out of the Committee.

AEROSPACE  
   Roger Webster, Michigan, Chairman  

APPROVED  

Resolution No. 216  
Subject: Support for the United States Air Force  
Origin: North Carolina  

WHEREAS, People are the United States Air Force’s top priority and the Air Force is the world’s premier aerospace force because its great people–active-duty, Guard, Reserve and civilian–continue to serve selflessly as a total force under increasingly difficult circumstances; and  

WHEREAS, In order to grow the force, recruiting and retention are among its highest priorities and to continue attracting and retaining dedicated men and women the Air Force recognizes that it must continue its efforts to improve pay, benefits, and quality of life; and  

WHEREAS, Since September 11, 2001 the Air Force has executed thousands of airlifts, moving millions of tons of cargo and passengers in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom and then New Dawn; and  

WHEREAS, The Air Force simultaneously provided top cover and weapons on target with more than a hundred-thousand sorties supporting those same operations; and  

WHEREAS, Air Force aeromedical evacuation crews surged to complete over a hundred-thousand of patient movements; and  

WHEREAS, On the home front, Air Force fighter, air refueling, and early warning aircraft have flown thousands of sorties supporting Operation Noble Eagle; and  

WHEREAS, To meet the challenges of adversaries at home and abroad, Air Force strategy calls for a capabilities–based approach to defense planning which enables the service to answer a broad range of challenges posed by potential adversaries, while also developing the capabilities it needs for the future; and  

WHEREAS, In assessing existing and potential adversaries’ capabilities against our own, the Air Force is developing task forces for a variety of mission requirements, from strategic response to homeland security, for example, Global Strike Task Force, which describes how we will operate in an anti-access scenario is the next step in the journey to
fully achieve Air Force missions, while also opening doors to adaptive and innovative operational plans and relevant organization structure;

WHEREAS, Continued investment in the core competencies of aerospace power–aerospace superiority, global attack, precision engagement, information superiority, rapid global mobility, and agile combat support–will continue to be the key to preserving the Air Force’s ability to respond to threats to America’s national security whenever and wherever they occur; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion National Convention assembled in, Cincinnati, Ohio, August 30, 31, September 1, 2016, That The American Legion urge the Congress to appropriately support the United States Air Force’s commitment to attract, retain, and train quality people and to mold them into an expeditionary aerospace force capable of flexibly responding to threats to America’s national security; to enhance readiness through its continued focus on total force integration and the integration of air and space systems; and to build and implement a transformation and modernization program that will maintain America’s dominance in air, space, and cyberspace well into the 21st century.

Resolution No. 225  
Subject: Fully Fund NASA  
Origin: North Carolina

WHEREAS, Commercial aviation is vital to the nation’s economic well-being; and

WHEREAS, NASA’s aeronautics research contributes significantly to air travel innovation and aligns with the principles, goals, and objectives of the National Aeronautics Research and Development Policy and its related National Aeronautics Research and Development Plan; and

WHEREAS, NASA explores early-stage concepts and ideas, develops new technologies and operational procedures through foundation research, along with demonstrating the potential of promising new vehicles, operations, and safety technology in relevant environments; and

WHEREAS, NASA is addressing the research challenges that must be overcome to achieve the goals of the Next Generation Air Transportation System or NextGen, a technology modernization effort that will make air travel safer, more flexible, more efficient, and to enable the design of vehicles that can support NextGen including unmanned aircraft; and

WHEREAS, The goals of NASA are to expand airspace capacity, enable fuel efficient flight planning, reduce the overall environmental footprint of airplanes today and in the future, diminish delays on the ground and in the sky, and improve the ability of aircraft to operate in all weather conditions while meeting or exceeding safety standards; and

WHEREAS, A goal that needs continued funding is for the X-43A Scramjet is essential; and

WHEREAS, Test flights are part of NASA Hyper-X program, an advanced research effort in propulsion technologies for high speed flight within the atmosphere and into Earth orbit; and

WHEREAS, After many years of research and development testing the craft met major milestones propelling itself to Mach 9.6 or nearly 7,000 mph; and

WHEREAS, Researchers predict scramjet speed could reach 15 times the speed of sound so that an 18 hour trip to Tokyo from New York City becomes a 2 hour flight; and

WHEREAS, The dissemination and use of space systems technology, the research programs on which it is based, and the spin-off products, techniques and services derived from the U.S. space program are vital components of the nation’s economy and the well-being of its citizens; and

WHEREAS, The U.S. space program has kept the nation on the leading edge of the technology frontier, has created jobs, improved communications, electronics, material, diagnosis and treatment of medical care for veterans and all Americans, fostered new
CONVENTIONAL ARMED FORCES
Charles E. Kruger (MN), Chairman

APPROVED

Resolution No. 19
Subject: Develop Defense Against Electromagnetic Pulse Attack
Origin: Nebraska

WHEREAS, In defiance of the United States and international community, both North Korea and Iran actively strive for missiles capable of delivering nuclear warheads; and

WHEREAS, The U.S. must maintain superior strategic deterrents and defense systems in the interest of national defense from both conventional and unconventional foes operating in either symmetrical or asymmetrical environments; and

WHEREAS, Islamic violent extremists and rogue nations continue to plot against the West and seek to destroy the U.S.; and

WHEREAS, The U.S. Missile Defense Agency (MDA) has requested $7.5 billion for FY 2017, encompassing $1.0 billion for the Ground-based Midcourse Defense (GMD) program, which will increase the number of deployed Ground Based Interceptors (GBI) to 44 by the end of 2017; and

WHEREAS, MDA requested $162 million to continue the development of the Long Range Discrimination Radar (LRDR) and an additional $305 million to complete two construction phases, with a completion date of 2019; and

WHEREAS, MDA has initiated a redesign of the Kill Vehicle (KV) for the GMD GBI with a budget of $274 million and an anticipated deployment date of 2020; and

WHEREAS, The Congressionally-sanctioned Commission to Assess the Threat to the U.S. from Electromagnetic Pulse (EMP) has clearly defined the vulnerabilities in America’s homeland defense posture to include potential catastrophic damage to U.S. infrastructure, telecommunications, banking, energy, transportation, food, water, emergency services, space systems, and government agencies; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Cincinnati, Ohio, August 30, 31, September 1, 2016, That The American Legion urges the
United States Government to fully fund, develop, and deploy a national ballistic missile defense system designed to intercept electromagnetic pulse (EMP) attacks; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges the United States Government to swiftly commission the further development and installation of electronic equipment and components resistant to EMP to quickly provide significant protection and limit damage to high-value electrical generation and transmission assets as well as emergency generation and re-start capability; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges the United States Government to expeditiously develop an EMP response plan to include necessary back-up systems and corresponding supply of electronic parts and equipment vital to a successful American defense and response in the event of such an attack.

Resolution No. 86
Subject: National Defense Budget
Origin: Maryland

WHEREAS, The American Legion views a strong national defense as paramount to national security; and

WHEREAS, the House Armed Services Committee approving a $583 billion total defense authorization bill for 2017; and

WHEREAS, More than $1 trillion in sequestration-related defense cuts are slated for now through 2021; and

WHEREAS, Secretary Hagel commissioned a report that stated, “If sequestration-level cuts persist, our forces will assume substantial additional risks in certain missions and will continue to face significant readiness and modernization challenges”; and

WHEREAS, Not only do the spending cuts downsize the force structure, but also reduce service members pay and benefits, which could potentially lead to the loss of highly trained men and women; and

WHEREAS, While the Department of Defense is content on shrinking the size and scope of the United States military, our major adversaries, Russia and China, along with rogue nations such as North Korea and Iran are ramping up their military stocks and capabilities; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Cincinnati, Ohio, August 30, 31, September 1, 2016, That The American Legion urge Congress to oppose any future budget cuts in military spending proposed by the Department of Defense; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That Congress not allow our military forces to reach a weakened state in these uncertain and perilous times.

Resolution No. 96
Subject: Support Full Funding and Resourcing for the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps
Origin: Maryland

WHEREAS, Our national security depends to a large extent on the ability of the United States to maintain sea superiority as well as strategic combat capabilities of the United States Navy and Marine Corps; and

WHEREAS, The Navy and Marine Corps have continually shown the ability of the United States to maintain a forward posture, projecting U.S. power overseas, when and where needed around the world to uphold our national security; and

WHEREAS, To maintain force readiness, the Navy and Marine Corps must balance priorities of manpower, current and future readiness, quality of service and alignment; and
WHEREAS, Balancing critical combat readiness with future navy requirements is essential to US Naval superiority; and

WHEREAS, A 21st century Navy requires rapid technological advancements in the areas of command and control, which will require judicious upgrades of its systems; and

WHEREAS, The programs that will be the core of Navy and Marine Corps forces in the 21st century require substantial investments; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Cincinnati, Ohio, August 30, 31, September 1, 2016, That The American Legion urges the Administration and the Congress to fully resource and fund the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps to provide credible combat power from the sea.

Resolution No. 104
Subject: Rebuild America’s Defense Industrial Base
Origin: Maryland

WHEREAS, Developing new technologies for the Armed Forces can be hindered by budget shortfalls despite the fact that the U.S. is currently the world leader in development of new technology, thereby disrupting materiel development vital to national security; and

WHEREAS, The United States fighting forces must be equipped with state-of-the-art technological advances to assure their capability to win on the modern battlefield, whether on land, sea, or in the air; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Cincinnati, Ohio, August 30, 31, September 1, 2016, That The American Legion urge the Administration and Congress to rebuild America’s industrial base by continuing to adequately fund research, development, and acquisition budgets to assure our military production can meet national requirements especially when U.S. military power is committed; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the Administration and Congress encourage the rebuilding of America’s defense industrial base by having a proper balance of policies that: increase and then sustain domestic production at levels that maintain a robust and internationally competitive defense industry, keep the arms industry internationally competitive and ensure that the U.S. is not putting itself at risk by having our armaments produced offshore.

Resolution No. 215
Subject: Long-Range Strike Capabilities
Origin: North Carolina

WHEREAS, United States Air Force Chief of Staff General Schwartz once stated that “Deterrence is not a fading construct in national security – re-emerging and growing in importance as an aspect of U.S. defense policy, risks and uncertainty cloud our ability to forecast the weapons needed to offer deterrence in a world of changing economies, alliances, competing political systems all of which require defense planning for the potential threats of ten and twenty years in the future”; and

WHEREAS, Russia and China continue to update their strategic-missile capabilities evidenced by exercises such as the Russia and China intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) tests; and

WHEREAS, The Russian Defense Ministry proposed 16 test launches of its ICBM’s for 2016; and

WHEREAS, In December of 2015, China conducted a launcher test of a new rail-mobile version of its newest ICBM, the DF-41 (CSS-X-20); and

WHEREAS, Development of Russian surface-to-air missiles (SAM) has progressed to the point where there is concern about the ability of present non-stealth vehicles in the bomber mix to penetrate modern air defenses; and
WHEREAS, The President’s 2017 budget proposal provides $1.4 billion for Air Force Long Range Strike Bombers, 3.1 billion for seven KC-46 Tankers, and $89 million for Carrier based Aerial Refueling Systems (CBARS); and
WHEREAS, The U.S. Air Force, Navy, and Army have allocated $4.61 billion for drones in Fiscal Year 2017 budget; and
WHEREAS, Russia and China have a history of supplying their weapon systems to nations which are often unfriendly with the U.S.; and
WHEREAS, We need to be prepared to deal with advanced fighter technology in quantities and locations beyond Russia and China; and
WHEREAS, China and Russia have failed to support efforts to impose effective sanctions on Iran’s nuclear program and in the case of Russia, they have unfrozen a contract to sell its S-300 anti-aircraft missile system to Iran; and
WHEREAS, Technical opportunities are changing constantly making the selection of what new capabilities should be developed to counter anticipated threats a major challenge as an error in selection of a course of development can have repercussions for decades; questions concerning manned or unmanned, hypersonic conventional or nuclear, missile or aircraft will constantly face the strategic planner while restricted defense budgets and the need to support other facets of the spectrum of conflict will persist; and
WHEREAS, Major General Jim Martin, Air Force budget director there have been sacrifices in modernization to uphold current readiness; and
WHEREAS, The United States Air Force was forced to delay five F-35’s, some fourth-generation modifications, and delay completion of recapitalization efforts for the C-130H; and
WHEREAS, Protecting modernization priorities, including the Long Range Strike Bomber, the KC-46A refueling tanker, and key space and intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance programs, is vital to the future force; and
WHEREAS, Questions exist about the nature of the strike solution uncertainties that may arise in the next decade that warrant the relatively inexpensive efforts to define the requirements of a long range strike weapon; now, therefore, be it
RESOLVED, By The American Legion National Convention assembled in, Cincinnati, Ohio, August 30, 31, September 1, 2016, That The American Legion urges the Department of Defense to undertake an adequately funded and prioritized program to define the nature of a long-range strike capability in the acquisition cycle where a concept including performance is established, systems engineering plans are ready, a request of proposal is on-hand and ready to commence the development test and production of a new long-range strike capability to address potential threats; and, be it finally
RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges Congress to fully fund the initial steps leading to capability of rapidly beginning the acquisition process for upgrades in long-range strike capabilities should the risk assessment determine it necessary circa 2018.

Resolution No. 217
Subject: Identifying National Interests Before Committing Military Forces and Assets
Origin: North Carolina
WHEREAS, One of The American Legion’s founding principles is national security; and
WHEREAS, The American Legion considers itself to be a partner with the Department of Defense in ensuring the nation’s security; and
WHEREAS, The United States Constitution clearly defines the duties and responsibilities of the branches of government relating to defense of the nation; and
WHEREAS, There is no greater responsibility of a government than to protect its population and infrastructure; and
WHEREAS, The War Powers Resolution of 1973 requires the President to advise the Congress and American people what national security interest is served by committing U.S. forces to combat in a sovereign nation; and
WHEREAS, The American people, due to a lack of experience in military matters, have no real understanding of the threats which face the nation; and

WHEREAS, The United States is currently under significant economic and budgetary constraints which has the potential to negatively impact the ability of the military to protect the nation; and

WHEREAS, It has been shown repeatedly an uninformed and uninvolved public will quickly lose confidence and deny support for military operations they do not understand; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion National Convention assembled in, Cincinnati, Ohio, August 30, 31, September 1, 2016, That The American Legion support the War Powers Resolution of 1973 (50 U.S.C.1541-1548); and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion, in keeping with its founding principle of a strong national security, call on the President of the United States, in compliance with the War Powers Resolution of 1973, to inform the American people and Congress of the critical national interests served by committing U.S. armed forces or military assets to hostile action; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That before committing military assets to hostile action, specific goals, overwhelming force levels necessary to accomplish the goals, parameters identifying when the specific goals are met, and realistic costs in national treasure must be identified and articulated to the American people and the Congress; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion define hostile action as any action where the use of lethal force is authorized, imminent, or implied to accomplish a military objective within the borders of a sovereign foreign nation; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion encourage Congress to once again establish itself as the oversight mechanism as prescribed in the Constitution of the United States in Article 1 Section 8, "The Powers of Congress."

Resolution No. 218
Subject: Support for the Selective Service Program
Origin: North Carolina

WHEREAS, The American Legion has given long-standing support to universal military training; and

WHEREAS, Despite the success of the all-volunteer force, Selective Service registration continues to serve as our defense manpower insurance policy; and

WHEREAS, The current reality of the upcoming reductions in end-strength across all branches of the active duty force as a result of the Budget Control Act of 2011 and continued sequestration only reinforces the need for the capability to reconstitute our forces in a timely manner; and

WHEREAS, World Wars I and II began long before our country became involved, allowing the United States the benefit of abundant time to accomplish registration before troops were actually committed, a luxury we cannot expect to enjoy in today's unpredictable environment; and

WHEREAS, The Selective Service Registration Program has enjoyed remarkable success as more that 90 percent of our 18-25 year old men have registered and there is virtually no resistance to the program; and

WHEREAS, Registration is one of the few remaining obligations our nation requires of its young men and removing this "rite of passage" for all men would reduce each man's level of consciousness about military service and the obligation to defend our nation; and

WHEREAS, If a national emergency arose, females would be as willing as their male counterparts to serve their country; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense has opened all Military Occupational Specialties to female servicemembers; and

WHEREAS, Each year we see an increase in female membership in The American Legion; now, therefore, be it
RESOLVED, By The American Legion National Convention assembled in, Cincinnati, Ohio, August 30, 31, September 1, 2016, That The American Legion supports the retention of the Selective Service Registration Program as being in the best interests of all Americans, and its maintenance is a proven cost-effective, essential, and rapid means of reconstituting the required forces to protect our national security interests; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion support legislation to amend the Selective Service Registration Program to include the mandatory registration of females between the ages of 18-25 years of age.

Resolution No. 219
Subject: Support Full Funding for the Department of the Army Budget
Origin: North Carolina

WHEREAS, The United States Army is serving a nation at war and, as America’s strategic and decisive land and expeditionary combat force, is a proud member of the Joint Force providing combatant commanders with relevant and ready campaign power; and

WHEREAS, The Army’s compelling needs include providing landscape power, training and equipping soldiers and adaptive leaders for the rigors of war, sustaining the all-volunteer force, and providing the infrastructure and support systems to ensure the Army is able to execute its missions; and

WHEREAS, The momentum of Army transformation and modernization needs to be maintained so as to deal with irregular, catastrophic, disruptive and traditional challenges; and

WHEREAS, The Army vision is to remain the preeminent land power, the ultimate instrument of national resolve, that is both ready and relevant to the challenges of the dangerous and complex 21st century security environment; and

WHEREAS, Support and funding is required to achieve critical recruiting and retention goals for all Army components; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion National Convention assembled in, Cincinnati, Ohio, August 30, 31, September 1, 2016, That the Army’s budget and wartime demands be fully funded and that supplemental funding is required for combat and contingency operations and to reset and replace battle losses of equipment; and, be it further

RESOLVED, The Congress will ensure that the Army is fully staffed, trained, and equipped to achieve victory in the War on Terrorism; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That Congress enables the Army to maintain the momentum of key programs while accelerating transformation.

Resolution No. 220
Subject: Support for National Missile Defense System
Origin: North Carolina

WHEREAS, The Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty of 1972 between the United States and the Soviet Union had placed a cap on deploying missile defense systems and limited more advanced research on such defensive systems; and

WHEREAS, Work on the underground silos for the first missile interceptors in Alaska began in June 2002 which reflected the urgency to begin moving on a missile defense system; and

WHEREAS, In early 2010, NATO acquired the first phase of an initial capability to protect alliance forces against ballistic missile threats; and

WHEREAS, At the November 2010 NATO summit in Lisbon, NATO’s leaders decided to develop a ballistic missile defense (BMD) capability to pursue its core task of collective defense; and

WHEREAS, Allied leaders recognized that the planned deployment of European-based U.S. ballistic-missile defense assets would help protect allies, and agreed that this
capability should be an integral part of any future NATO-wide ballistic-missile defense architecture; and

WHEREAS, In June 2011, the NATO-Russia Council defense ministers took stock of the work on missile defense since the 2010 Lisbon summit; and

WHEREAS, In March 2012, NATO began implementing the BMD plan; and

WHEREAS, In February 2016, North Korea launched its second Earth satellite, underscoring its continuing progress toward deliverable nuclear weapons; and

WHEREAS, The imperative to protect America is just as high today when the potential aggressors are rogue states rather than the USSR; and

WHEREAS, As unreliable, hostile nations such as North Korea and Iran seem determined to acquire the capability to deliver a nuclear strike over long distances, including striking the continental United States, the need for a national missile defense as an essential ingredient of our homeland security for the continental United States has become as urgent as ever; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion National Convention assembled in, Cincinnati, Ohio, August 30, 31, September 1, 2016, That The American Legion urges the United States Government to develop and continue to deploy a national missile defense system which is in the national interest of the United States and the American people and an essential ingredient of our homeland security.

Resolution No. 221
Subject: Military Occupational Specialty Standards
Origin: North Carolina

WHEREAS, The American Legion has long recognized the significant role and the contributions of women serving in the military services of the United States of America; and

WHEREAS, Women veterans have been eligible for full membership in The American Legion since its founding in 1919, prior to the full franchise of women to vote in presidential elections; and

WHEREAS, There are approximately 205,000 women serving on active duty in the military comprising 15.3% of the total active force, and approximately 130,000 women serving in the National Guard and Reserve comprising 18% of the total Guard and Reserve all serving with distinction, honor, and valor; and

WHEREAS, In 2013, the Department of Defense issued an order mandating that women have the same opportunities as men in combat jobs; and

WHEREAS, On April 1, 2016 all military combat professions were opened to females; and

WHEREAS, Three females have graduated from Army Ranger School; and

WHEREAS, Women have and still are serving in Iraq and Afghanistan in low intensity combat, truck convoys, military-police units, female engagement teams, where they have interacted and assisted Afghanistan women and a number of other military occupations; and

WHEREAS, Wherever any member of our armed services serving in Iraq and Afghanistan are on the battlefield, which undergoes a constant changing definition, there are no truly secure areas; and

WHEREAS, More than 1,000 female servicemembers have been wounded due to military action in Iraq and Afghanistan; and

WHEREAS, A growing number of female servicemembers are suffering from what is termed the “signature wounds” of service in Iraq and Afghanistan, Post-Traumatic Stress and Traumatic Brain Injury; and

WHEREAS, The Congress and the courts have held that Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which ensures all individuals are treated equally before the law with respect to civilian employment, does not apply to the military profession, no less than seven major
Supreme Court decisions are distilled in these words from Goldman v. Weinberger; [T]he military is, by necessity, a specialized society [separate] from civilian society…‘The military must insist upon respect for duty and a discipline without counterpart in civilian life,’ in order to prepare for and perform its vital role…The essence of military service ‘is the subordination of the desires and interests of the individual to the needs of the service.’; and

WHEREAS, Some countries have repealed “combat exclusion policies” in recent years, while others such as the Soviet Union and Israel have maintained their “combat exclusion policies”; and

WHEREAS, Retired Army General Norman Schwarzkopf, former Commander of Operation Desert Shield and Desert Storm, spoke for many Americans when he declared, “Decisions on what roles women should play in war must be based on military standards, not women’s rights”; and

WHEREAS, There are valid concerns about the physical demands required of soldiers to qualify and serve in the combat arms; Army and Marine Corps infantry, armor, artillery, Army Special Forces and Navy Seals; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion National Convention assembled in, Cincinnati, Ohio, August 30, 31, September 1, 2016, That The American Legion strongly believes that the Department of Defense and all branches of the military services must maintain the current physical and mental requirements and qualifications for acceptance into military service that have created the best and most respected military in the world; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the mental and physical qualifications of all military personnel, regardless of gender or age, should be held to a single duty position specific standard depending on Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) and not be amended without Congressional authority.

Consolidate

Resolution No. 49 with Resolution No. 218
Subject: Support For The Selective Service Registration Program
Origin: Colorado

Refer to the Standing Commission

Resolution No. 258
Subject: Selective Service for Women
Origin: Illinois

FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE
Paul Dillard (TX), Chairman

APPROVED

Resolution No. 45
Subject: Policy on the Arctic Region
Origin: Maine

WHEREAS, The United States, an Arctic nation, with the thinning and decreasing circumpolar sea ice will experience new security risk and economic opportunities; and

WHEREAS, The Russian Federation in 2015 boosted their Arctic Region presence, stood up the Northern Fleet-Unified Strategic Command, conducted a 2015 joint Arctic land, air, sea and undersea military exercise and restored Arctic air defense not active since the cold war; and
WHEREAS, The United States National Strategy for the Arctic Region emphasizes security and the eight-member circumpolar nation members of the Arctic Council chaired by the United States emphasizes security as key to address issues faced by Arctic governments and native peoples; and

WHEREAS, The thinning and decreasing sea ice will offer increased opportunities to extract untapped oil and natural gas reserves from circumpolar continental shelf, provide shorter shipping routes for establishing trade, offer opportunities for new Arctic trading partners, and open the Arctic to cruise-line tourism; and

WHEREAS, The United States Coast Guard and Navy lack the infrastructure to ensure the security and safety of current or increased Arctic activity; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By the American Legion in National Convention assembled in Cincinnati, Ohio, August 30, 31, September 1, 2016, That the American Legion express strong support for a National Strategy which recognizes the renewed Arctic importance in United States National Security; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the American Legion urges the President of the United States and both houses of the U. S. Congress to support legislation to advance United States security interests, construction of new heavy polar icebreakers, and promote Arctic region stewardship by strengthening international cooperation and funding to this end.

Resolution No.  89
Subject: Taiwan Defense Arms Sales
Origin: Maryland

WHEREAS, The Republic of China, also known as Taiwan, is a long-time friend having fought with the United States against Japanese Imperialism during World War II and against communism during the post-war period; and

WHEREAS, The Republic of China is a major trading partner and democratic ally of the United States; and

WHEREAS, Taiwan is strategically located and is extremely important to the peace, prosperity, and stability of the Asia-Pacific region; and

WHEREAS, Under the provisions of the Taiwan Relations Act (Public Law 96-8), the United States is committed 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; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Cincinnati, Ohio, August 30, 31, September 1, 2016, That The American Legion supports the sales of the latest American weapon systems, including naval vessels, submarines, military aircraft, high-tech electronics, communications equipment and air-defense missile systems to Republic of China of such quality and in such quantities so as to enable the Government of the Republic of China to maintain a sufficient self-defense capability; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion supports the continued sales of sophisticated U.S. weapon systems, including, but not limited to, F-16 fighter aircraft, antisubmarine equipment and torpedoes, anti-aircraft/anti-missile systems, and electronics and communications equipment to Republic of China; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the Government of the Republic of China be given preferential pricing for these items but not equal to that given to the U.S. government, to enable the Republic of China to purchase sufficient quantities of these items for their defense needs.

Resolution No.  90
Subject: South China Sea Island Building
Origin: Maryland
WHEREAS, In the last 18 months, China has constructed more new island surface than all other nations have constructed throughout history and unlike other claimants, China has—at least briefly—placed military equipment on one of its artificial islands; and

WHEREAS, The South China Sea is international water and sovereignty in the area should be determined by the United Nations Convention on Laws of the Sea (UNCLOS); and

WHEREAS, UNCLOS states that countries can’t claim sovereignty over any land masses that are submerged at high tide, or that were previously submerged but have been raised above high tide level by construction; and

WHEREAS, Control of the South China Sea would allow China to dominate a major trade route through which most of its imported oil flows; and

WHEREAS, It would also allow China to disrupt, or threaten to disrupt, trade shipments to all countries in East and Southeast Asia as well as deny access to foreign military forces, particularly the United States; and

WHEREAS, The floor of the South China Sea may contain massive oil and natural gas reserves and sovereignty over the region could give China a level of energy security and independence far beyond what it currently possesses; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Cincinnati, Ohio, August 30, 31, September 1, 2016, That The American Legion urge Congress to use aircraft and naval vessels to assert freedom of navigation in the region, as demonstrated by the recent passage of the USS Fort Worth combat ship and the flight of the U.S. Navy P8 Poseidon surveillance aircraft, over the Chinese construction at Fiery Reef; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion support strengthening regional allies through intelligence gathering and surveillance capabilities, and provide them with updated military hardware to counter China’s technical advantages in both quantity and quality.

Resolution No. 111
Subject: Taiwan Straits Dialogue
Origin: Maryland

WHEREAS, The Republic of China (Taiwan) is a long-time friend, ally, and major trading partner of the United States; and

WHEREAS, The Republic of China, closely cooperated with the United States against Japanese imperialism during World War II and in the fight against Communism during the Cold War; and

WHEREAS, Taiwan is strategically located and is extremely important to the peace, prosperity, and stability of the Pacific Rim; and

WHEREAS, It is in the best interests of all parties on both sides of the Taiwan Strait to resolve political differences peacefully; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Cincinnati, Ohio, August 30, 31, September 1, 2016, That the United States Government encourages the parties on both sides of the Taiwan Strait, the Republic of China (Taiwan) and the Peoples Republic of China (PRC) to promote peaceful dialogue and avoid any negative actions by either side to change the status quo, which might lead to military conflict.

Resolution No. 171
Subject: Western Hemisphere Institute For Security Cooperation (WHINSEC)
Origin: Iowa

WHEREAS, The Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHINSEC) is established in Public Law 106-398, Section 911 which amended Chapter 108 of Title 10, United States Code by adding a new section numbered as § 2166, to enhance security, and promote democratic values, and foster cooperation among the Organization of American States; and
WHEREAS, In addition to the primary missions cited above, the mission of WHINSEC also includes promoting respect for human rights; knowledge and understanding of U.S. customs and traditions; and training programs covering ethics, the rule of law, international treaties and conventions, international humanitarian law, the military role in democratic societies and civilian control of the military; and

WHEREAS, WHINSEC inherited an unfair and unfortunate reputation from its predecessor, the School of Americas (SOA) and such reputation is being generated by public response to media coverage of claims by a number of human rights activist groups who accused SOA, without any specific cause and effect evidence, of conducting training that had influenced a total of eight military leaders from Central and South America to commit serious human rights violations and crimes against their fellow citizens, long after leaving SOA and serving in much higher positions of responsibility in corrupted governments; and

WHEREAS, WHINSEC and the Department of Defense have long maintained that no school should be held accountable for the actions of only a minute number of its large number of its graduates; and

WHEREAS, American Legion representatives visited WHINSEC in June 2008 and observed ethics and human rights courses being conducted and met with students from South and Central America who expressed appreciation for the training in American alliances, cooperation, democracy, living in free societies and traditional American values; and

WHEREAS, During their WHINSEC visit, The American Legion representatives observed the personal relationships and bonding developed between and among the WHINSEC faculty, the international military students and U.S. military students training along with the international military students and how effectively, therefore, WHINSEC is building the kind of partnering with other nations and their military, police, and first responders that is deemed as an essential element of national power to use in the long fight against extremist terrorism, as well as a very cost effective way to build improved relationships and the international partnering needed for success in the prolonged war against extremist terrorism; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Cincinnati, Ohio, August 30, 31, September 1, 2016, That The American Legion urges Congress and the Secretary of Defense to ensure that the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHINSEC) is adequately funded on the basis that hemispheric training, alliance building, and the sharing of knowledge among the Organization of American States is a vital interest to the U.S. in terms of the establishment of alliances, hemispheric cooperation and national security; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion calls on Congress to ensure that such funding be restricted for use only for those purposes included in the mission statement of WHINSEC; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge Congress and the Secretary of Defense to establish similar institutes for other regions of the world where international mutual cooperation and alliance building can be beneficial to the vital interests of the United States.

Resolution No. 172
Subject: Support for World Press Freedom
Origin: Iowa

WHEREAS, In a democratic society the essential right of the press (print and electronic) to report on government activities, social movements, scientific developments, and other significant events or breakthroughs is one of the basic pillars of our Bill of Rights; and
WHEREAS, Such reporting and expression of speech helps to ensure the transparency of the political and social systems that are in place and that an informed and educated public can more effectively participate politically; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion recognizes that oppressive and restrictive regimes around the world work to deter, manipulate or out-rightly deny their citizens the ability to get unfettered information, or to allow free press to investigate and report in those countries; and

WHEREAS, Department of State and U.S. Government News Media Organizations under the Broadcast Board of Governors such as: The Voice of America, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Radio Free Asia, Radio Marti TV, and Middle East Broadcasting Network, are essential news resources to countries whose domestic news sources are oppressed or restricted; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Cincinnati, Ohio, August 30, 31, September 1, 2016, That The American Legion urge the President and Congress to designate and provide appropriate funding for the Department of State and U.S. Government News Media Organizations under the Broadcast Board of Governors such as: The Voice of America, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Radio Free Asia, Radio Marti TV, and the Middle East Broadcasting Network; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion supports international press freedom and the protection of international journalists who report and investigate news throughout the world.

Resolution No. 173
Subject: Secure National Borders Against Illegal Drugs
Origin: Iowa

WHEREAS, The borders that separate the United States, Canada, and Mexico are relatively open; and

WHEREAS, There are rising concerns among U.S. officials regarding the deteriorating security situation which allows significant smuggling of drugs, illegal immigrants, and other contraband across our borders; and

WHEREAS, The violence on the Mexican border has caused a change in smuggling from that area to other parts of our national borders such as Canada and our sea coast; and

WHEREAS, The Mexican government, while attempting to control the problem, is not able to counter the drug cartels due to being out-manned and out-gunned; and

WHEREAS, The United States has the capability to provide assistance to the Mexican Government that would allow it to reestablish control and eliminate the drug cartels; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Cincinnati, Ohio, August 30, 31, September 1, 2016, That The American Legion support the President’s and Congress’ efforts to provide assistance and aid to the Canadian and Mexican Governments to secure the borders separating the United States, Canada, and Mexico from trafficking illegal drugs across those borders.

Resolution No. 174
Subject: Security of Overseas Embassies
Origin: Iowa

WHEREAS, The United States has 294 embassies and consulates distributed around the globe; and

WHEREAS, Many of these embassies and consulates are located in countries that are hostile towards our culture and way of life; and

WHEREAS, The soil on which they occupy is sovereign territory of the United States; and
WHEREAS, The men and women who serve our country by representing us in these locations deserve the highest level of security we can offer; and

WHEREAS, In the wake of the recent murder of our ambassador to Libya and three other Americans in Benghazi, Libya on September 11, 2012, marking the first United States ambassador death to a violent act since 1979; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Cincinnati, Ohio, August 30, 31, September 1, 2016, That the United States government review, and if necessary, take measures at all United States embassies and consulates to ensure the safety and security of all United States diplomatic personnel against our enemies and terrorists.

Resolution No. 175
Subject: Oppose Iran Nuclear Deal
Origin: Iowa

WHEREAS, The American Legion views nuclear weapons development and proliferation a critical threat to national security; and

WHEREAS, Allowing Iran to develop or acquire a nuclear weapon would destabilize the entire Middle East and pose an eminent threat to Israel; and

WHEREAS, The Iran Nuclear Deal, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) is a non-binding executive agreement which was signed in Vienna on July 14, 2015 between Iran, and the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council: China, France, Russia, United Kingdom, United States, and Germany (also known as the P5+1) along with the European Union; and

WHEREAS, The JCPOA allows Iran to retain its nuclear infrastructure; and

WHEREAS, Under the JCPOA, International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors will have 24-hour access to Iran’s declared nuclear sites but will be faced with a stipulated 24-day notification and appeal period when requesting access to Iran’s military facilities or undeclared sites or suspected sites— thereby possibly allowing Iran to hide, remove or transport nuclear-weapon materials and operations in a clandestine manner; and

WHEREAS, Not all verification and monitoring mechanisms are defined in the JCPOA; and

WHEREAS, Important verification and monitoring mechanisms have been defined in agreements made solely between the IAEA and Iran separate and apart from the JCPOA and these same verification and monitoring agreements remain undisclosed to Congress or the Administration for review; and

WHEREAS, Diplomatic relations between the U.S. and Iran were extinguished in 1980 and therefore U.S. citizens are prohibited from being a part of any IAEA inspection team located in Iran; and

WHEREAS, The JCPOA removes a United Nations embargo prohibiting conventional weapons exports to Iran in five years and ballistic missile technology in eight years; and

WHEREAS, Ending the conventional-weapons embargo would permit Russia to sell Iran ballistic missiles which have the capability to reach Israel and overseas targets; and

WHEREAS, By lifting U.S. and international sanctions in accordance with the JCPOA, an estimated $100 billion dollars will be released to Iran which may be used to fund terrorism against Americans, American interests and allies; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Cincinnati, Ohio, August 30, 31, September 1, 2016, That The American Legion urges Congress not to lift any sanctions in connection with the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action also known as the Iran Nuclear Deal until such agreement is amended by including all verification and monitoring mechanisms as well as including a provision stipulating unconditional access to every aspect of Iran’s nuclear program—whether declared or undeclared—to inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency and that these
amendments are ultimately agreed to in a timely manner by Iran and the P5+1; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the United States of America be prepared to exercise all options, up to and including military action, in the interest of preventing Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon.

Resolution No. 201
Subject: Enhanced Funding for USAID
Origin: North Carolina

WHEREAS, The Department of State is the first line of defense in combating the myriad security threats that face America from abroad, and is charged with a number of missions that are vital to the nation; and

WHEREAS, These missions include: diplomatic relations with foreign nations, promoting peace and stability in regions of vital interest, bringing countries together to address global challenges, creating jobs at home by opening markets abroad, and helping developing nations establish stable economic environments that provide investment and export opportunities; and

WHEREAS, In recent years the State Department’s responsibilities have expanded enormously to include combating threats from terrorism, international crime, and narcotics trafficking, and that development programs through USAID are in the frontline to offer solutions and alternatives for emerging states to prevent their economic and democratic failure; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion National Convention assembled in, Cincinnati, Ohio, August 30, 31, September 1, 2016, That The American Legion support policies and legislation that increase funding for the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) within the Department of State and seek use of that funding towards targeted states whose failure to provide for its people could result in the expansion of international terrorism; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That USAID, because of its technical knowledge and expertise, be given a greater role in the decision-making process for the disbursement and usage of funds targeted for reconstruction in nations in which our military presence resulted in the need for infrastructure redevelopment.

Resolution No. 202
Subject: Military Retiree Mail at Overseas Embassies
Origin: North Carolina

WHEREAS, As of January 1, 2010 the Department of State has said it cannot be responsible for the costs of mail going to military retirees at embassies, consulates, and diplomatic missions; and

WHEREAS, This decision has adversely affected the quality-of-life of U.S. military retirees and veterans living abroad; and

WHEREAS, This new policy has negatively impacted veterans’ personal lives and will likely result in prohibitive costs in addition to potential unreliable delivery of medications, compensation, absentee ballots, legal correspondence and other important personal documents from Federal, state and local government agencies; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense cannot pay the Department of State for the delivery of retiree mail on the basis of the Anti-Deficiency Act (31 U.S.C. § 1341); now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion National Convention assembled in, Cincinnati, Ohio, August 30, 31, September 1, 2016, That The American Legion strongly urges Congress to change any necessary laws to permit the Department of Defense to fund the cost of essential mail service delivered to military retirees at embassies, consulates, diplomatic missions or other U.S. government facilities.
Resolution No. 204
Subject: Policy on Latin and Central America
 Origin: North Carolina

  WHEREAS, Over the past decade the nations of Central America have made great
 strides toward establishing democratic societies; and

  WHEREAS, The American Legion has taken a great interest in supporting
democracy, development, and security in this area so close to our borders and strategically
situated between the naval lifeline between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, the Panama
Canal, and one of our major trading partners, Mexico; and

  WHEREAS, In the light of the decreasing threat from subversion in Central America
as well as budget restrictions in the United States, it is inevitable that U.S. aid to Central
America must be reduced; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion National Convention assembled in,
Cincinnati, Ohio, August 30, 31, September 1, 2016, That The American Legion urge the
U.S. Government to continue economic aid to friendly, democratic Central American
nations which are seeking to develop democratic societies with market economies; and, be
it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion recommend the U.S. Government provide
minimal amounts of military aid while urging Central American nations to adopt the model
of Costa Rica and Panama and disband military forces and rely solely on police forces for
internal security, thus freeing funds for development and contributing to peaceful relations
in the region.

Resolution No. 205
Subject: Foreign Policy Objectives
 Origin: North Carolina

  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 National Convention assembled in,
Cincinnati, Ohio, August 30, 31, September 1, 2016, That The American Legion believes
that the following objectives should be incorporated into U.S. foreign policy in order to
maintain peace with freedom while preserving and promoting democracy:
  1. Recognition that the U.S. has great and multiple responsibilities as a leader of
the Free World
  2. Dedication to achievement of world peace with freedom, secured by a peace
through strength posture
  3. Support for a global fight on multiple fronts to end the scourge of terrorism
  4. Support for democracy and 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. Negotiation of equitable, verifiable arms control agreements, which improve
U.S. national security
  7. Opposition to the spread of nuclear, chemical or biological weapons or long-
range ballistic missiles which may be used by terrorists, terrorist organizations,
communists or aggressor nations
  8. Determined opposition to international terrorism and drug trafficking
9. Support for responsible international organizations that are consistent with U.S. sovereignty and serve U.S. national interests
10. Participation in an increasingly interdependent Free World trading system based on fair and equitable trading practices
11. 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
12. Support for the appropriate resources to promote and protect U.S. vital national interests world-wide.

Resolution No. 206
Subject: Middle/East Gulf States Foreign Policies
Origin: North Carolina

WHEREAS, The end of World War I brought about the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and the arbitrary delineation of the middle eastern states of the former Turkish held territories of Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, Palestine (Israel), Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Aden, Oman, (United Arab Emirates), and the Gulf of Aden states of Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Sudan, and to include the sovereign states of Egypt and Libya; and

WHEREAS, Many of these nations continue to struggle with reforming from authoritarian regimes to more democratic and representative forms of governance; and that the call by their own populations to seek greater freedoms and the protection of individual human rights and universal suffrage must be heard; and that states which fail to provide the basic needs of their people creates an opportunity for extremists and terrorists to flourish and grow; and

WHEREAS, That as each of these nations strives to reform their government they will need the technical and economic support of more developed and advanced representative democracies, and these needs will include: creating diplomatic coalitions with other countries and international institutions, creating jobs, open market reforms, developing and establishing stable economic environments, achieving internal and international security cooperation; and

WHEREAS, The President and Congress have both called for a policy that will help promote and assist nations seeking to establish greater democratic reforms in the Middle East; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion National Convention assembled in, Cincinnati, Ohio, August 30, 31, September 1, 2016, That The American Legion support legislation and foreign policy that specifically targets diplomatic, economic, and educational programs to promote greater and peaceful democratic reforms in countries within the Arabian Gulf and Middle Eastern Region.

Resolution No. 207
Subject: Policy on the United Nations
Origin: North Carolina

HEREAS, The American Legion played a significant role in helping to establish the United Nations after World War II, believing it would help prevent the outbreak of future wars; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion has remained generally supportive of the United Nations over the succeeding years, although it has been critical of particular ineffective, wasteful, or undesirable activities of the United Nations; and

WHEREAS, Countries with vast national budget surpluses are exploiting their working citizens for unfair economic leverage in the United Nations; and
WHEREAS, The current scale of assessments, which weighs and considers the “low per capita income” of each member nation, determines the funding structure of the United Nations, is inequitable to the United States; and

WHEREAS, Although the United Nations in half a century of operation has not fulfilled the lofty purposes of international peace and human betterment envisioned by its founders, it continues to be in the national interest for the United States to function as a member of the United Nations; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion National Convention assembled in, Cincinnati, Ohio, August 30, 31, September 1, 2016, That The American Legion urge Congress to use American leverage to encourage the United Nations to focus on limited, necessary, achievable tasks that truly better the lot of humankind in a sensible, cost effective manner; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That Congress encourage the United Nations not to infringe on national sovereignty when operating economic and social programs; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That Congress encourage the United Nations to recalculate the assessment of nations’ funding obligations to be based on the Gross National Product of each country with no “low per capita income” factor to distort the proportion of such obligations; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That in the absence of such reform of the funding formula the United Nations should adopt a weighted voting strength based on the funds contributed by each member nation; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That truly independent authority be provided to the UN Inspector General and ensure that United Nations agencies become subject to periodic, unannounced auditing, the findings of such audits to be reported to member nations; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That an equitable fiduciary relationship be established between the United States and United Nations.

Resolution No. 208
Subject: Prohibit Foreign Investments in U.S. Defense Industry
Origin: North Carolina

WHEREAS, In this era of changing technology, the United States must maintain ownership and control of critical defense industries so that U.S. technological secrets can be protected and adequate production facilities can be maintained to meet any national emergency; and

WHEREAS, The generally declining strength of the dollar and the downsizing of our industrial base in the 1990s and the continuing decline in the 2000s have made it very lucrative for foreign entities to purchase U.S. firms, including those involved in national defense production; and

WHEREAS, Some allies of the United States, which lease or purchase U.S. advanced technology, may transfer or resell to actual or potential enemies of the United States; and

WHEREAS, Such technology transfers threaten the security of sensitive U.S. military technologies and U.S. technological superiority; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in assembled in, Cincinnati, Ohio, August 30, 31, September 1, 2016, That The American Legion urge the U.S. Government to ensure that foreign entities are not permitted to own critical industries, especially those involved in producing defense items; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion opposes the transfer and sales of sensitive technologies which may endanger our national security and economic interests.

Resolution No. 210
Subject: Support for the American Battle Monuments Commission
Origin: North Carolina

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 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 assembled in, Cincinnati, Ohio, August 30, 31, September 1, 2016, That The American Legion urges 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. 211
Subject: Securing Pakistan’s Nuclear Arsenal
Origin: North Carolina

WHEREAS, Pakistan is a long-time ally, which has partnered with the United States against terrorist threats in Iraq and Afghanistan during the Global War on Terror; and

WHEREAS, Pakistan's nuclear program is a vital concern to U.S. national security, due to the close proximity to al-Qaeda and Taliban insurgents as well as suspected Islamist sympathizers imbedded within Pakistan’s army; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion seeks to deter the possibility of terrorists gaining access to nuclear weapons as the potential for the intersection of terrorism and nuclear weapons is arguably the greatest threat to U.S. national security; and

WHEREAS, In an effort to prevent the infiltration of a nuclear establishment by individuals sympathetic to al-Qaeda goals, the U.S. must construct and implement policies that proactively thwart the unwelcome possibility of Pakistan's nuclear weapons falling into the wrong hands; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in assembled in, Cincinnati, Ohio, August 30, 31, September 1, 2016, That The American Legion urges the President and the Congress to carefully formulate and execute policies toward Pakistan in order to deter the possibility of terrorists gaining access to nuclear weapons; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the U.S. should seek to provide assistance to Pakistan in implementing programs that will improve security and effective accountability at nuclear facilities thereby transforming Pakistan from a source of insecurity in the Middle East to a country committed to eliminating terrorism, and ensuring security from nuclear proliferation.

Resolution No. 212
Subject: Vietnam Human Rights
Origin: North Carolina
WHEREAS, The American Legion recognizes the comradeship and loyalty of the ethnic minorities of Vietnam to include, Montagnards and Hmong hill people, whose assistance was invaluable during the Vietnam War; and

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 the protection of human rights are vital in that regard; and

WHEREAS, Since diplomatic and trade relations have been established over the last 20 years and normalized between the U.S. and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, the condition of tribal people who assisted United States forces during the Vietnam conflict has greatly worsened in terms of persecution; 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 assembled in, Cincinnati, Ohio, August 30, 31, September 1, 2016, That The American Legion urges the President and the Congress to support legislation and policies that will compel the Socialist Republic of Vietnam to meet the international standards of human rights; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the ethnic and religious minorities within the country of Vietnam be extended those protections and rights to live and worship in peace without threat of imprisonment or retribution from their government; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges Congress to take such measures as are necessary to overcome the jamming of Radio Free Asia by the government of Vietnam; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That educational and cultural exchange programs with Vietnam should promote progress toward freedom and democracy; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges Congress to create a U.S. policy that will offer refugee resettlement to Vietnam nationals (including members of the Montagnard ethnic minority groups) who were eligible for the Humanitarian Resettlement program, the Orderly Departure program, the Resettlement Opportunities for Vietnamese Returnees program, the Amerasian Homecoming Act of 1988, or any other U.S. refugee program, but who were deemed ineligible for reasons of administrative error, to include inaccurate language translation or certain circumstances beyond their control.

Resolution No. 213
Subject: Support for Foreign Exchange Education Programs
Origin: North Carolina

WHEREAS, The United States, Mexico, and Central and South America are historic, regional neighbors with a common heritage and thousands of miles of common boundaries; and

WHEREAS, The Congress and the Executive Branch have entered into the North American Free Trade Agreement with Mexico; and

WHEREAS, College scholarships and educational exchanges help reduce social, cultural, and international barriers and promote good will and understanding; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in assembled in, Cincinnati, Ohio, August 30, 31, September 1, 2016, That The American Legion urges Congress to increase financial and political support for existing international education exchange and scholarship programs, such as: the Fulbright, Gilman, and other programs, offered through the Departments of State and Education which will increase cooperative endeavors on all fronts to enhance the prosperity and security of those nations participating; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge the U.S. Government to expand the number of scholarships for Mexico, Central America, and South America, particularly for
those highly qualified students, who lack funds to attend undergraduate and appropriate vocational-technical programs, provided said students promise to abide by current or future immigration student visa policies after completing their education or program requirements.

Resolution No. 214
Subject: Global Trade Policies
Origin: North Carolina

WHEREAS, China and other trade countries have purchased billions of dollars worth of U.S. Government bonds, stock market shares, and individual companies with their windfall money from our trade deficit as a result of Congress approving the “World Free Trade” policy a number of years ago; and

WHEREAS, China and other trade countries have not adhered to the global trade rules initially agreed to in the treaty relating to import fees and tariffs resulting with below reasonable costs of the products in the U.S. and higher prices of U.S. products sold in their countries; and

WHEREAS, Revenues realized by other countries from these trade imbalances have resulted in greater purchasing power and the potential for foreign ownership of essential industries and corporations vital to our basic national security interests and infrastructure; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in assembled in, Cincinnati, Ohio, August 30, 31, September 1, 2016, That The American Legion urge the President and Congress to balance trade deficits by pursuing the enforcement of the conditions of the trade negotiations made in good faith with these nations and support the efforts of our trade negotiators and diplomatic officials to use every avenue available through the World Trade Organization and the International Court of Justice to pursue our nation’s claims for fair trade practices.

Resolution No. 222
Subject: Policy on Africa
Origin: North Carolina

WHEREAS, Decades of colonization, authoritarian rule, severe economic disparity, internal conflicts, rampant corruption, and, in many cases, great resistance to change have overwhelmed the African continent; and

WHEREAS, Today some African nations are beginning to develop strong economic markets, and are making determined efforts to put the continent towards a solid democratic course with multi-party systems and other significant political changes; and

WHEREAS, Promoting policies that support democracy, conflict resolution, economic development, free and open trade, and disease prevention in African countries are in the national interests of the United States, understanding that a major contributing factor to terrorism are failed states; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in assembled in, That The American Legion supports bipartisan policies and legislation that identify areas and authorize and fund programs where the United States can provide economic, political, and social development in Africa; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion believes such U.S. policies toward African nations must be intertwined with our nation’s overall strategy to promote democracy throughout the world; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, The American Legion National Convention assembled in, Cincinnati, Ohio, August 30, 31, September 1, 2016, That any African nation that clearly demonstrates open democratic reforms, human rights protection, and cooperation in the fight against international terrorism, will have the support of the U.S. government.
Resolution No. 223
Subject: Policy on Cuba
Origin: North Carolina

WHEREAS, The communist government of Cuba has ruined the Cuban economy, repressed the Cuban people, provided a base for forces inimical to the United States, and committed aggression in many lands; and

WHEREAS, Following the demise of the Soviet Union and the liberation of Eastern Europe, Cuba has lost the sources of foreign subsidies that alone sustained its inefficient communist economy; and

WHEREAS, Cuba and the United States restored diplomatic relations on 20 July 2015, which had been severed in 1961 during the Cold War; and

WHEREAS, If the Free World remains firm in its rejection of communism in Cuba, many economic, social, and political indicators point to the likely collapse of the Castro dictatorship in Cuba; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By, The American Legion National Convention assembled in, Cincinnati, Ohio, August 30, 31, September 1, 2016, That The American Legion urge the U.S. Government to continue to maintain control of Guantanamo Bay Naval Base, continue intelligence flights over Cuba, remain firm in opposition to the export of revolution by Cuba, continue broadcasting true news and information to the Cuban people, and encourage the development of democracy and a free market economy in Cuba.

APPROVED WITH AMENDMENTS

Resolution No. 88
Subject: POW/MIA Policies
Origin: Maryland

WHEREAS, American service members and civilians remain missing or otherwise unaccounted for from America’s past wars and conflicts, and reports indicate that cases of Americans last known alive, information regarding their fates is still illusive; and

WHEREAS, The families of POW/MIAs suffer untold uncertainty due to the lack of information about and accounting for their missing loved one, often in spite of heroic efforts by U.S. specialists; and

WHEREAS, The National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) of 2010 called upon the Secretary of Defense to provide funds, personnel, and resources to significantly increase the capability and capacity of the Department of Defense (DOD) to account for missing persons so that, beginning with fiscal year 2015, at least 200 missing persons are accounted for annually under the program; and

WHEREAS, improvements in foreign government cooperation have helped identify locations of incident sites that may enable remains of US personnel to be recovered and identified by the U.S. Government; and

WHEREAS, Promising advances in scientific DNA capabilities and other identification techniques involving radiographic comparison and facial superimposition have dramatically increased the U.S. Government’s ability to identify remains of unaccounted for servicemen and civilians for whom identification had not earlier been possible; and

WHEREAS, Each member of the DOD POW/MIA accounting community plays a vital role in the mission to account for missing and unaccounted for U.S. servicemen and civilians from our nation’s past wars and conflicts; and

WHEREAS, The Secretary of Defense recently directed “complete reorganization” of the DOD POW/MIA accounting community, a consolidation encouraging to family members and veterans, though close scrutiny for viability will continue to be required; and

WHEREAS, The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency was formed as a result of the Defense Secretary’s directive for “complete reorganization” and is responsible for
policy control and operational implementation to achieve the fullest possible accounting for missing U.S. personnel; and

WHEREAS, The POW/MIA accounting effort should continue to be a matter of highest national priority until all reasonable actions have been taken to achieve the fullest possible accounting for all U.S. personnel; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion fully supports and advocates for the fullest possible accounting of missing Americans, in every country, on every continent; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion believes U.S. Government POW/MIA operations, though currently still inadequate, are achieving substantial progress; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Cincinnati, Ohio, August 30, 31, September 1, 2016, That The American Legion remains steadfast in our commitment to the goal of achieving the fullest possible accounting for all U.S. military personnel and designated civilian personnel missing and unaccounted for from our nation’s past wars and conflicts; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges the President and Members of Congress to speak out on every occasion on the need to expedite the return of U.S. personnel still missing and unaccounted for, regardless of location or era of loss; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges the President and Congress to support legislation and policies that will sustain use of all necessary resources to achieve the fullest possible accounting of missing American service members and designated civilians regardless of location or era of loss; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion calls upon Congress to provide full funding for the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency to meet requirements for personnel and operations to achieve accounting goals and to ensure these funds not be redirected by the DOD for any other purpose; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion calls upon the President and Congress to continue to declassify all POW/MIA information (except that revealing intelligence sources or methods) in a form readily available to the affected families and for public review; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion calls upon Congress to establish a joint standing congressional committee on POW/MIA affairs to oversee plans and policies to ensure continued priority by the executive branch in addressing requirements to achieve the POW/MIA accounting goals; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion calls upon the President to strengthen the US-Russia Joint Commission on POW/MIAs, and to initiate similar such commissions with the People's Republic of China, and Democratic People’s Republic of Korea to increase POW/MIA accounting and recovery efforts; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion calls upon the President and Congress to continue taking favorable steps with the Socialist Republic of Vietnam as Hanoi increases efforts to provide the fullest possible accounting for US personnel still missing in Vietnam or in areas of Laos and Cambodia controlled by Vietnam during the Vietnam War; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That "fullest possible accounting" is defined as the releasing live prisoners, repatriating remains of those killed in action or who died in captivity, or providing convincing evidence as to why neither is possible.

CONSOLIDATED

Resolution No. 4 with Resolution No. 111
Subject: Taiwan Straits Dialogue
Origin: Alaska
Resolution No. 199 with Resolution No. 111
Subject: Taiwan Straits Dialogue
Origin: North Carolina

REFER TO THE STANDING COMMISSION

Resolution No. 232
Subject: Pause/Hold Syrian Refugees Importation/Immigration to the United States of America
Origin: West Virginia

Resolution No. 234
Subject: U.S. and China Relations
Origin: Florida

LAW AND ORDER & HOMELAND SECURITY
George Wehrli, Florida, Chairman

APPROVED

Resolution No. 16
Subject: Second Amendment
Origin: Nebraska

WHEREAS, All members of The American Legion are wartime veterans who believe in the precepts of the Constitution of the United States; and
WHEREAS, At more than one time in the lives of these selfsame veterans, he/she has sworn to “…uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States…” and upon entering the military include the phrase – “…against all enemies, both foreign and domestic; and
WHEREAS, In several states individual state laws have been created encroaching upon our “rights” under the Constitution; specifically, in abrogation of the Second Amendment; and
WHEREAS, The American Legion is the largest veterans service organization in the world, being an effective voice against tyranny; and
WHEREAS, For the sake of all who have served in the military of the United States, and for the sake of our youth – the future of our country – The American Legion seeks to remind the elected Senators and Representatives of their obligation to listen to and vote in line with the wishes of their constituents; now, therefore, be it
RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Cincinnati, Ohio, August 30, 31, September 1, 2016, That the United States should enforce the will of the citizens; and, be it finally
RESOLVED, That Those States, which have passed restrictive legislation, in deference to the Second Amendment, issue repeals at their earliest opportunity to reverse these unfair/unrepresented Firearm “regulations” which are in opposition to our rights under the Constitution.

Resolution No. 18
Subject: Support Research And Funding For Alternative Energy Resources
Origin: Nebraska

WHEREAS, Our growing dependence on foreign oil adversely affects the United States and world economies as was discovered during the oil embargo in 1973 and interruption in the supply of foreign oil during the years of conflict between Iran and Iraq; and
WHEREAS, There is a growing need for creating new employment for the American people and developing new skills especially for our veteran population; and

WHEREAS, The development of alternate energy sources is vital to America’s maintaining a competitive advantage in the world economy; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Cincinnati, Ohio, August 30, 31, September 1, 2016, That The American Legion urge Congress to fund research and development of all alternative sources of energy including the utilization of coal; crude oil; oil shale; natural gas; wind; and solar energy as well as nuclear energy to ensure our nation will never be an economic hostage and we can always meet the ever growing competition from China and other Far Eastern industrial complexes and the European Common Market; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the federal government be strongly encouraged to substantially expand its incentives to industry, either through tax incentives or through research and development grants, in a greatly expanded effort to develop.

Resolution No. 20
Subject: Fully Enforce Immigration Laws
Origin: Nebraska

WHEREAS, Each sovereign nation is responsible for enforcement of laws regarding its borders; and

WHEREAS, Citizens of each sovereign nation should be protected from those who violate their borders; and

WHEREAS, The United States has laws specifying means to obtain legal means to enter our nation; and

WHEREAS, These immigration laws are being violated each day by persons entering our nation and endangering our national security; and

WHEREAS, There are existing means to arrest, detain, or deport those who violate these immigration laws; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Cincinnati, Ohio, August 30, 31, September 1, 2016, That The American Legion support the strict enforcement of immigration laws already in existence; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That benefits of any kind should not be granted to those immigrants who have gained access to our nation in an illegal manner.

Resolution No. 21
Subject: Support for Financial Anti-Terrorism Law Enforcement
Origin: Nebraska

WHEREAS, The United States Departments of Justice and Homeland Security, U.S. Customs and Border Security, Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the Internal Revenue Service are the first line of defense of the nation in combating financial security threats that face America from both home and abroad, and are charged with a number of missions that are vital to the security of the nation; and

WHEREAS, These missions include: policing, investigation, and enforcement of financial laws to ensure the integrity and stability of our nation’s banking and financial institutions from both foreign and domestic abuse or manipulation, and to ensure a stable economic environment that provides for legal investment and export opportunities; and

WHEREAS, These departments and agencies are charged with the role of securing both the physical and cyber borders of our nation, and while mindful of the constitutional rights of American citizens; and

WHEREAS, Financial investigations and prosecutions conducted by the Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, and Internal Revenue Service have uncovered illicit financing schemes and revenue accounts of listed terrorist organizations through knowing or unknowing individuals, investment development groups, associations, charitable, and other legitimate organizations; and
WHEREAS, These departments and agencies must have the ability to use every legal tool and policy at their disposal to ensure that terrorist organizations do not have the ability to be financed through domestic and international financial systems; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Cincinnati, Ohio, August 30, 31, September 1, 2016, That The American Legion supports legislation that strengthens the abilities of the Departments of Justice and Homeland Security and the Internal Revenue Service to police, investigate, and prosecute financial institutions or individuals within the parameters of the Constitution that use legitimate and illegitimate financial means to help support both domestic and international terrorism.

Resolution No. 24
Subject: Illegal Immigration Policy
Origin: Nebraska

WHEREAS, Immigration and Customs Enforcement estimates that there are 11.5 million illegal immigrants who currently reside within the U.S.; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Homeland Security, Office of Audits stated that each year more than one million aliens attempt to illegally enter the United States without proper documentation or enter legally and violate the provisions of their visa; and

WHEREAS, A need exists for a broad exchange of intelligence and related action between regulatory agencies which govern immigration policy, social services, and the Department of Justice; and

WHEREAS, Aggressively tracking foreign nationals is a deterrent to terrorist activities and failing to effectively utilize the available systems and technology to track illegal aliens threatens the security and future of the U.S.; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Cincinnati, Ohio, August 30, 31, September 1, 2016, That The American Legion urge Congress to adopt an immigration reform policy which emphasizes border security against those individuals attempting to enter this country illegally and internal tracking of all resident aliens and illegal immigrants; and be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion oppose legislation that would result in the granting of amnesty and legal residency, in any form or by any name, to illegal immigrants currently in the United States; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the Department of Homeland Security be provided the monies necessary to ensure both the thorough performance of its responsibilities and the security of the borders of the United States; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion oppose any change to “Title V of the Immigration and Nationality Act” (8 U.S.C. 1531-1537) that would require revealing the source(s) of secret evidence used in the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services, Department of Homeland Security, administrative deportation hearings; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion encourages the federal government to provide the needed resources to enforcement agencies tasked with curtailing illegal immigration in this country and encourage the Congress of the United States to mandate that the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Student and Exchange Visitor Information System continue and be aggressively administered by the responsible agency of the federal government; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion encourages the Congress of the United States to provide agencies of the federal government with the necessary resources to track the arrival and departure of foreign nationals to the United States; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion encourages a thorough background check and interview for each candidate for a U.S. visa prior to issuing said visa; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That those foreign nationals who perpetrate fraud and/or are visa overstays be arrested by law enforcement and turned over to the Department of Homeland Security for removal/deportation proceedings; and, be it further
RESOLVED, That The American Legion encourages Congress to pass legislation prohibiting the acceptance of foreign-issued forms of identification deemed untrustworthy by the federal government for application for government-sponsored public services, and that businesses, including financial institutions, be prohibited from accepting foreign-issued documents determined to be unacceptable forms of identification; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion encourages Congress to authorize and fund the securing of the borders and points of entry in the United States by: construction of physical barriers; hiring a sufficient number of U.S. Border Patrol Agents; federalization of National Guard troops to assist border security operations; searching all vessel and their cargo arriving at our seaports; enforcement of existing laws and passing of new laws to reduce the illegal immigrant population; and the funding of the Department of Homeland Security to ensure its effectiveness in securing borders of the United States; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion encourages Congress, the Justice Department and the Department of Homeland Security to take necessary action to stop the flow of illegal immigration into this country by means that include, but are not limited to: requiring all legal aliens to carry U.S. Government-issued identification documents; enacting measures that effectively halt the smuggling of illegal immigrants into this country; granting law enforcement agencies at the local, state, and federal levels the authority to work together and with the Department of Homeland Security to apprehend and incarcerate illegal immigrants; and the utilization of military resources as appropriate to assist in stopping the flow of illegal aliens in to this country.

Resolution No. 26
Subject: Pipeline Construction and Energy Independence
Origin: Nebraska

WHEREAS, Our republic is in a state of emergency and our people are no longer secure in their “unalienable rights” to “liberty and the pursuit of happiness”; and

WHEREAS, All subsidies distorted the efficient and equitable function of our capitalistic economic system and encourage crony-capitalism; and

WHEREAS, Our current recession is exacerbated by the high cost of energy; and

WHEREAS, We have sufficient energy resources within our borders to make our nation energy independent for decades and centuries if we construct third and fourth generation nuclear power plants; and

WHEREAS, The development of our energy resources would greatly increase national security, create jobs, and facilitate paying down our national debt, which now exceeds our gross domestic product and threatens the collapse of our nation; and

WHEREAS, Despite the January 2014 State Department report which managed to conclude that the proposed pipeline Canada to the Gulf of Mexico and other points won’t significantly increase oil-sands production or worsen climate change, President Obama is still waiting to hear from other federal agencies before deciding to issue the necessary presidential permit in lieu of an approved veto-proof bill from Congress; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Cincinnati, Ohio, August 30, 31, September 1, 2016, That The American Legion call upon Congress and the President to expedite the approval and construction of a pipeline from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico and other points as a step toward greater U.S. energy independence along with allowing the development of all viable energy resources; and be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion call upon Congress and the President to phase out all subsidies and tax loop-holes in connection with this transcontinental energy project; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That all duplicative and nonessential regulations in connection with this transcontinental energy project be revoked.
Resolution No. 30  
Subject: Support for U.S. Blood Banks  
Origin: Nebraska  

WHEREAS, The public needs to be constantly reminded that the blood banks of the United States need to be supported by The American Legion and the public; and  
WHEREAS, Emergencies continue to come up where blood is needed without warning; now, therefore, be it  
RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Cincinnati, Ohio, August 30, 31, September 1, 2016, That The American Legion continues its support of blood banks to cover such emergencies; and be it finally  
RESOLVED, That The American Legion continues promoting the donation of blood for all emergencies where lives are at stake.

Resolution No. 31  
Subject: Buy American  
Origin: Nebraska  

WHEREAS, The American Legion is an organization of wartime service veterans which pledges to foster and perpetuate one hundred percent Americanism; and  
WHEREAS, The Department of Defense contracts with large corporations and small businesses for the construction and repair of military hardware to include ground systems, armaments, aircraft and other systems for all of our military branches; and  
WHEREAS, These government contractors may rely on subcontractors for the production and overhaul of individual components and subsystems to be used in these equipment items; and  
WHEREAS, The government contractor manufacturing a system or systems may choose to employ the services of subcontractors located in foreign countries rather than those subcontractors which have comparable equipment and comparable costs in this country; and  
WHEREAS, The choices made by the government contractor not only can affect the security of our nation as well as the employment of many Americans and veterans who may work at these subcontractors at both the originating and overhaul facilities located in the United States; now, therefore, be it  
RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Cincinnati, Ohio, August 30, 31, September 1, 2016, That The American Legion urge Congress to require government contractors to utilize American-made components and subsystems in construction and repair of their equipment over those made by foreign subcontractors for use by the United States military to ensure the defense of the country as well as the continued employment of Americans and veterans at subcontractor facilities.

Resolution No. 33  
Subject: Rare Earth Elements  
Origin: Nebraska  

WHEREAS, Rare earth elements are a collection of 17 elements that are critical to civilian and military high technology applications: Scandium; Yttrium; Lanthanum; Cerium; Praseodymium; Neodymium; Promethium; Samarium; Europium; Gadolinium; Terbium; Dysprosium; Holmium; Erbium; Thulium; Ytterbium; and Lutetium; and  
WHEREAS, Rare earth elements are distributed globally, with 36 percent of known reserves located in China, and 13 percent located in the United States; and  
WHEREAS, China now produces 97 percent of the world’s rare earth elements, key components in a large assortment of advanced technologies, and increasing global demand along with Chinese government reductions in export quotas over the past six years have led to international concerns about future supply shortages; and
WHEREAS, Some U.S. weapons and equipment that contain rare-earth elements are: Predator unmanned aerial vehicles, Tomahawk cruise missiles, Zumwalt-class destroyers, night vision goggles, smart bombs, and sonar transducers as well as other sophisticated military applications including guidance and control systems; advanced optics technologies; radar and radiation detection equipment; and advanced communications; and

WHEREAS, China may use its monopoly over rare earths to leverage its influence on U.S. foreign policy, and numerous analysts have expressed concerns that Chinese quota reductions will increase U.S. element dependence; and

WHEREAS, The Government Accountability Office released a report in February 2016 to Congress outlining how developing a comprehensive approach could help DoD better manage national security risks in the supply chain; and

WHEREAS, Given that DOD’s assessment of future supply and demand was based on previous estimates using 2010 data, there could be new concern for a possible rare earth material supply shortage or vulnerability that could affect national security; and

WHEREAS, Dependence on foreign sources alone for rare earths may pose a national security threat; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Cincinnati, Ohio, August 30, 31, September 1, 2016, That The American Legion urge Congress to continue to require the Department of Defense to provide regular assessments of the needs of the U.S. rare earth supply-chain for defense and require the Defense Secretary to have a long-term rare-earth supply plan in the interest of national defense.

Resolution No. 56
Subject: Protection, Preservation and Retention of Federal and Military Monuments in the United States
Origin: Wyoming

WHEREAS, At different times through history there have been attempts by either the Filipino government or other groups to petition the United States Government for the return of the church bells taken by American military forces from the belfry of the church in Balangiga, Samar, Philippines; and

WHEREAS, Any return of a Federal or military monument by the United States of America would set a negative and dangerous precedent on any and all Federal or military monuments; and

WHEREAS, Military monuments honor those servicemen and servicewomen whose sacrifice for the United States of America has preserved the nation and recognizes those who have sacrificed their lives in service to their country; and

WHEREAS, Returning any military monument should never be considered as contributing to the enhancement or reaffirmation of any friendly relationship with foreign countries; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Cincinnati, Ohio, August 30, 31, September 1, 2016, That The American Legion urge the Congress of the United States to establish such laws to preserve, protect and retain all Federal and military monuments within the United States from any foreign government or religious order who attempts to have any Federal and military monument removed from the United States of America.

Resolution No. 99
Subject: Support for the Jones Maritime Act and Related Cabotage Laws
Origin: Maryland

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”; 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, As of 2010, the privately owned ocean-going U.S.-flag fleet consisted of only 192 active ships, which included 97 ships in domestic trade and only 95 U.S.-Flag ships that operated 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 U.S.

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 annually; and

WHEREAS, On October 8, 1996, the President signed the Maritime Security Act of 1996 establishing the Maritime Security Program (MSP) for Fiscal Years (FY) 1996 through 2005 and on November 24, 2003, the President signed the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2004, which contained the Maritime Security Act of 2003 (MSA 2003) authorizing the MSP for FY 2006 through FY 2015; and

WHEREAS, The MSA 2003 requires that the Secretary of Transportation, in consultation with the Secretary of Defense, to establish a fleet of active, commercially viable, militarily useful, privately-owned vessels to meet national defense and other security requirements; and

WHEREAS, MSA 2003 authorized $156 million annually for FYs 2006, 2007, and 2008; $174 million annually for FYs 2009, 2010, and 2011; and $186 million annually for FYs 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2015 to support the operation of 60 U.S.-flag vessels in the foreign commerce of the United States; and

WHEREAS, Participating operators are required to make their ships and commercial transportation resources available upon request by the Secretary of Defense during times of war or national emergency; and

WHEREAS, The MSP maintains a modern U.S.-flag fleet providing military access to vessels and vessel capacity, as well as a total global, intermodal transportation network and this network includes not only vessels, but logistics management services, infrastructure, terminals facilities and U.S. citizen merchant mariners to crew the government owned/controlled and commercial fleets; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Cincinnati, Ohio, August 30, 31, September 1, 2016, That The American Legion support the Jones Act and related maritime cabotage laws critical to America’s maritime infrastructure, and therefore, to the United States national defense.

APPROVED AS AMENDED

Resolution No. 23
Subject: Support for the Department of Homeland Security and Coast Guard
Origin: Nebraska

WHEREAS, The September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on American soil have made Americans painfully aware of their vulnerability to violence from international terrorism; and

WHEREAS, On September 20, 2001, President Bush announced the establishment of the Office of Homeland Security, a new cabinet position designed to be the single source of authority, at the highest levels, for all homeland defense programs and policies; and
WHEREAS, The Coast Guard was transferred from the Department of Transportation to the Department of Homeland Security; and
WHEREAS, The Coast Guard was able to respond to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, within hours, and its homeland security missions have since significantly increased; and
WHEREAS, Included in the numerous peacetime and wartime missions of the Coast Guard is law enforcement in its many facets to include drug interdiction; interception of illegal aliens; environment protection; maritime safety, including search and rescue responsibilities and inspecting and licensing Merchant Marine ships; and national security to include port security, and serving as an essential wartime and peacetime partner of the U.S. Navy; and
WHEREAS, To carry out these critical missions, it is essential that highly skilled and motivated men and women continue to be recruited and retained by the Coast Guard and its Reserve, and that cutters, aircraft, and required facilities be fully funded; and
WHEREAS, Without adequate resources, the United States Coast Guard will be unable to meet its national and international commitments to the detriment of the American people and other democratic nations; and
WHEREAS, The Coast Guard needs to modernize and recapitalize its integrated surface and air sensors and communication assets allowing the Coast Guard to efficiently and effectively support national maritime security interests well into the 21st century; now, therefore, be it
RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Cincinnati, Ohio, August 30, 31, September 1, 2016, That The American Legion supports the Department of Homeland Security and urges the Administration and Congress to make security of the United States the top national priority; and be it further
RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges Congress to arm the Department of Homeland Security with the legal powers and fiduciary tools to harmonize the many agencies and offices with homeland security responsibilities into a viable and credible deterrent to those who seek to inflict violence on the United States and the American people; and, be it further
RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges Congress to fund homeland security tasks and functions being performed at a regional, state, and local levels; and be it further
RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges the Administration and Congress to fully fund the United States Coast Guard to achieve its numerous vital missions including homeland security, law enforcement, environmental protection, maritime safety, and other missions as assigned as well as its modernization and recapitalization initiatives; and, be it further
RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges the annual Congressional passage of the Coast Guard Authorization Act; and, be it further
RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge Congress and the Department of Homeland Security to support pay and benefits equity for Coast Guard men and women as well as the same quality of life features as authorized for the other Armed Forces of the United States; and, be it finally
RESOLVED, That The American Legion National Security Commission and the Legislative Commission each establish a liaison with the U.S. Coast Guard in order to advocate for legislative approval of future Coast Guard budget requests.

Resolution No. 29
Subject: Commercial Shipbuilding for Defense
Origin: Nebraska
WHEREAS, The United States emerged as the world’s foremost economic power and trading nation after the Cold War, and America’s policymakers have neglected to use these advantages to sustain the nation’s naval and maritime power; and
WHEREAS, According to the U.S. Maritime Administration the number of merchant vessels sailing internationally flying the U.S. Flag has been reduced from 1,072 to 191 over the last six decades; and
WHEREAS, In 1955, the U.S. Flag fleet represented almost 25% of the world’s overall tonnage while the U.S. share today is approaching a mere 2% of total world tonnage; and
WHEREAS, The 600-ship navy envisioned by President Ronald Reagan would have kept the ship yards busy; and
WHEREAS, U.S. Navy active ship levels have been reduced from 559 ships in 1975 to approximately 274 today, including 11 aircraft carriers, 22 cruisers, 60 destroyers, 26 frigates, 2 littoral combat ships, 9 amphibious assault ships, 2 amphibious command ships, 9 amphibious transport docks, 12 dock landing ships, 53 attack submarines, 14 ballistic missile submarines, 4 guided missile submarines, and 14 mine countermeasures ships; and
WHEREAS, The question of how the United States should respond to China’s naval modernization effort has emerged as a key issue in U.S. defense planning and this question is important to the U.S. Navy because many military programs for countering improved military forces would fall within the Navy’s budget; and
WHEREAS, A U.S.-Chinese military conflict is possible however unlikely, due to the significant economic linkages between the two countries and the tremendous damage that such a conflict could cause on both sides; and
WHEREAS, U.S. Navy programs for countering improved Chinese maritime military forces need to positively influence the political evolution of the Pacific region so that the United States can protect its national interests in the Pacific and around the world; and
WHEREAS, China’s naval modernization effort encompasses a broad range of weapon acquisition programs including anti-ship ballistic missiles (ASBMs), submarines, and surface ships along with improved maintenance, logistics, and training systems; and
WHEREAS, Potential issues for Congress include whether or not the U.S. Navy will be large enough to adequately counter improved Chinese naval capabilities and have the ability to counter Chinese ASBMs and submarines; and
WHEREAS, U.S. commercial build rates are not large enough to provide the strategic sealift needed in an emergency, or to support a shipbuilding industry large enough to meet future U.S. naval needs; now, therefore, be it
RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Cincinnati, Ohio, August 30, 31, September 1, 2016, That The American Legion urge Congress to stop further erosion of our vital maritime capability; and be it finally
RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge the President and Congress to boost naval budgets, promote commercial shipbuilding, expand the use of U.S. flagged ships in world commerce, and resist foreign actions that would further damage America’s defense industrial base.

Resolution No. 32
Subject: Support Domestic Energy Production
Origin: Nebraska
WHEREAS, The United States’ continued reliance on foreign sources of energy places our national security and economic well-being as a nation at risk during times of crisis; and
WHEREAS, The United States continues to import approximately 60 percent or more of its crude oil; and
WHEREAS, The countries of Algeria, Angola, Ecuador, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Libya, Nigeria, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Venezuela are bound by their membership in the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC); and
WHEREAS, The United States imports 40 percent of its oil from OPEC-member countries; and
WHEREAS, The war on terrorism and continuing conflict in the Middle East has brought into sharp focus the heavy reliance of the United States on foreign oil which necessitates a re-evaluation of our current and long-range energy policies; and

WHEREAS, Congress has denied petroleum exploration in the Arctic National Wildlife Region and the Administration has denied the construction of the northern section of the Keystone Pipeline XL even though such efforts to expand our domestic supply could reduce our reliance on foreign sources of energy; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Cincinnati, Ohio, August 30, 31, September 1, 2016, That The American Legion urge Congress and the Administration to pursue further development of domestic sources of energy to include: increasing U.S. petroleum production in an environmentally sensible manner so as to reduce America’s reliance on foreign petroleum; building new nuclear energy plants; implementing domestic crude oil; gas exploration; and oil shale development.

Resolution No. 108
Subject: Support for Legislation Prohibiting Hate Speech at Military Funerals
Origin: Maryland

WHEREAS, Since its creation, the United States has honored its war dead by a sacred tradition of military funerals, and continues to treat its war dead with sanctity, dignity and honor, and recognizes the ultimate sacrifice made to protect, defend, and preserve the freedoms and way of life in the United States; and

WHEREAS, Certain groups oppose various policies of the United States, particularly the armed conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, and protest those policies at the time and location of military funerals of service members who were killed in combat or who died from battle wounds; and

WHEREAS, Such protests have included chants against the President, the United States and its armed forces; laced with profanity, insults to the deceased service member, and his or her family, desecration of the Flag of the United States, and other sacred symbols of our country; and

WHEREAS, Such protests at military funerals have led to confrontations between protestors and family or community members including members of veterans organizations who vociferously oppose the positions advanced by the said protestors, and who support and honor the soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines and others serving in the armed forces; and

WHEREAS, These protests are targeted at the deceased service member and their families and can be considered hate speech; and

WHEREAS, These protests interfere with the bereaved family’s grieving process during the mourning period in connection with funerals administered by the United States Armed Forces and Congressionally chartered veterans organizations thereby violating Title 18 USC 13§ 245 Federally Protected Activities 1(b), which states, “Whoever attempts to interfere with any person participating in any service or activity provided or administered by the United States… shall be fined under this title, or imprisoned not more than one year, or both”; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion is a Congressionally chartered organization pursuant to USC Chapter 217; and

WHEREAS, Under the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, citizens have the right to free speech; and

WHEREAS, It is not an unreasonable or unconstitutional intrusion of the free speech rights of protestors to preclude them from intentionally targeting military funerals and dishonoring those service members who have died in armed conflict and their families; and

WHEREAS, Justice Samuel Alito has stated, “… it is clear that the First Amendment does not entirely preclude liability for the intentional infliction of emotional distress by means of speech” and “in order to have a society in which public issues can be openly and vigorously debated, it is not necessary to allow the brutalization of innocent victims” in
addition to “our profound commitment to free and open debate is not a license for...vicious verbal assault”;
now, therefore, be it
RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in
Cincinnati, Ohio, August 30, 31, September 1, 2016, That The American Legion finds the
targeted protest of service member funerals to be a vile and despicable act and not worthy
of American citizens who enjoy the freedoms purchased by the sacrifice and death of
military heroes; and, be it further
RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge Congress to designate protests planned
and conducted at targeted service member funerals as hate speech prohibited by law; and,
be it further
RESOLVED, That Congress define the official mourning period for service members
killed in combat to be at least one week; and, be it finally
RESOLVED, That Congress prohibit the planning for, or conduct of, protests aimed
at a specific member of the military or the related family within the one mile radius of
activity pertaining to funeral services, procession, and internment for a period of one day
before and one day after the official mourning period.

CONSOLIDATE

Resolution No. 27 with Resolution 56
Subject: Pipeline Construction and Energy Independence
Origin: Nebraska

Resolution No. 66 with Resolution 23
Subject: Support for the United States Coast Guard
Origin: Texas

REFER TO THE STANDING COMMISSION

Resolution No. 197
Subject: Policy on Concealed Carry Permits
Origin: Ohio

REJECT

Resolution No. 277
Subject: Commission the USS Los Alamos
Origin: New Mexico

MILITARY BENEFITS & QUALITY OF LIFE
Melvin Smullen, Maryland, Chairman

APPROVED

Resolution No. 85
Subject: Support for Military Quality of Life Standards
Origin: Maryland

WHEREAS, The American Legion has always supported quality of life features for
members of the Armed Forces, their dependents, military retirees, and survivors as people
are the foundation of our Nation's fighting forces; and
WHEREAS, Without highly qualified, dedicated men and women, even the most
sophisticated weaponry will not provide the deterrent force necessary for this nation to
remain at peace; and
WHEREAS, Military compensation is only one factor in the quality of life equation as to whether good service members and their families remain in military service: Other major factors include fair treatment, career stability, regular promotions, adequate quarters, adequate health care, commissaries, and day care facilities, all of which ease the numerous sacrifices that are demanded of service members; and

WHEREAS, Our military retirees and their dependents and survivors are deserving and rightfully entitled to adequate health care treatment, concurrent receipt, and regular cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) to military retirement pay and survivor benefit plans; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Cincinnati, Ohio, August 30, 31, September 1, 2016, That The American Legion urges Congress and the Department of Defense to support and fund quality of life features including, but not limited to, the following: military pay comparability for the Armed Forces and regular increases in the Basic Allowances for Housing (BAH); renovation and construction of military quarters and increased funding for child day care centers and pay raises must be competitive with the private sector; adequate medical, mental, and dental health services; morale, welfare, and recreational facilities; non-privatized exchanges and commissary facilities, and the Defense Commissary Agency (DECA) and its functions should be retained and not relegated to the military services; preserving an attractive retirement system for the active and reserve components; oppose any changes to the military retirement system, whether prospective or retroactive, that would violate contracts made with military retirees and that would undermine morale and readiness; requiring the Services perform mandatory physical examinations, without waivers, for all separating and retiring service members within 90 days of separation from service; full funding concurrent receipt of military retirement pay, and VA disability compensation as well as Special Compensation pays for disabled military retirees; that the Survivor Benefit Plan/Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (SBP/DIC) offset be eliminated; TRICARE for Life and the TRICARE Senior Pharmacy program for Medicare-eligible military retirees, their dependents and military survivors, should be adequately funded; regular cost-of-living adjustments to military retirement and increased death gratuity payments; combat zone tax exclusions for service in South Korea; that Congress extend and improve additional quality of life benefits, allowances and privileges to the National Guard and Reserves involved in homeland security and other missions so as to more closely approximate those of the active force; military retirement pay and TRICARE health care for members of the Reserve Components should be authorized before age 60; tax credits to private businesses that pay the difference between military and civilian salaries to mobilized reserve component service members; restore travel exemptions for Reserve and Guard members for expenses associated with attending drills; military health care should also be provided to members of the Reserve Components and their dependents, who become injured while on active duty status regardless of the number of days served on active duty, to the same degree as active duty members under the same circumstances; and whenever a Base Realignment and Closure Commission (BRAC) is conducted, certain base facilities such as base medical facilities, commissaries, exchanges and other facilities be preserved for use by active duty, reserve forces personnel, military retired veterans and their families.

Resolution No. 92
Subject: Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission Positions
Origin: Maryland

WHEREAS, The Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission (MCRMC) was established by the National Defense Authorization Act FY 2013 Pub. L. 112-239, 126 Stat. 1787 (2013) to conduct a review of military compensation and retirement systems and to make recommendations to modernize such systems in order to:
1. Ensure the long-term viability of the All-Volunteer Force by sustaining the required human resources of that force during all levels of conflict and economic conditions
2. Enable the quality of life for members of the Armed Forces and the other uniformed services and their families in a manner that fosters successful recruitment, retention, and careers for members of the Armed Forces and the other uniformed services
3. Modernize and achieve fiscal sustainability for the compensation and retirement systems for the Armed Forces and the other uniformed services for the 21st century; and

WHEREAS, MCRMC released 15 recommendations to modernize the Uniformed Services’ compensation and benefit programs today, 29 January 2015; and

WHEREAS, MCRMC’s 15 recommendations are as follows: Recommendation 1: Help more Service members save for retirement earlier in their careers, leverage the retention power of traditional Uniformed Services retirement, and give the Services greater flexibility to retain quality people in demanding career fields by implementing a modernized retirement system; Recommendation 2: Provide more options for Service members to protect their pay for their survivors by offering new Survivor Benefit Plan coverage without Dependency and Indemnity Compensation offset; Recommendation 3: Promote Service members’ financial literacy by implementing a more robust financial and health benefit training program; Recommendation 4: Increase efficiency within the Reserve Component by consolidating 30 Reserve Component duty statuses into 6 broader statuses; Recommendation 5: Ensure Service members receive the best possible combat casualty care by creating a joint readiness command, new standards for essential medical capabilities, and innovative tools to attract readiness-related medical cases to military hospitals; Recommendation 6: Increase access, choice, and value of health care for active-duty family members, Reserve Component members, and retirees by allowing beneficiaries to choose from a selection of commercial insurance plans offered through a Department of Defense health benefit program; Recommendation 7: Improve support for Service members’ dependents with special needs by aligning services offered under the Extended Care Health Option to those of state Medicaid waiver programs; Recommendation 8: Improve collaboration between the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs by enforcing coordination on electronic medical records, a uniform formula for transitioning Service members, common services, and reimbursements; Recommendation 9: Protect both access to and savings at Department of Defense commissaries and exchanges by consolidating these activities into a single defense resale organization; Recommendation 10: Improve access to child care on military installations by ensuring the Department of Defense has the information and budgeting tools to provide child care within 90 days of need; Recommendation 11: Safeguard education benefits for Service members by reducing redundancy and ensuring the fiscal sustainability of education programs; Recommendation 12: Better prepare Service members for transition to civilian life by expanding education and granting states more flexibility to administer the Jobs for Veterans State Grants Program; Recommendation 13: Ensure Service members receive financial assistance to cover nutritional needs by providing them cost-effective supplemental benefits; Recommendation 14: Expand Space-Available travel to more dependents of Service members by allowing travel by dependents of Service members deployed for 30 days or more; and Recommendation 15: Measure how the challenges of military life affect children’s school work by implementing a national military dependent student identifier; and

WHEREAS, On March 25, 2015, The American Legion gave testimony before the Subcommittee on Military Personnel, Committee on Armed Services, United States House of Representatives and stated that The American Legion supports recommendations nos. 3, 8, 12, 14 and 15; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion testimony stated as well, that it does not support
recommendations nos. 1, 2, 6, and 11; and
WHEREAS, The American Legion testimony also stated that it maintains no position in connection to recommendations nos. 4, 5, 7, 9, 10, and 13; and
WHEREAS, The American Legion National Security Commission has deliberated the merits of either supporting or not supporting each of the recommendations in which The American Legion previously maintained no position, i.e. recommendations 4, 5, 7, 9, 10 and 13; and
WHEREAS, In reference to Recommendation 4, current Title 10 Reserve Component (RC) statutory authorities and duty statuses are as follows: full mobilization, partial mobilization, Presidential reserve call-up, Major disaster/emergency response, preplanned combatant command, captive status, unsatisfactory participation (45 days), unsatisfactory participation (24 months), disciplinary action, annual active duty (up to 30 days), additional training and operational support, medical evaluation and treatment, medical care (duty < 30 days), retiree recall, muster duty, duty at the national guard bureau, aid for state governments, enforce federal authority, National Guard called to federal service, additional training periods, additional flight training periods, readiness management periods, funeral honors duty; Title 32 – National Guard required training and other duty, additional training and other duty, additional training periods, additional flight training periods, readiness management periods and funeral honors duty; Title 14 – U.S. Coast Guard emergency augmentation; and
WHEREAS, According to the Commission on the National Guard and Reserves, the numerous criteria for determining Reserve Component statuses can make it difficult for military commanders to call RC members to duty because the current system is complex, aligns poorly to current training and complicates rather than supports effective budgeting; and
WHEREAS, The MCRMC recommends streamlining RC duty status to the following six categories: Title 10 Active Duty, Inactive Reserve Service, Federal Service (Presidential Call-Up), Title 32 Full-Time National Guard, Inactive National Guard, Title 14 Active Duty for emergency augmentation; and
WHEREAS, In reference to Recommendation 5, the MCRMC is calling for the creation of a four star Joint Readiness Command to manage the readiness, as well as the interoperability, efficiency, and “jointness” of the entire military force, including medical readiness; and
WHEREAS, According to the MCRMC, this recommendation is made for fear of losing the lifesaving capabilities developed during Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom by joint military medical personnel; and
WHEREAS, The ingenuity, adroitness and first-hand experience of U.S. medical personnel are the reasons for the development of these effective capabilities; and
WHEREAS, Each branch of the military can benefit from experience-based training and not necessarily by the creation of redundant bureaucracy or added layer to the Military Health System’s command structure or the Defense Health Agency (DHA); and
WHEREAS, The Military Health System (MHS) is a global, comprehensive, integrated system that includes combat medical services, health readiness futures, a health care delivery system, public health activities, medical education and training, and medical research and development. The fundamental mission of the MHS, providing medical support to military operations; and
WHEREAS, According to the Department of Defense, DHA is a joint, integrated Combat Support Agency that enables the Army, Navy, and Air Force medical services to provide a medially ready force and ready medical force to Combatant Commands in both peacetime and wartime; and
WHEREAS, In reference to Recommendation 7, Exceptional Family Members (EMF) are service members who have family members with special medical or educational needs and EMFs can register for TRICARE Extended Care Health Option (ECHO) program; and
WHEREAS, Children may remain eligible for ECHO benefits beyond the usual TRICARE eligibility age limit (age 21 or age 23 if enrolled in a full-time course of study at an approved institution of higher learning and if the sponsor provides over 50 percent of the financial support) provided all of the following are true: the sponsor remains on active duty; the child is incapable of self-support because of a mental or physical incapacity that occurs prior to the loss of eligibility; and the sponsor is responsible for over 50 percent of the child’s financial support; and

WHEREAS, Lack of proper funding for maintaining DoD quality of life programs including ECHO, risks a deteriorating effect on military healthcare options specifically established to provide supplemental service and benefits to active duty family members with qualifying mental or physical disabilities; and

WHEREAS, In reference to Recommendations 9, any effort to reduce or dismantle the integrity of the military commissary system would be seen as a serious breach of faith with a benefit system that currently serves as a mainstay for the active and reserve components, military retirees and military survivors, and 100 percent service-connected disabled veterans, among other qualifying personnel; and

WHEREAS, In reference to Recommendation 10, Military compensation is only one factor in the quality of life equation as to whether a good service member and their families remain in military service and adequate access to child care is crucial to supporting valuable assistance that can ease the numerous sacrifices that are demanded of service members; and

WHEREAS, In reference to Recommendation 13, MCRMC recognizes that some service members will continue to need financial help to purchase food for their families and the Family Subsistence Supplemental Allowance (SNAP), better known as food stamps, is available to service members in the United States, however, the Family Subsistence Supplemental Allowance (FSSA), the military’s alternative to SNAP, is currently a second option, but only serves approximately 300 service members a year; and

WHEREAS, Considering the low number of participants, it appears that the majority of military families in-need are not familiar with FSSA due to the lack of promotion of the FSSA website by Department of Defense; and

WHEREAS, MCRMC recommends that FSSA should be retained for service members in overseas locations where SNAP is unavailable, but should be sunset over a two-year period in the U.S.; and

WHEREAS, Military families in-need should be allowed more than one option when applying for assistance; and

WHEREAS, Lack of proper funding for maintaining DoD quality of life programs including FSSA, risks a deteriorating effect on overall morale; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Cincinnati, Ohio, August 30, 31, September 1, 2016, That The American Legion supports the following MCRMC recommendations: Recommendation 3: Promote Service members’ financial literacy by implementing a more robust financial and health benefit training program; Recommendation 4: Increase efficiency within the Reserve Component by consolidating 30 Reserve Component duty statuses into 6 broader statuses; Recommendation 8: Improve collaboration between the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs by enforcing coordination on electronic medical records, a uniform formulary for transitioning Service members, common services, and reimbursements; Recommendation 10: Improve access to child care on military installations by ensuring the Department of Defense has the information and budgeting tools to provide child care within 90 days of need; Recommendation 12: Better prepare Service members for transition to civilian life by expanding education and granting states more flexibility to administer the Jobs for Veterans State Grants Program; Recommendation 14: Expand Space-Available travel to more dependents of Service members by allowing travel by dependents of Service members deployed for 30 days or more; and Recommendation 15: Measure how the
challenges of military life affect children’s school work by implementing a national military dependent student identifier; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion does not support MCRMC Recommendation 1: Help more Service members save for retirement earlier in their careers, leverage the retention power of traditional Uniformed Services retirement, and give the Services greater flexibility to retain quality people in demanding career fields by implementing a modernized retirement system; Recommendation 2: Provide more options for Service members to protect their pay for their survivors by offering new Survivor Benefit Plan coverage without Dependency and Indemnity Compensation offset; Recommendation 5: Ensure Service members receive the best possible combat casualty care by creating a joint readiness command, new standards for essential medical capabilities, and innovative tools to attract readiness-related medical cases to military hospitals; Recommendation 6: Increase access, choice, and value of health care for active-duty family members, Reserve Component members, and retirees by allowing beneficiaries to choose from a selection of commercial insurance plans offered through a Department of Defense health benefit program; Recommendation 7: Improve support for Service members’ dependents with special needs by aligning services offered under the Extended Care Health Option to those of state Medicaid waiver programs; Recommendation 9: Protect both access to and savings at Department of Defense commissaries and exchanges by consolidating these activities into a single defense resale organization; Recommendation 11: Safeguard education benefits for Service members by reducing redundancy and ensuring the fiscal sustainability of education programs; and Recommendation 13: Ensure Service members receive financial assistance to cover nutritional needs by providing them cost-effective supplemental benefits.

Resolution No. 93

Subject: Codify Burial Eligibility for Arlington National Cemetary

Origin: Maryland

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, More than 400,000 veterans and their dependents are buried here on 612 acres of land; and

Whereas, Arlington is one of more than 100 National Cemeteries but, unlike the others, Arlington Cemetery is administered by the Department of the Army; and

Whereas, In spite of restrictive regulations (Title 32, CFR), there have been numerous waivers in past years, falsification of military records to gain interment at Arlington and even an unprecedented presidential requested waiver and reservation; and

Whereas, Eligibility criteria for burials at Arlington need to be codified in order to assure compliance and fairness and to assure that the remaining space at Arlington is judiciously used; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Cincinnati, Ohio, August 30, 31, September 1, 2016, That The American Legion urges Congress to codify eligibility criteria for burial at Arlington National Cemetery and that such burial be restricted to service members who die on active-duty; to our most decorated veterans to include recipients of the Purple Heart; former members of the armed forces separated from the military with a physical disability of 30 percent or more before October 1, 1949; and to veterans who spent full careers in uniform, and to their spouses and eligible children; to former prisoners of war; and for the President or former Presidents as Commanders in Chief of the Armed Forces; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion believes there should be no waivers for unqualified persons except under unique and compelling circumstances that comport with codified non-partisan waiver procedures as established by Congress; and, be it finally
RESOLVED, That The American Legion believes eligibility for interment of cremated remains of honorably discharged veterans in the Columbarium at Arlington should also be codified.

Resolution No. 94
Subject: Earned Military Benefits
Origin: Maryland

WHEREAS, Without highly qualified, dedicated men and women, even the most sophisticated weaponry will not provide the deterrent force necessary for this nation to remain at peace; and

WHEREAS, The profession of arms cannot be compared to any civilian occupations because of the required amount of sacrifice or necessary individual dedication; and

WHEREAS, An all-volunteer military requires benefits commensurate with sacrifices made by military personnel to entice enlistment and re-enlistments; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense (DoD) has on several occasions conducted studies to change, modify, and update military retirement, healthcare, or other earned benefits yet recommendations from those studies have been repeatedly found to be unsatisfactory; and

WHEREAS, Regardless of identified negative impacts to service members and retirees, DoD continues to attempt to conduct a “bait and switch”; changing benefits for military service with no recourse for currently serving individuals; and

WHEREAS, A change in earned retirement benefits, known as REDUX, was instituted in 1986 but was changed in 2000 because of negative impact on recruiting and retention; and

WHEREAS, Any changes to the existing military benefit system would violate contracts made with military retirees and currently serving military personnel and would undermine morale and readiness; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Cincinnati, Ohio, August 30, 31, September 1, 2016, That The American Legion encourage Congress to ensure that any benefit in force at the time of initial enlistment cannot be reduced in value, and that benefit is to remain in force throughout the entire military career and retirement of a service member.

Resolution No. 95
Subject: Flexible Savings Accounts
Origin: Maryland

WHEREAS, Medical savings accounts, also known as "flexible savings accounts,” are recognized by Title 37 of the United States Code for civilian employees and active duty members of the Department of Defense; and

WHEREAS, Medical savings accounts are pretax dollar savings utilized by families specifically for health care, dental care, and child care expenses; and

WHEREAS, Reserve Component members not under TRICARE historically have had significant mobilization issues due to deferred preventive health care due to cost for such things as dental checkups, which reduced the mobilization readiness of both service members and their units; and

WHEREAS, Medical savings accounts would allow Reserve Component members to afford regular health care, thus improve their mobilization health readiness, and thereby also improve the readiness of the Reserve Components; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion supports benefits that support Reserve Component members, their military families and the nation; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion believes the Department of Defense, by not allowing medical savings accounts for the Reserve Components equal to the active duty components, is discriminating against those members of the Armed Services Reserve
Component who, although they serve equally in the defense of this nation, are not allowed access to a medical savings account; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Cincinnati, Ohio, August 30, 31, September 1, 2016, That The American Legion supports the participation in pretax medical savings accounts for both active duty and Reserve Component service members and military families; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That Congress be urged to pass legislation that enables participation in pretax medical savings accounts.

Resolution No. 97
Subject: Grant Access to all U.S. Military Facilities to Military Retirees and Their Dependents
Origin: Maryland

WHEREAS, A portion of the earned benefits of military retirees is considered to be the use of military facilities, such as post and base exchanges, commissaries, health care, recreational facilities, mail, and other U.S. military facilities worldwide; and

WHEREAS, As a direct result of the Status of Forces Agreements between the U.S. government and host countries many of these benefits are usually denied to retired military members and their dependents residing or visiting U.S. military facilities located outside the U.S.; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Cincinnati, Ohio, August 30, 31, September 1, 2016, That all future Status of Forces Agreements negotiated, renegotiated, or revised with host countries allow for the unimpeded use of all U.S. military facilities by retired U.S. military members and their dependents.

Resolution No. 100
Subject: Military Commissaries
Origin: Maryland

WHEREAS, Defense officials have asked DeCA for cost-saving options including how the system would operate with reduced or no taxpayer subsidies; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense is implementing pilot programs to reduce costs such as variable pricing; and

WHEREAS, DeCA currently operates nearly 250 stores worldwide and employs approximately 18,000 people and its annual sales exceed $5 billion; and

WHEREAS, By using commissaries, financially challenged military families can save an average of more than 30 percent on their purchases compared with commercial supermarkets; and

WHEREAS, In addition to improving the quality of life for the troops and their families, commissary privileges help recruit and retain the best and brightest men and women to serve our country; and

WHEREAS, Without commissary savings, pay compensation for active duty and military retirees would be less competitive with the civilian sector; and

WHEREAS, Retired as well as drilling Reservists and National Guardsmen are now authorized to use the commissaries and their access to the DeCA should not be restricted; and

WHEREAS, Any effort to reduce or dismantle the integrity of the military commissary system would be seen as a serious breach of faith with a benefit system that currently serves as a mainstay for the active and reserve components, military retirees and military survivors, military personnel involuntarily discharged or released from active duty, and 100 percent service-connected disabled veterans and others; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Cincinnati, Ohio, August 30, 31, September 1, 2016, That The American Legion urge the
Department of Defense and Congress to continue full funding of the military commissary system and to retain this vital non-pay compensation benefit system which is essential to the morale and readiness of the dedicated men and women who have served, and continue to serve, the national security interests of the United States; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion oppose any efforts to institute “variable pricing” or to privatize the military commissary system or to reduce discounts or to dismantle or downsize the Defense Commissary Agency.

Resolution No. 101
Subject: Support for the Reformation of the Military Voting System
Origin: Maryland

WHEREAS, The 1986 Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (Public Law 99-410) streamlined the procedures for overseas absentee voting; authorized a back-up write-in overseas ballot if the voter did not receive one requested from the state; Postal Service was to ensure that balloting materials were “carried expeditiously and free of postage;” and the overall intent was to ensure “maximum access to the polls” by both uniformed and civilian overseas voters; and

WHEREAS, The 2000 general election demonstrated numerous problems concerning uniformed and overseas citizens absentee balloting procedures exist not only in Florida, but nationally as well; and

WHEREAS, Although a presidential election is held on the same date across the United States, it is composed of 50 separate state elections; and the Constitution of the United States grants the responsibility for the conduct of elections to the states; and

WHEREAS, Many states have difficulty printing and mailing ballots to overseas military voters in a timely manner, thus, posing a challenge for military members and their family members to vote and return ballots within deadlines; and other states will not accept ballots received 30 days before general elections making it difficult, particularly, for military personnel deployed overseas; and

WHEREAS, Absentee ballots from forward deployed military members entitled to free postage in locales like the Iraq, Afghanistan and Bosnia often are not postmarked at mailing but are postmarked en route resulting in late postmarking in CONUS; and

WHEREAS, Military voters should be protected from disenfranchisement based on technicalities that are beyond their control such as postmark discrepancies, missing notarized signatures, and confusion on residency requirements; and

WHEREAS, Some military units compound military absentee voting problems because voting assistance in the military is often an additional duty relegated to the most junior officers and special vigilance is often not given to handling election mail; and

WHEREAS, A worldwide Internet voting pilot program was recently tested by a Department of Defense contractor using digital signatures and ballot encryption, however, it was rejected for security reasons; and

WHEREAS, Many states now allow the fax transmission of absentee voting materials; and

WHEREAS, Despite progress made after more than a decade by the Department of Defense cooperatively working with the states, on average, some 30 percent of all military absentee ballots are still not counted in federal elections; and

WHEREAS, National defense is uniquely a constitutional mandate that gives the federal government the authority and responsibility to ensure military personnel and their families are not disenfranchised by the circumstances of their service and, thereby, necessitating federal legislation as the states have not resolved the problem for nearly a century, and a more adequate uniform and consistent system, not 50 unique systems, is needed; and

WHEREAS, The Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP), administers the federal responsibilities of the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA) of
1986, as amended in 2010 by the Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment Act (MOVE); and
WHEREAS, The American Legion recognizes the progress made by FVAP and the usefulness of its website www.FVAP.gov; and
WHEREAS, The National Conference of Commissioners on Uniform State Laws promotes drafts of uniform and model acts, and it could offer uniform formats for the states to follow on military absentee voting; now, therefore, be it
RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Cincinnati, Ohio, August 30, 31, September 1, 2016, That The American Legion ensure that satisfactorily drafted uniform acts and/or regulations pertaining to the Military Voting Absentee System, are made available to all appropriate state and local election entities; and, be it further
RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges that appropriate laws and guidelines be developed at federal, state, and local levels with the intent that all military absentee voters and their families will have their votes counted in every election; and, be it further
RESOLVED, That the sending and receiving of blank and completed military absentee ballots be accomplished electronically as much as possible; and, be it finally
RESOLVED, That The American Legion takes an advocate role on this vital issue at national, state and local levels.

Resolution No. 102
Subject: Oppose Tricare Fee Increases
Origin: Maryland
WHEREAS, The American Legion recognizes the debt owed to the entire military retirement community for their sacrifices and hardships endured in honorable military service to this nation; and
WHEREAS, Administration and defense leaders are seeking to impose very large health care fee increases on military retirees and their families; and
WHEREAS, The proposed fee increases are inappropriate and out of line with career service members’ unique sacrifices; and
WHEREAS, Military medical and retirement benefits must be markedly better than civilian benefits because they are primary offsets for decades of extraordinarily arduous service conditions; and
WHEREAS, Military retirees’ careers entailed unique and arduous service conditions few other Americans are willing to endure for 20 or 30 years including hazardous duty, service in foreign countries, often in hostile environments, extended family separations, just to mention a few; and
WHEREAS, The current fiscal realities dictate certain financial concessions may have to be made by our citizens but to unfairly burden America’s military retiree families any further is unconscionable; and
WHEREAS, Those who point to the disparity in cost between civilian and military health insurance, and hint at unfairness, simply do not appreciate the huge premiums already paid by the selfless service and sacrifice of our service members and their families; and
WHEREAS, TRICARE enrollment fees are scheduled to increase annual on October 1st.
WHEREAS, The American Legion sees this proposal as an erosion of quality of life earned benefits from a grateful nation for honorable military service; now, therefore, be it
RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Cincinnati, Ohio, August 30, 31, September 1, 2016, That The American Legion is strongly opposed to proposed hikes in premiums and or enrollment fees being paid by enrollees in the military’s health insurance program known as TRICARE; and, be it finally
RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges Congress to decisively reject these unjust proposed increases in the military retirees’ TRICARE enrollment fees, deductibles, or premiums.

Resolution No. 103
Subject: Correction of Military Records
Origin: Maryland

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, United States Code (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 service ember, 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, 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 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 Cincinnati, Ohio, August 30, 31, September 1, 2016, That appropriate action be taken in support of legislation to amend title 10, United States Code, section 1552, so as to eliminate all time limitations restricting when a claimant may petition the Boards for Correction of Military Records for relief of an error or injustice.

Resolution No. 105
Subject: Reference Veterans Service Organizations at Discharge
Origin: Maryland

WHEREAS, Members of The American Legion are veterans of the United States Armed Forces; and

WHEREAS, Legionnaires would like to share the veterans services available to newly discharged and retired service members; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion recommends that a separation package be supplied to each of these newly discharged and retired veterans and recommends that
separation packets contain the names and addresses of all major veterans service organization in the United States by state; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion recognizes that the transition from military life to civilian life is sometimes difficult and recognizes that association with fellow veterans and access to available services is highly beneficial in their efforts to become productive citizens; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion respectfully requests each military service include such a package of information in the separation process from the military; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Cincinnati, Ohio, August 30, 31, September 1, 2016, That The American Legion support legislation to insert a clause into the briefing of transitioning servicemen and women that makes specific reference to veterans service organizations, such as The American Legion, in their civilian communities.

Resolution No. 107
Subject: Support Armed Services Retirement Homes
Origin: Maryland

WHEREAS, The Armed Forces Retirement Home (AFRH), formally known as United States Soldiers’ and Airmen’s Home (USSAH) and the United States Naval Home (USNH), is a pair of continuing care facilities which was 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, Persons are eligible to become residents of AFRH who served as members of the Armed Forces, at least one-half of whose service was not active commissioned service (other than as a warrant officer or limited-duty officer), are eligible to become residents of the Retirement Home: are 60 years of age or over; and were discharged or released from service in the Armed Forces under honorable conditions after 20 or more years of active service; persons who are determined under rules prescribed by the chief operating officer to be incapable of earning a livelihood because of a service-connected disability incurred in the line of duty in the Armed Forces; served in a war theater during a time of war declared by Congress or were eligible for hostile fire special pay were discharged or released from service in the Armed Forces under honorable conditions; and are determined under rules prescribed by the chief operating officer to be incapable of earning a livelihood because of injuries, disease, or disability; served in a women's component of the Armed Forces before June 12, 1948; and are determined under rules prescribed by the chief operating officer to be eligible for admission because of compelling personal circumstances; and

WHEREAS, A person who has been convicted of a felony or is not free of drug, alcohol, or psychiatric problems shall be ineligible to become a resident of the Retirement Home; and

WHEREAS, Pursuant to 24 U.S. Code and 37 U.S. Code, monthly pay deductions of $1.00 from every enlisted member, warrant officer, and limited-duty officer provide a substantial stream of revenue, among other sources of support, fund the AFRH; and

WHEREAS, The extensive downsizing of the Armed Forces due to the Budget Control Act of 2011 and associated sequestration is subsequently resulting in the reduction in the number of military personnel; and

WHEREAS, The current and upcoming reductions in end-strength evidently will reduce revenue and, coupled with rising nursing home care costs are a cause for concern which would potentially require both locations of the AFRH (Gulfport, Mississippi and Washington, D.C.) to close their doors; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Cincinnati, Ohio, August 30, 31, September 1, 2016, That The American Legion urge Congress to continue support and fund those measures, to include annual appropriations,
which will provide for the long-term solvency and viability of the Armed Forces Retirement Home.

Resolution No. 109
Subject: Support for Pain Management Research Treatments and Therapies at DOD, VA and NIH
Origin: Maryland

WHEREAS, The characteristics of modern warfare, including the global war on terrorism, exposes members of the uniformed services to many adverse and dangerous environmental diseases and living conditions; and
WHEREAS, War zone conditions, replete with noxious gases released from explosive devices among other potentially harmful environmental exposures in such theaters as the Middle East and Southwest Asia, as well as in other areas of the world in which service members are exposed to combat-like conditions, produce traumatic, life altering, battlefield scars, and casualties unheard of in previous wars including infections, instant crushing of protective skull and body bones, loss of sight and limbs, dehydration, blood and other body infections and, in some cases, severely impairment or total loss of mental and physical body motor functions; and
WHEREAS, Military medical rapid response teams provide superb, state of the art, medical and psychological life-saving treatment and care at battlefield sites with an extraordinarily high success rate; and
WHEREAS, Military, Department of Veterans Affairs, and some specialty civilian health care treatment facilities are overburdened with caring for the most serious and most painful battlefield casualties ever witnessed from war; and
WHEREAS, The nation’s medical and mental health care professionals have not been provided with sufficient resources to adequately research, diagnose, treat, and manage acute and chronic pain associated with present day battlefield casualties; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Cincinnati, Ohio, August 30, 31, September 1, 2016, That federal funding for pain management research, treatment, and therapies at the Department of Defense, Department of Veterans Affairs and at the National Institutes of Health be significantly increased and that Congress and the Administration re-double their efforts to ensure that an effective pain management program be uniformly established and implemented; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs increase their investments in pain management clinical research by improving and accelerating clinical trials at military and VA treatment facilities and affiliated university medical centers and research programs.

Resolution No. 110
Subject: Support for Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences
Origin: Maryland

WHEREAS, The American Legion has supported the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USU), since its establishment in 1972 as the nation’s federal academic health center dedicated to providing uniquely educated and trained uniformed officers for the
United States Army, Navy, Air Force, and Public Health Service; and
WHEREAS, The university’s nationally ranked military and civilian faculty conduct cutting edge research in the biomedical sciences and in areas specific to the Department of Defense (DOD) health care mission such as combat casualty care, infectious diseases, and radiation biology; and
WHEREAS, The university specializes in military and public health medicine, focusing on keeping people healthy, disease prevention, and diagnosis and treatment, and
USU faculty offer significant expertise in tropical medicine and hygiene, parasitology, epidemiologic methods, and preventive medicine; and

WHEREAS, The DOD and Congress have recognized the extensive military-unique and preventive health care education provided in the multi-service environment of USU ensures medical readiness and force health protection for the Military Health System (MHS); and

WHEREAS, USU is recognized as the place where students receive thorough preparation to deal with the medical aspects of weapons of mass destruction, including chemical, radiological and biological, nuclear, and high yield explosive (CBRNE) terrorism or other catastrophes; and

WHEREAS, USU has developed similar training for civilian first responders, medical professionals and emergency planners; and

WHEREAS, USU is also uniquely qualified and experienced in simulation technology, education and training; and

WHEREAS, USU, recognized by DOD as the Academic Health Center for the MHS, has graduated thousands of uniformed physician officers who represent approximately one-quarter of the total physicians on active duty in the Armed Forces; USU alumni have been described as the backbone of the MHS, and in addition, the USU Graduate School of Nursing has conferred Masters of Science in Nursing degrees to uniformed, critically required advanced practice nurses during the current nationwide nursing shortage; and, the university has conferred master and doctoral degrees through its Graduate Education Programs in essential areas requested by the MHS; and

WHEREAS, The establishment of the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center (WRNMMC) expands the role of USU; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Cincinnati, Ohio, August 30, 31, September 1, 2016, That The American Legion urge Congress to: continue its demonstrated commitment to the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USU), as a national asset, for the continued provision of uniquely educated and trained uniformed physicians, advanced practice nurses, and scientists dedicated to careers of service in the Army, Navy, Air Force, and the United States Public Health Service; support timely construction and maintenance of the USU campus; continue funding the university’s collaborative effort for sharing its chemical, radiological and biological, nuclear, and high yield explosive (CBRNE) expertise and training; support development of the USU Immersive, Wide Area Virtual Environment (WAVE) Simulation for CBRNE/WMD Medical Readiness Training; support funding for the Graduate School of Nursing Teaching/Educational Programs and, encourage continued close collaboration between Walter Reed National Military Medical Center with USU as the core academic health center.

Resolution No. 176
Subject: Authorize and Fund Tricare for Reserve Components and Dependents
Origin: Iowa

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense (DOD) created TRICARE to augment its Military Health System; and

WHEREAS, TRICARE largely consists of regional federally-contracted, for-profit health care providers; and

WHEREAS, DOD’s utilization of Reserve Components in the performance of traditionally active duty missions continues globally; and

WHEREAS, Many members of the Reserve Components, when activated to perform fulltime duties, can no longer afford their civilian health care coverage for themselves and their dependents and numerous activated Reservists have been non-deployable due to health or dental problems; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Cincinnati, Ohio, August 30, 31, September 1, 2016, That The American Legion urge
Congress to authorize and fund the Department of Defense in providing permanent TRICARE health care access for members of the Reserve Components and their dependents.

Resolution No. 200
Subject: Extended Care Health Option (ECHO)
Origin: North Carolina

WHEREAS, One of the Four Pillars of The American Legion is National Security; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion has always supported quality of life features for our military and their families; and

WHEREAS, Part of National Security is maintaining a strong military; and

WHEREAS, The morale of the military has a direct effect on strength of the military; and

WHEREAS, Some military members have special health needs for their families such as autism, intellectual disability, serious physical disabilities and all extraordinary physical or psychological conditions; and

WHEREAS, Children may remain eligible for Extended Care Health Option (ECHO) benefits beyond the usual TRICARE eligibility age limit age 21 or age 23 provided the sponsor remains on active duty, the child is incapable of self-support, the sponsor is responsible for over 50 percent of the child’s financial support; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Cincinnati, Ohio, August 30, 31, September 1, 2016, That The American Legion urges Congress and the Department of Defense (DOD) to support legislation to properly fund the quality of life features including the funding of the Extended Care Health Option (ECHO) which provides supplemental service to active duty family members with qualifying mental or physical disabilities; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the DOD inform active duty members of this benefit.

Resolution No. 203
Subject: Family Subsistence Supplemental Allowance
Origin: North Carolina

WHEREAS, One of the Four Pillars of The American Legion is National Security; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion has always supported quality of life features for our military and their families; and

WHEREAS, Part of National Security is maintaining a strong military; and

WHEREAS, The morale of the military has a direct effect on strength of the military; and

WHEREAS, Some military families rely on food stamps and other programs to survive; and

WHEREAS, The majority of military families are not familiar with the Family Subsistence Supplemental Allowance (FSSA Program); and

WHEREAS, Families must apply for these benefits and the DOD website dealing with FSSA had only 11,214 visitors which indicates not many families know of the program; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That The American Legion National Convention assembled in, Cincinnati, Ohio, August 30, 31, September 1, 2016, urges Congress and the Department of Defense to support legislation to properly fund the quality of life features including the funding of the Family Subsistence Supplemental Allowance.

Resolution No. 209
Subject: Space-a Travel for Unemployed and Disabled Veterans and Dependents
Origin: North Carolina
WHEREAS, The United States Department of Defense (DoD) in DoD Regulation 4515.13R has established a program of travel known as Space Available Travel to allow authorized passengers to occupy DoD aircraft seats that are surplus after all required passengers have been accommodated; and

WHEREAS, The purpose of this privilege was to provide uniformed service members with a respite from the rigors of military service, and to provide retired uniformed service members with recognition for a career of rigorous duty; and

WHEREAS, The privilege is also extended to other categories of passengers, to include dependents, in support of the mission of the Uniformed Service members; and

WHEREAS, DoD regulation 4515.13-R does not provide for 100% disabled veterans, or 100% Individually Unemployed (IU) veterans, or dependents of 100% disabled veterans, or dependents of 100% IU veterans, to be eligible for Space Available Travel; and

WHEREAS, One hundred percent disabled veterans and 100% IU veterans may not have fulfilled the requirements for retirement, but have shown dedication to the DoD and a desire to retire by serving ten or more years of active duty service and separated due to their great sacrifice in the line of duty that resulted in a 100% disability rating or 100% IU; and

WHEREAS, Dependents of 100% disabled veterans and 100% IU veterans continue to faithfully support their disabled spouses; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in assembled in, Cincinnati, Ohio, August 30, 31, September 1, 2016, That The American Legion urges Congress to authorize the Department of Defense to offer space available worldwide travel on military aircraft to 100% disabled veterans and 100% individually unemployed veterans who served ten or more years on active duty, and their dependents, be authorized to participate in Space Available Travel.

Resolution No. 224
Subject: Support for Concurrent Receipt of Military Retirement Pay and VA Disability Compensation

Origin: North Carolina

WHEREAS, We reaffirm our support of veterans who have served our country as career military men and women; and

WHEREAS, These retired veterans were injured or disabled as a result of their service; and

WHEREAS, Military retirees have devoted more than 20 years to defending our country and democracy; and

WHEREAS, Military retirees are the only federal retirees who pay out of their own pocket for their service connected disability compensation; and

WHEREAS, Military retirees with 50% or greater service connected disabilities are able to receive both military retired pay and Department of Veterans Affairs disability compensation; and

WHEREAS, All other federal retirees receive both retirement pay and disability compensation; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, The American Legion National Convention assembled in, Cincinnati, Ohio, August 30, 31, September 1, 2016, That The American Legion strongly support ending the unfair policy of forcing many military longevity retirees to forfeit some of their retired pay in order to receive equal amounts of disability compensation from the Department of Veterans Affairs for those retirees with less than 50% service connected disability.

NATIONAL GUARD AND RESERVE FORCES
William Goede, Minnesota, Chairman
Resolution No. 15
Subject: Support Veteran Status for National Guard and Reserve Servicemembers
Origin: Nebraska

WHEREAS, For the purposes of this resolution, the term Reserve Component represents the National Guard, Air National Guard, and the Reserves of all U.S. Military and Naval Branches; and
WHEREAS, Any provision within the United States Code pertaining to both the Active and Reserve Components should also be true for the Coast Guard and Coast Guard Reserve in terms of receiving legal and technical veterans’ status; and
WHEREAS, According to United State Code (USC) Title 38 - Veterans’ Benefits, the term “veteran” is defined as “a person who served in the active military, naval, or air service, and who was discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable”; and
WHEREAS, Also according to USC Title 38, “drill” and “active duty for training” do not qualify as “active duty” thereby excluding approximately 280,000 former Reserve Component retirees among other service members who have served in the Reserve Component from the honor of having the technical and legal status of the title: Veteran; and
WHEREAS, As USC Title 38 currently stands, any Reserve-Component service member who was discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable but never called to federal duty for other than drill or active duty for training is indeed entitled to benefits such as retirement pay, TRICARE, VA service-connection eligibility among other benefits but is still not however legally or technically considered a Veteran according to the letter of the law; and
WHEREAS, The American Legion recognizes the military service of all those who serve in the Guard and Reserve who have supported and continue to support the deployments of the active duty component ensuring active units are fully prepared at all times; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Cincinnati, Ohio, August 30, 31, September 1, 2016, That The American Legion states that anyone who has in good faith taken the United States Armed Forces Oath of Enlistment or United States Uniformed Services Oath of Office for either full-time active military or naval duty, or for the National Guard, Air National Guard, Reserve Component, Coast Guard or Coast Guard Reserve and has honorably carried out the military obligations set forth within these oaths should be entitled to receiving the practical, technical and legal status of the title: Veteran; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion supports legislation that amends any provision in the United States Code that excludes drills or active-duty-for-training from the legal definition of active duty to a provision that includes drills or active-duty-for-training in the definition of active duty under the law.

Resolution No. 17
Subject: Position on the Operational Reserve
Origin: Nebraska

WHEREAS, Historically, America has in times of relative peace looked for an immediate economic “peace dividend”; and
WHEREAS, This fervent call for cost savings has repeatedly placed the national security of the nation at risk; and
WHEREAS, The nation is currently undergoing severe economic times; and
WHEREAS, Once again the Department of Defense (DOD), in order to meet budget constraints has been required to reduce active duty end strength; and
WHEREAS, A reduction in active duty end strength will require a continued and even increased dependence on the reserve components in the form of an “Operational Reserve” to meet mission requirements; and

WHEREAS, The Fiscal Year 2017 budget anticipates the DOD will use the Guard and Reserve as a vital part of the operational force, and where it makes sense as a force of first choice; and

WHEREAS, An operational reserve requires increased commitment by servicemembers and their families; and

WHEREAS, An operational reserve requires sufficiently increased, timely, and dedicated funding for training, equipment, and family support issues; and

WHEREAS, In order to insure sufficient, timely, and dedicated funding, the operational reserve must be properly missioned in accordance with the current National Security Strategy; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Cincinnati, Ohio, August 30, 31, September 1, 2016, That The American Legion shall urge Congress to reform the laws and policies governing the reserve components to provide them programmable sustainability as an operational force; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the Department of Defense be directed to, in compliance with those laws and policies, establish missions and funding supporting taskings consistent with the National Defense Authorization Act, the Quadrennial Defense Review, the National Security Strategy, and the National Military Strategy, which directly impact national security and support the readiness of and the rotational nature of the operational reserve.

Resolution No. 22
Subject: Guard and Reserve Space-A Travel
Origin: Nebraska

WHEREAS, The United States Department of Defense (DoD) in DoD Regulation 4515.13-R has established a program of travel known as space-available travel—also known as “Space-A”—to allow authorized passengers to occupy DoD aircraft seats that are surplus after all required passengers have been accommodated; and

WHEREAS, The purpose of this privilege was to provide uniformed servicemembers with a respite from the rigors of military service, and to provide retired uniformed service members with recognition for a career of rigorous duty; and

WHEREAS, Under the current rules, Guard and Reserve members qualify for Space-A travel, however, unlike active duty family members, dependents of the Guard and Reserve currently cannot fly Space-A; and

WHEREAS, So called, “gray area” retirees (retirement eligible members of the Guard and Reserve who are under 60 years old) are excluded from traveling outside the continental United States (OCONUS) on Space-A; and

WHEREAS, Both the Guard and Reserve have transitioned from a Strategic Reserve into an Operational Force to meet the exigencies of an all-volunteer force in an era of persistent conflict in which all soldiers, active-duty and reserve-component alike, are expected to regularly deploy; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Cincinnati, Ohio, August 30, 31, September 1, 2016, That The American Legion urges Congress to authorize the Department of Defense to offer space available worldwide travel on military aircraft to dependents of Guard and Reserve members, “gray area” retirees, and widows and widowers of retired members and dependents.

Resolution No. 25
Subject: Support for the Non-Federal Roles of the National Guard
Origin: Nebraska

WHEREAS, Members of the National Guard swear dual allegiance to support and defend the United States as well as the individual states in which they serve; and
WHEREAS, National Guard units perform invaluable non-federal roles such as quelling domestic civil disturbances, providing relief assistance in man-made or natural disasters, as well as civil defense and drug interdiction functions, and other vital missions as determined by state authorities; and

WHEREAS, National Guard units are often the first relief or rescue forces to provide immediate on-scene response in the event of such emergencies; and

WHEREAS, Past large scale natural and man-made disasters could be repeated across the country requiring the immediate intervention of military units to supplement and assist state and local authorities and our citizenry; and

WHEREAS, Numerous overseas missions are expected to continue; and

WHEREAS, The participation of the National Guard in these traditional non-federal roles may be in danger of being severely limited or even eliminated in some cases; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Cincinnati, Ohio, August 30, 31, September 1, 2016, That The American Legion urge Congress to retain National Guard units at reasonable readiness levels so that in addition to their active duty missions they may continue to provide civil disturbance and natural and man-made disaster assistance, perform civil defense and drug interdiction functions as well as other essential state or federal roles as required, to include border security.

Resolution No. 28
Subject: Reserves and National Guard Retirement Benefit Fairness
Origin: Nebraska

WHEREAS, Congress has passed laws that allow Reserve and National Guard members retirement credit points to retire early provided that they served on active duty for 90 consecutive days in a fiscal year and have completed 20 years of service before the age of 60 years; and

WHEREAS, The effective date for this benefit is for those who served after its signing in early 2008; and

WHEREAS, The law signed leaves out all the Reserve and National Guard members who were activated between August 2, 1990 through present that would give them credit for their active duty service toward early retirement; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Cincinnati, Ohio, August 30, 31, September 1, 2016, That The American Legion urges Congress to amend the law to retroactively allow early retirement for those Reserve and National Guard members who have completed 20 years of service had been activated to Active Federal Duty since August 2, 1990 the same benefit.

CONSOLIDATE

Resolution No. 87 with Resolution 15
Subject: Support Veteran Status for National Guard and Reserve Service Members
Origin: Maryland

UNCONVENTIONAL FORCES AND INTELLIGENCE
Doug Haggan, France, Chairman

APPROVED

Resolution No. 34
Subject: Support Unmanned Vehicles
Origin: Nebraska

WHEREAS, Historically unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), commonly known as drones, were primarily used for reconnaissance; and
WHEREAS, Currently, military UAV’s perform both reconnaissance as well as attack missions; and
WHEREAS, The Coast Guard and U.S. Border Patrol use drones to monitor land and sea to protect oil and gas pipelines; and
WHEREAS, The CIA operates a covert drone program targeting terrorist leaders in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Somalia and Yemen; and
WHEREAS, The State Department uses surveillance drones to protect U.S. diplomatic personnel; and
WHEREAS, As the war in Afghanistan ends and new threats emerge in the Asia-Pacific region, the Pentagon is considering adapting multiple weapons for drones, including the Cold War-era Hydra 70 rocket and the Laser Homing Attack or Anti-Tank Missile, or LAHAT, according to its latest report on the future of unmanned systems; and
WHEREAS, It is difficult to find any other technology in the Defense Department that in a single decade has made such a tremendous impact on our war-fighting capability; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Cincinnati, Ohio, August 30, 31, September 1, 2016, That the U.S. Government be encouraged to continue to proceed on a path of transforming American’s armed forces into a modern force capable of providing for the security of all Americans, strengthening and expanding our military capabilities using unmanned vehicles.

Resolution No. 98
Subject: Support for the Global War on Terrorism
Origin: Maryland
WHEREAS, The American Legion is an organization of wartime veterans created by an act of the United States Congress in 1919; and
WHEREAS, The American Legion is committed to the security and defense of the United States and its allies; and
WHEREAS, In any war, continued public support not only for the troops, but also for their mission, is essential for victory; and
WHEREAS, The United States of America was suddenly, and without provocation, attacked by terrorists on September 11, 2001, resulting in the death of nearly 3,000 innocent people, injuring over 6,000 victims, and causing untold economic damage to the nation; and
WHEREAS, This attack was not an isolated event, but one in a long series of terrorist attacks aimed at destroying such core American values as liberty, democracy and respect for human rights; and
WHEREAS, In response to this clear act of war against the United States, Congress authorized the use of military force against those persons and organizations who planned and helped carry out the attack, their affiliates and those that harbored them, and to deter and pre-empt future acts of terrorism; and
WHEREAS, Our service members have made tremendous sacrifices over the past decade in fighting the forces of tyranny and terror; and
WHEREAS, Members of the United States military and intelligence agencies, displaying great courage and commitment to the mission, are still deployed around the world in support of the Global War on Terrorism, including Afghanistan, the Horn of Africa, the Philippines, and elsewhere; and
WHEREAS, While the U.S. and our allies have had great successes in the war on terrorism, most notably the killing of Osama bin Laden, ISIL, associated global terrorist groups, and their sponsors continue to operate in many locations and pose a grave threat to the national security of the United States ; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Cincinnati, Ohio, August 30, 31, September 1, 2016, That The American Legion fully
supports the men, women, and leadership of our armed forces as they are engaged in the
Global War on Terrorism; and, be it further
RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges all Americans and freedom-loving
peoples everywhere to stand united in their support of the Global War on Terrorism, and
united in their support of the troops who are engaged in protecting our values and way of
life; and, be it finally
RESOLVED, That the National Commander be, and is hereby authorized, to use
whatever means at his disposal to disseminate accurate information about the Global War
on Terrorism, and to engage whatever means necessary to ensure the united support of the
American people.

Resolution No. 106
Subject: Establish a Strategic Plan for the Internal Security Within the United States
Origin: Maryland
WHEREAS, The American Legion has always recognized the importance of
investigations that expose the truth about subversive activities that may harm or seek to
destroy our constitutional government; and
WHEREAS, The Central Intelligence Agency and the Federal Bureau of
Investigation, both security agencies of this nation, perform functions essential to the
maintenance of our national security; and
WHEREAS, The American Legion supports the thorough background investigation
of all applicants for federal employment to expose possible links to subversive activities or
membership in subversive organizations that contribute to the weakening of the internal
security of the United States; now, therefore, be it
RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in
Cincinnati, Ohio, August 30, 31, September 1, 2016, That The American Legion urges the
President and Congress to immediately take such action as may be appropriate and
necessary to effectively fund and staff federal intelligence and security agencies at a level
that will help protect the United States from foreign espionage, organized crime, terrorism,
and subversive activities; and, be it finally
RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge the President and Congress to enact
legislation and take executive action as necessary to deny subversive individuals or groups
the ability to infiltrate and subsequently destroy our government agencies and institutions
through federal employment.

APPROVE WITH AMENDMENTS

Resolution No. 91
Subject: Cybersecurity and Identity Theft
Origin: Maryland
WHEREAS, The security of the United States is being increasingly challenged by
non-traditional threats which may extend the fields of battle and terrorism to cyberspace
warfare; and
WHEREAS, The United States government maintains a comprehensive and
integrated system of federal agencies, including the Armed Forces, law enforcement,
intelligence, and public health, to detect, deter and defend against cyberspace warfare
threats to critical government and private infrastructures; and
WHEREAS, Presidential Decision Directive 62 (PDD-62), titled Combating
Terrorism established the National Coordinator for Security, Infrastructure Protection and
Counterterrorism; and
WHEREAS, The U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) recently discovered
two separate but related cybersecurity incidents that have impacted the data of Federal
government employees, contractors, members of the armed forces including veterans:
1. In April 2015, OPM discovered that the personnel data of 4.2 million current and former Federal government employees including members of the military and veterans had been stolen; this means information such as full name, birth date, home address and Social Security Numbers were affected; and

2. While investigating this incident, in early June 2015, OPM discovered that additional information had been compromised: including background investigation records of current, former, and prospective Federal employees and contractors; and

WHEREAS, OPM has concluded with high confidence that sensitive information—including the Social Security Numbers (SSNs) of 21.5 million individuals—was stolen from the background investigation databases; and

WHEREAS, This includes 19.7 million individuals that applied for a background investigation, and 1.8 million non-applicants, primarily spouses or co-habitants of applicants and some records also include findings from interviews conducted by background investigators and approximately 1.1 million include fingerprints; and

WHEREAS, Usernames and passwords that background investigation applicants used to fill out their background investigation forms were also stolen; and

WHEREAS, The Government Printing Office (GPO) has published registers of Commissioned Navy, Air Force, USMC and Army Officers on an unrestricted basis during the Vietnam Era; and

WHEREAS, These registers were published with Social Security Numbers (SSN) instead of Service Numbers; and

WHEREAS, Sometime later, one or more web-based business organizations digitized these unrestricted registers and subsequently posted the unrestricted registers on the Internet making them publicly available; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Cincinnati, Ohio, August 30, 31, September 1, 2016, That The American Legion urge Congress to appropriate the necessary funding to combat both international and domestic cybersecurity threats to the United States in the 21st century; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge Congress to appropriate the necessary funding to any federal law enforcement agencies for the purpose of searching and removing veterans’ Social Security numbers from publicly available websites found on the Internet; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge Federal investigators to request powers from the appropriate court to subpoena specific registers of all military personnel of the United States armed forces to include the U.S. Coast Guard which include Social Security numbers belonging to any public library—which are vulnerable to computer scanning and Internet posting—for the purpose of classifying such registers as “restricted” or “restricted access”; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion also urge the American public to be vigilant of cyberspace attacks, and that all efforts be made to detect, deter, and defend against the threats of cyberspace warfare, and to prosecute violators to the fullest extent of the law.

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 - Departments with 100,000 or more members
Post & Individual Participation: Department of California
Category II - 70,000 to 99,999 members
Post & Individual Participation: Department of Maryland
Category III - 40,000 to 69,999 members
Post & Individual Participation: Department of Minnesota
Category IV - 25,000 to 39,999 members
Post & Individual Participation: Department of Colorado
Category V - 10,000 to 24,999 members
Post & Individual Participation: No Submission
Category VI - less than 10,000 members
Post & Individual Participation: No Submission

Many of our Departments participated in the ROTC Awards Program this year. A total of almost 4,500 medals were awarded to deserving cadets in Senior ROTC and Junior ROTC Units. The winning Departments for 2015-2016 are the Departments of Alaska, Colorado, Hawaii, Illinois, Maryland, Minnesota, Montana, and North Dakota. This speaks well for these Departments and The American Legion in their recognition of the youth of America enrolled in ROTC programs.

Mr. Commander, as a Delegate to this Convention from the Department of Maryland, I move the adoption of this report.

National Executive Committee Meetings, Fall 2016
OCTOBER 12-13, 2016

The National Security Commission and its seven committees along with the council continue to review developments in the national security and foreign relations arenas. The National Security Commission has not met since our report to you in Cincinnati. The 98th National Convention adopted more than 80 resolutions which comprise the Commission’s policy and legislative agendas for the year ahead. Four resolutions were referred to the standing Committee and our recommendations are contained in Addendum A attached to this report. The following are brief updates on several critical areas for your review:

**Defense Resourcing and Threats**

Military leaders are urging Congress to prevent the return of funding caps imposed by the 2011 Budget Control Act, also known as sequestration. While there is currently a hold on sequestration, it has not gone away. The active duty Army end strength is set to be reduced to 450k by 2019. Army leadership believes 480k is where the reduction should end. The Army will be reduced to 470k by the end of FY 2017.

Not only do the spending cuts downsize the force structure, but they also limit service members pay and benefits which could potentially lead to the loss of highly trained men and women. While the Department of Defense is shrinking the size and scope of the military, our major adversaries - Russia and China - along with rogue nations such as North Korea and Iran are ramping up their aggressive activities. We live with the constant threat of terrorism within our national borders and worldwide. Additionally we have the cybersecurity issue.

**Presidential Campaign**

We are deep into a presidential campaign season and on the cusp of an election. So far the presidential candidates have not made clear their own priorities for a national security strategy. There are many issues that we would like addressed such as the future of Afghanistan, the South China Sea feud, the future of Iraq, our aging nuclear arsenal and of their specific proposals to ensure a strong national defense.

**Military Retirement System**

The National Defense Authorization Act of 2016 includes the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission’s (MCRMC) recommendation to change the existing military retirement system to a blended system; where 20% of the benefit would depend on a retiree’s own investments over the course of their military career. 2017 will be the last year servicemembers have the option of the current or new retirement system. On 1 January 2018 the new retirement system will become mandatory for all new servicemembers. The American Legion does not support this change to the military
retirement system; there are too many questions about the implementation and concerns about how service members would be affected.

**Decline in Forces**

The gap between the demands on our military and resources continues to get larger. Since 2012, the Army has cut its war-time force from 570,000 to 480,000; accompanying this has been a reduction of 13 of the Army's 45 brigade combat teams. If the automatic budget cuts known as sequestration were to continue in this fiscal year, the Army would have to slash another 40,000 soldiers. Defense officials have said that the Army would not be able to respond to demands for troops in other regions of the world while maintaining our current deployment obligations. The Army maintains that dipping below 450,000 soldiers could prevent it from prevailing in a war.

Twenty-five years ago, the U.S. maintained over 1669 overseas bases and there are just 587 today. Less forward presence means a reduction in deterrence and thus bolstering tactical advantages of Russia, China and Iran. Repair and modernization efforts in connection with major big-ticket items such as ships and aircraft are being negatively impacted by these arbitrary budget policies. The training regimen for our troops is now slower and less frequent due to budget cutbacks. Our military leaders have repeated: predictable funding is vital and using funds from the overseas contingency operations ledger is not a long-term solution.

**ISIS Conflict and Terrorist Threat**

The threat of ISIS on U.S. soil has been witnessed over the past year. In just a 20-month period, 74 adults and eight minors have been interdicted by law enforcement for connections to ISIS, including four killed on US soil. These numbers translate to a 300 percent increase in terrorist arrests in the United States compared to the average monthly arrests of al Qaeda suspects since the 9/11 attacks of 2001. Now that Russia is bombing both ISIS and non-ISIS fighters in Syria who are opposing the al-Assad regime, the U.S. military and foreign policy challenges are heightened even further.

We are now witnessing the largest global convergence of jihadists in history. Islamic extremists from more than 100 countries have migrated to the conflict zone in Syria and Iraq since 2011. These extremists are now joining the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) to become a part of the group’s “caliphate” and to expand its violence and oppression. More than 250 individuals from the United States have also joined or attempted to fight with extremists in the conflict zone, according to news reports.

As previously stated, these extremists pose a serious threat to the United States and its allies. This enemy has combat experience and connections to international sympathizers. Many of them are only a plane-flight away from our shores. Currently extremists are busy recruiting a new generation of terrorists by radicalizing Americans and Europeans through the worldwide web to spread terrorism.

The National Security Commission thanks National Commander Charles E. Schmidt, our NEC Liaison Committee and the distinguished members of the National Executive Committee for their continuing support for Commission efforts to take care of the troops and “provide for the common defense”.

Washington Conference
February 27 – March 1, 2017

The National Security Commission convened on February 27nd during the 57th Annual Washington Conference at the Washington Hilton, Washington, D.C. The following report is a summary of this session:
The commission was honored to welcome National Commander Charles Schmidt. The National Security Commission was honored by his attendance and very appreciative of his participation.

National Commander Schmidt addressed some key policy areas that the National Security Commission covers, particularly the importance of the Defense POW/MIA Accountability Agency (DPAA), which is charged with the recovery and identification of U.S. POW/MIA service members, as well as the need to defend the sanctity of the American flag and protect it from desecration.

The program proceeded in the following five sections: 1) state of the Army Reserves; 2) national military strategy; 3) Air Force recruiting; 4) POW/MIA update; and 5) National Security Commission business.

1. State of the Army Reserves
The Commission’s first guest speaker was Brigadier General William Way, Director, Government Relations for the U.S. Army Reserve (USAR). BG Way is responsible for Congressional relations, as well as state and local government relations for the USAR, and briefed the Commission on the goals and some of the activities of the reserve component. BG Way began his presentation with a video clip of the commanding general of the USAR, Lieutenant General Charles Luckey, who expounded on his vision of the force: leadership, energy, and execution. Following the clip, BG Way spoke about the recent USAR and National Guard deployment to Poland in support of a NATO joint force, as well as a deployment to Puerto Rico and a war exercise dealing with a chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) response. In the question and answer segment, BG Way identified the need for equipment and readiness funding.

2. National Military Strategy
The Commission’s next speaker was Brigadier General James (Jim) Dawkins Jr., the Deputy Director for Nuclear, Homeland Defense and Current Operations, J-33 Joint Staff. He is responsible for advising the Secretary of Defense, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Joint Staff Director of Operations regarding nuclear, reconnaissance, space, homeland and missile defense operations as well as all aspects of the National Military Command System.

BG Dawkins described the on-going effort within the DoD to refocus, after 15 years of counterinsurgency and stabilization operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, on the ‘4+1’ set of threats: Russia, China, Iran, North Korea, and global terror networks. The DoD is intent on maintaining a qualitative edge over near-peer competitors like Russia and China while also developing multi-domain and multi-functional weapons and strategies, to include space, cyber, conventional strike/fires with smart munitions, and special operations. BG Dawkins described the manner in which each of the 4+1 threats manifests themselves. Russia continues to destabilize Ukraine while conducting cyber and information operations against western allied nations. Chinese actions in the South China Sea, particularly the building and militarizing of islands they claim, remains a threat to free passage through important waterway. North Korean missile testing and overall belligerence is a persistent threat, one the U.S. is countering through the installation of the THAAD (Terminal High Altitude Area Defense) system which promises South Korea protection against any potential North Korean ballistic missile strike. Iran also poses a threat based on its continued support of terrorist organizations like Hezbollah and testing medium range ballistic missiles. Finally, BG Dawkins turned to the counter-ISIL coalition campaign, and the ongoing efforts to finally unseat ISIL from its capitals in Raqqa and Mosul.

3. Air Force recruiting
The Commission’s last military speaker was Colonel Robert W. Trayers Jr., Vice Commander of Air Force Recruiting Service at Headquarters Air Education and Training
Command. As Vice Commander, COL Trayers is responsible for obtaining sufficient numbers of qualified men and women to meet the personnel procurement requirements of today's and tomorrow's highly technological Air Force. The Air Force Recruiting Service comprises more than 2,350 Airmen and civilians in more than 1,170 recruiting offices across the United States and abroad.

COL Trayers spoke about some of the challenges present in military recruitment, and the need for recruiters to make themselves a part of the communities they draw from, summed up in the motto: inspire, engage, recruit. COL Trayers discussed the propensity of military service, how many recruits are drawn from families with members who had served in the military, and how many young people are discouraged from serving based on the input of influential people in their respective lives. COL Trayers identified a key theme in ongoing civil-military relations: the lack of understanding, knowledge, or experience with the military and veteran communities. COL Trayers also addressed the niche requirements of the Air Force, such as the need for diversity of personnel, individuals with STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) backgrounds, pilots, linguists, and special operators. Finally, COL Trayers called on the American Legion volunteers to engage with their local stations and assist them in communicating the content of military service to the public.

4. POW/MIA Update

The National Security Commission welcomed Mrs. Fern Sumpter Winbush, Principal Director for the DPAA, and Mrs. Ann Mills-Griffiths, Chairman of the Board for the National League of Families of American Prisoners and Missing in Southeast Asia. Mrs. Winbush works in support of the DPAA Director and is responsible for leading the Washington D.C. office in formulating policy, overseeing business development, and increasing outreach initiatives to achieve the agency’s goal of providing families and the nation with the fullest possible accounting of missing personnel from past conflicts. Mrs. Mills-Griffiths served over 30 years as Executive Director and CEO of the National League of Families, and currently focuses on policy, operations and sustaining the League’s financial ability to achieve accounting objectives. At the request of the Secretary of Defense, she also serves on the Advisory Committee of the Defense Department’s 50th Anniversary Vietnam War Commemoration.

The speakers provided membership with very informative updates regarding overcoming successive budget crises, the remaining obstacle to increasing the pace and scope of accounting efforts while ensuring the safety of field recovery teams. Mrs. Winbush addressed the balance between budgeting for disinterment of existing, known remains and conducting field operations to identify some of the 26,000 recoverable POW and MIA service members. Mrs. Mills-Griffiths, a regular participant in the National Security Commission’s work on POW/MIA accountability, gave an overview of the continuing work of the National League of Families and that organizations support for both the American Legion and the DPAA.

5. Business Session

The business session commenced by Chairman Schlee leading the Commission in reviewing two resolutions that were referred by the 2016 National Security Convention Committee, Resolution 232: Pause/Hold Syrian Refugees Importation/Immigration to the United States of America, and Resolution 234: U.S./China Relations.

To conclude the meeting, Commission Chairman Mike Schlee provided the Commission with a quick overview of the upcoming plans for this year’s National Security Commission Pre-Convention trip to Lake Tahoe. Deputy Director Freddy Gesner indicated a visit to U.S. Coast Guard Station Lake Tahoe will be the likely destination for the Commission’s tour just prior the 2017 National Convention which will be held in Reno, Nevada.
You have received a copy of the report of the meeting of the National Commission during the Washington Conference which took place on February 27th and 28th. During the business session, two resolutions were considered and our recommended action is in the addendum to this report.

The National Security Commission and its seven committees along with the council continue to review developments in the national security and foreign relations arenas. The National Security Commission has not met since our report to you at the Washington Conference. The 98th National Convention adopted more than 80 resolutions which comprise the Commission’s policy and legislative agendas for the year ahead. Two resolutions were referred to the standing Committee and our recommendations are contained in Addendum A attached to this report.

The following are brief updates on several critical areas for your review:

**Current Threat Environment**

**Counter-ISIL coalition/counter-terrorism**

The counter-ISIL coalition has significantly reduced the territory that ISIL controlled in Iraq and Syria, with U.S. and allied forces engaged in campaigns against its two major strongholds in Mosul and Raqqa. It is unclear what impact ISIL’s eventual defeat will have on the larger Syrian civil war and sectarian conflict in Iraq, however. Additionally, there is concern in that foreign fighter outflows back to their countries of origin will exacerbate the number of terrorist incidents by spreading their knowledge and network. Both countries have been devastated economically and socially, and it remains to be seen if the international community will step up to rebuild or whether these weakened states descend into another round of chaos and armed conflict.

Other U.S. counter-terrorism efforts are underway in Libya, against an ISIL affiliate, in Somalia against al-Shabbab, in Nigeria against Boko Haram, in Yemen against al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, and against the Taliban and ISIL and al-Qaeda affiliates in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

**North Korea**

With a string of successful missile tests, experts claiming that North Korea’s nuclear weapons program could conceivably develop a missile capable of reaching Seattle, and threats against the U.S., Japan, and South Korea, North Korea under Kim Jong Un represents another clear challenger to the international order. As it stands, the U.S. has settled into using a mix of sanctions, military exercises, and troop and naval presence in response. The recent deployment of a Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) system in South Korea to guard against North Korean ballistic missiles has increased tensions in South Korea domestically, but brought on condemnation from China. But China has grown increasingly weary of dealing with the liability that North Korea represents, though it is loath to see a unified, democratic Korea allied with the United States. China will be an essential partner in securing a positive diplomatic or political outcome in North Korea, though it is unclear just how much leverage China can bring to bear on Kim Jong Un, and what approach will be most effective.

**Russia**

Vladimir Putin continues to try to revise the outcome of the Cold War by challenging the international order of law and norms that have arisen under decades of U.S. leadership. In Ukraine, Russian-backed separatists continue to fight government forces in the Donbass. In Syria, Putin’s support for the Assad regime ensures there will be political settlement in the near term, and hinders counter-ISIL efforts by targeting fighters hostile to both Assad
and ISIL. Putin also protects Assad by vetoing any UN Security Council resolutions targeting his government. Recent reports also indicate that Russia has also begun providing arms to the Taliban, who in late April conducted a surprise attack on Afghan security forces, killing 140. Russia’s violation of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, the still unresolved depth of its interference in the 2016 U.S. presidential election, and its behavior elsewhere in the world all pose serious challenges to U.S. and allied security interests.

**China**

Despite continuing tensions in the South China Sea between the United States, China, and other claimants like Philippines and Vietnam, current discussions between the White House and President Xi Jinping have been focused on North Korea. China remains a persistent cyber threat, however, and like Russia is interested in shifting the balance of power in what it sees as its sphere of influence. China is undergoing a concerted modernization and expansion of its maritime presence and power projection, with plans to add 100,000 Marines and the recent launching its first indigenously built air craft carrier as current examples. Whether this buildup of capability and capacity will worsen relations between China and its neighbors remains to be seen. China’s critical role in the global economy, and the desire of the Chinese Communist Party leadership to continue high economic growth, constrains China’s ability to act too aggressively, though it continues to test the United States.

**Iran**

Along with Russia, Iran is the chief supporter of Assad through the use of Hezbollah and Revolutionary Guard forces, and the provision of money and weapons. It was the Russian and Iranian intervention that rescued Assad’s regime from collapse; as a result, the Syrian conflict has stalled as multiple ethnic and religious factions continue to fight with few clear winners. While monitors have reported that Iran is in compliance with Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) restricting its ability to develop a nuclear weapon, Iran’s testing of ballistic missiles and support for the Houthis in Yemen display a desire to continue to provoke and challenge Saudi Arabia, the U.S., and Israel in efforts to increase its influence within the region.

**Readiness**

In February, the Vice Chiefs of Staff for Army, Navy, and Air Force, and the Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps, testified before about the poor readiness levels across their services. The vice chiefs of America’s armed forces said their personnel and aging equipment are stretched thin amid years of war, statutory budget caps and temporary workarounds, end-strength cuts, and Congress passing nine consecutive continuing resolutions. Senior House Armed Services Committee members joined in lamenting the unpredictability, but none offered a plan to navigate the Capitol Hill deadlock over budget caps that threatens to stymie the Trump administration’s military buildup plans. Congress punters on 2017 appropriations, and the federal government is on a stopgap continuing resolution that expires April 28.

Vice Chief of Naval Operations Adm. William Moran said the Navy is the smallest and least ready it’s been in years due to high demand of naval forces, funding cuts and consistent uncertainty about when Congress would fund the military. The service satisfies 40 percent of demand from regional combatant commanders. Wear and tear on ships and aircraft and maintenance crews has created a “downward readiness spiral,” with equipment failures and the removal of ships and aircraft from service, he said. Nearly two-thirds of the Navy’s strike fighters can’t fly because they’re either undergoing maintenance or simply waiting for parts or their turn in line on the aviation depot backlog. Overall, more than half the Navy’s aircraft are grounded, most because there isn’t enough money to fix them.
Army Vice Chief Gen. Daniel Allyn said one-third of Army brigade combat teams, one-fourth of combat aviation brigades and half of division headquarters are ready. Only three of 58 the Army's BCTs are considered ready to “fight tonight,” Allyn said. Air Force Vice Chief Gen. Stephen W. Wilson said the Air Force is the smallest it has ever been. Aircraft numbers have fallen from 8,600 in 1991 to 5,500, and their average age is 27 years. There are 55 fighter squadrons, down from 134. Fewer than 50 percent of the Air Force’s combat forces are “sufficiently ready for a highly contested fight against peer adversaries — creating unacceptable risk for our airmen, our joint partners, and our nation.” Assistant Marine Corps Commandant Gen. Glenn Walters said 80 percent of his aviation units lack the minimum number of ready basic aircraft for training, and the service is “significantly short ready aircraft for wartime requirements.”

The equipment, manning, and training issues facing the services are largely a result of the nearly 17 years of sustained ground and air combat in multiple countries. As General David Petraeus and Brooking Institution senior fellow Michael O’Hanlon pointed out in their widely read op-ed “America’s Awesome Military” the U.S. military has been worn thin, but still boasts military capability and capacity far above and beyond every other near-peer competitor. The need for recapitalization of the force from top to bottom is apparent, as is steady funding and multi-year budgeting—but even it a weakened state, the U.S. still fields the most dominant military in the world.

**Budgeting**

**FY17 Omnibus - Defense**

Congress looks poised to pass HR 244, a $1.1 trillion omnibus spending bill. The bill allocates $593 billion for defense — $19.9 billion more than the FY 2016 level and $16.3 billion more than the Obama administration's request. It includes $516.1 billion in base discretionary funding — $2 billion above FY 2016 levels — and $76.6 billion for Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) associated with the war in Afghanistan and other counterterrorism operations such as the fight against the Islamic State (also known as ISIS or ISIL). The OCO total includes $14.8 billion in new supplemental funding requested by the Trump administration in March.

- The bill denies cuts to troop levels proposed by the Obama administration and includes an additional $1.6 billion to pay for 3,000 more active-duty and reserve Army soldiers and 1,000 more active-duty Marines. And it would give military personnel a 2.1 percent across-the-board raise, a half-percent higher than requested by President Barack Obama.
- The bill would fund 74 F-35 fighters, 11 more than Obama requested, for a total price tag of $8.2 billion. The F-35 is assembled in the district of Kay Granger, R-Texas, chairwoman of the House Defense Appropriations panel, though multiple appropriators from both parties support the stealthy jets.
- The measure also would provide $1.1 billion for 14 F/A-18E/F Super Hornet fighters — a dozen more than requested.
- The bill also includes $21.2 billion to buy 13 Navy ships, including three DDG-51 guided missile destroyers, three Littoral Combat Ships, one LPD-17 amphibious transport dock ship and a down payment for a polar icebreaker for the Coast Guard.

**FY17 Omnibus – State & Foreign Operations**

HR 244 appropriates $53.1 billion for foreign programs, including $36.6 billion subject to discretionary caps and $16.5 billion in Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) funding for programs related to the war in Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq and other expenses, such as humanitarian relief for Syrian refugees in Jordan and Lebanon. The combined total is $594 million below last year's enacted level when special emergency funding for famine
relief is not included and slightly less than the President Obama’s request. The measure includes $8.7 billion for global health programs, $3.2 billion for military assistance to Israel, $1.4 billion in assistance to Egypt, $1.3 billion for Jordan and $410 million for Ukraine.

**FY17 Omnibus – Homeland Security**

HR 244 appropriates $42.4 billion in discretionary funding subject to spending caps, $1.5 billion more than the FY 2016 level, and $7.3 billion in disaster relief funding. The agreement increases funding for U.S. Customs and Border Protection by 8%, Immigration and Customs Enforcement by 10%, and Transportation Security Administration (TSA) by 7%. It reduces funding for the Coast Guard by 4%. The measure does not include funding for a new wall along the border with Mexico as proposed by President Trump.

**FY18 Proposed Defense & State Department Budgets**

President Trump’s FY18 ‘skinny’ budget includes an expected $54 billion defense increase, offset by domestic-side cuts, including a 28 percent cut for the State Department. The broad-brushstrokes plan signaled the White House’s intent to restore a “depleted” military. The request includes $639 billion for the Defense Department, including $574 billion in the base budget and $65 billion in the emergency Overseas Contingency Operations account. Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., and his House counterpart Rep. Mac Thornberry, R-Texas, have said a $640 billion defense budget is needed and that the administration's numbers mask a less robust increase than they would like. Congressional leaders like Lindsey Graham and Ben Cardin have rejected the idea of a 28% cut to State, with Graham calling the proposal “dead on arrival.” Retired diplomats, academics, and military officers have also come out against the cuts.

**POW/MIA Update**

The Fiscal Year 2010 National Defense Authorization Act mandated the establishment of a single accounting agency to search for and repatriate our missing. On January 1, 2015 the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency was established and was announced fully operational on 1 January 2016. The mandate also required that DPAA identify 200 remains each year.

Since the beginning of 2017 the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency has accounted for 59 service members from past conflicts. As of May 3, 2017, the DPAA Director position has not been filled. The job announcement closed on April 6th. The Office of the Under Secretary for Policy or Secretary of Defense will announce when a selection is made.

Full funding of DPAA is something we continue to be concerned about. The effects of continuing resolutions and threats of government shutdowns are crippling to DPAA efforts. Without guaranteed funding recovery teams are threatened with having to end their mission and return stateside short of mission dates. Mission planning is impacted as well. The difficult mountains of Vietnam can only be excavated during the warm months and without guaranteed funding opportunities may be missed.

The National Security Commission thanks National Commander Charles Schmidt, our NEC Liaison and the distinguished members of the National Executive Committee for their continuing support for Commission efforts to take care of troops and "provide for the common defense"

**VETERANS AFFAIRS & REHABILITATION COMMISSION**

*Ralph P. Bozella, Colorado, Chairman*

*Louis Celli, Massachusetts, Director*

The following report covers the activities of the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission and its staff during the program year ending June 30, 2017.
The Ninety-Eighth Annual National Convention in Cincinnati, Ohio and the Fall and Spring Meetings of the National Executive Committee approved certain positions expressed in resolutions submitted to those bodies through the Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation and the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission, respectively. The approved resolutions are set forth as follows:

### 2016 National Convention
Cincinnati, Ohio

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<td>Prostate Cancer Research and Treatment</td>
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<td>129</td>
<td>Protection of Religious Rights And Ceremonies at National Cemetery Administration National And State Cemeteries</td>
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<td>130</td>
<td>Provide The Department of Veterans Affairs The Ability to Purchase Medications Located Outside The United States</td>
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<td>131</td>
<td>Radiation Exposure</td>
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<td>132</td>
<td>Recognize Operations in Lebanon (1958), Granada (1983), And Panama (1989-1990) As Periods of War For Department of Veterans Affairs Pension Purposes</td>
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<td>133</td>
<td>Request Congress Provide The Department of Veterans Affairs Adequate Funding For Medical And Prosthetic Research</td>
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<td>134</td>
<td>Revision of Work-Rate Standards For Department of Veteran Affairs Adjudicators</td>
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<td>Service Dogs For Injured Service Personnel And Veterans With Mental Health Conditions</td>
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<td>Strategic Capitol Investment Planning Program</td>
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<td>137</td>
<td>Support Legislation To Place Mariner Medical Recipients in Priority Group 3 For The Department of Veterans Affairs Health Care</td>
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<td>138</td>
<td>Support Medical Reimbursement For The Department of Veterans Affairs</td>
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<td>Support Presumptive of Service Connection For Hepatitis C</td>
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<td>Policy on State Veterans Homes Inspections</td>
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<td>Department of Veterans Affairs Enhanced-Use Leasing</td>
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<td>Department of Veterans Affairs mental Health Services</td>
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<td>Department of Veterans Affairs Nursing Home Capacity</td>
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<td>Department of Veterans Affairs Pharmacy Benefits</td>
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<td>Oppose Legislation Authorizing Legion-Accredited Representatives To Develop Claims Directory on Behalf of The Department of Veterans Affairs</td>
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<td>160</td>
<td>Complementary and Alternate Medicine</td>
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<td>Agent Orange Presumption for Service in Southeast Asia Since 1975</td>
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<td>In Vitro Fertilization</td>
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<td>Legislation to provide Reporting, Tracking, And Actions Dealing With Sexual Assaults at Department of Veterans Affairs Facilities</td>
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<td>Oppose Lowering of Cost-of-Living Adjustments</td>
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<td>Traumatic Brain Injury And Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Programs</td>
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<td>Department of Veterans Affairs Involvement In The Department of Homeland Security</td>
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<td>Assured Funding For VA medical Care</td>
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<td>Extend The Filing period of An Appeal Notice To The Court of Appeals For Veterans Claims</td>
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<td>180</td>
<td>Designate Hypertension As a Presumptive Condition For Veterans Exposed to Agent Orange</td>
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<td>National Cemetery Administration</td>
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<td>Policy For those Serving November4,1979 Through January 20, 1981 to be Considered Wartime Veterans</td>
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<td>Department of Veterans Affairs to Provide Interim Benefits For Pending Claims Over 90 Days</td>
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<td>237</td>
<td>Authorization to Apply For a Headstone, Marker, or Medallion</td>
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<td>Suicide Prevention For American Veteran Act</td>
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<td>Dependency And Indemnity Compensation For Surviving Spouses</td>
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<td>243</td>
<td>Compensation For Veterans Requiring Hearing Aids For Service Connected Hearing Loss</td>
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<td>244</td>
<td>Exempt Purple Heart and medal of Honor Recipients From VA Prescription Co-Payment</td>
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<td>245</td>
<td>Extend Eligibility for National Cemetery Administration Medallion</td>
<td>IL</td>
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<td>246</td>
<td>Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans</td>
<td>IL</td>
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<td>247</td>
<td>Authorization to Disclose Personal Information To A Third Party Amend The Eligibility Requirements And Extend The Eligibility Time Period For Service-Disabled Veteran Insurance</td>
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<td>249</td>
<td>Increase Maximum Coverage Under the Service-Disabled Veterans Insurance</td>
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<td>250</td>
<td>Grant A 10% For Veterans Who Must Take Daily Medications For Hypertension</td>
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<td>251</td>
<td>Support Legislation To Pay interest On Claims Granted By The Board Of Veterans’ Appeals</td>
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<td>252</td>
<td>Eliminate The Benefit Payment Loophole Certain Incarcerated Veterans Reducing Eligibility For Dependency Indemnity Compensation (DIC) payments For 100% Disabled Veterans From 10 Years To 5 Years Extend Caregiver Benefits To Include Veterans Before September 11, 2001</td>
<td>IL</td>
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<td>253</td>
<td>Department of Veterans Affairs Provide Service Dog Allowance</td>
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<td>254</td>
<td>Include WWII Veterans In Priority Group 6 For Department of Veterans Affairs Health Care</td>
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<td>255</td>
<td>Automatic Waiver for Over-Payments of $300 or Less</td>
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<td>267</td>
<td>Allow Beneficiaries to retain $90 of Their Benefits While in Medicaid-Covered Nursing Homes</td>
<td>IL</td>
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<td>Urn Markers Provided By National Cemetery Administration</td>
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<td>271</td>
<td>Request Study By department of Veterans Affairs On The Medical Effects of Exposure To Depleted Uranium</td>
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<td>272</td>
<td>Extend Dental Care to Veterans With Service Connection of 50% or More</td>
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<td>360</td>
<td>Advance Appropriations For All of The Department of Veterans Affairs Discretionary Accounts</td>
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<td>361</td>
<td>Congress To Provide Back pay To Veterans And Dependents</td>
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<td>Congressional Budget Office Scoring on Department of Veterans Affairs Leasing</td>
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<td>363</td>
<td>Consolidation of Department of Veterans Affairs Care In the Community Program</td>
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<td>364</td>
<td>Department of Veterans Affairs to Develop Outreach And Peer Program For Rehabilitation</td>
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<td>365</td>
<td>Fit To Serve Initiative</td>
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<td>366</td>
<td>Honoring Those Who Have Earned The Medal of Honor</td>
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<td>367</td>
<td>Include Korean War Veterans In Priority Group 6 For Department of Veterans Affairs Health Care</td>
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<td>368</td>
<td>Increase The Transparency of Asbestos Claims</td>
<td>VA&amp;R</td>
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<td>369</td>
<td>Restore VA’S informal Claims and Appeals Process</td>
<td>VA&amp;R</td>
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<td>370</td>
<td>Licensed Professional mental Health Counselors And Marriage Family Therapists</td>
<td>VA&amp;R</td>
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<td>372</td>
<td>Oppose Closing or Privatization of Department of Veterans Affairs Health Care System</td>
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<tr>
<td>373</td>
<td>Oppose Lump Sum Payments for Department of Veterans Disability Compensation</td>
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<td>374</td>
<td>Priority Care For Medal of Honor Recipients</td>
<td>VA&amp;R</td>
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<td>375</td>
<td>Prosecution of VA Employees Engaged In Fraudulent Practices In The Department of Veterans Affairs</td>
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<td>377</td>
<td>Support For Veteran Quality of Life</td>
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<td>378</td>
<td>United States Census to include Veterans Information</td>
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<td>379</td>
<td>Veteran Caretaker Stipend</td>
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<td>380</td>
<td>Exempt Funds Related to Interment Services at Cemeteries</td>
<td>VA&amp;R</td>
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**2016 Fall National Executive Committee Meeting**

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<td>7</td>
<td>Agreement With The National Veterans Legal Services Program (NVLSP) – 2016-2017</td>
<td>VA&amp;R</td>
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<td>22</td>
<td>Surviving Families Benefits</td>
<td>VA&amp;R</td>
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<td>23</td>
<td>Add Agent Orange Component To Code Of Federal Regulation 4.16</td>
<td>VA&amp;R</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Resolution No. | Title                                                                 | Origin |
-------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|
24           | Improve Special Monthly Compensation (K) Award                       | VA&R   |

2017 Spring National Executive Committee Meeting

Resolution No. | Title                                                                 | Origin |
-------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|
7            | Department of Veterans Affairs Health-Care Provider of the Year Award | VA&R   |
8            | Department of Veterans Affairs Physician of the Year Award           | VA&R   |
22           | Public/Private Partnerships with the Department of Veterans Affairs to Expand Reach with Local Hospitals | VA&R   |
23           | Department of Veterans Affairs provide mental Health Services for Veterans with Other than Honorable and General Discharges | VA&R   |
24           | Caregiver Program                                                    | VA&R   |
25           | Department of Veterans Affairs Maintain Medical and Dental School    | VA&R   |
26           | Compliance with Public Law 114-31 Veterans Identification Card Act of 2015 | CO     |
27           | Amend Tile 38, United States Code, to Clarify the Treatment of a Veteran as Adjudicated mentally Incompetent for Certain Purposes | VA&R   |
28           | Suicide Prevention Program                                           | VA&R   |
29           | Department of Veterans Affairs Establish an Opioid Treatment Program to Include an Opioid Detox Unit at Every VA Medical Center | NC     |

National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission Meetings
Members of the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission held three meetings during the period August 27, 2016, through May 1, 2017.

The Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Committee met on August 27, 2016 during the National Convention in Cincinnati, Ohio and a report was subsequently made to the National Executive Committee relative to the Commission’s meeting.

A Subcommittee of the Executive Section of the VA&R Commission met at National Headquarters, October 10, 2016, for the purpose of considering those matters, which had previously been referred for study, and to discuss a broad range of other veteran related matters. A report of that meeting was presented to the National Executive Committee on October 13, 2016.

The National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission met for the 94th consecutive year in Washington, DC, on February 27, 2017, in conjunction with the 57th Annual Washington Conference.

Annual National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Conference

The 94th Annual Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation (VA&R) Conference was held at the Washington Hilton Hotel in Washington, D.C. on February 27, 2017.

National Commander Charles Schmidt (OR) presented Mr. Kent Lee Erickson, from the Department of Oregon, the VA Voluntary Services (VAVS) Volunteer of the Year Award. Conferees were addressed by Dr. Carolyn Clancy, Assistant Deputy Under
Secretary for Health for Organizational Excellence, Veterans Health Administration (VHA); Thomas J. Murphy, Acting Under Secretary for Benefits, Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA); Ronald Walters, Acting Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs, National Cemetery Administration (NCA); Matthew Shuman, National Legislative Director, The American Legion; Heather Strawn, Senior Director of Federal Government Affairs, AbbVie; Scott Blackburn, Interim Deputy Secretary, Department of Veterans Affairs; Christopher E. O’Connor, Acting Assistant Secretary for Congressional and Legislative Affairs, Department of Veterans Affairs; Dr. Tina Shaw, White House Fellow, Department of Veterans Affairs; and Perry Parks, CW3 (R), US Army.

National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Legislative Activities

From September 2016 - June 2017, The VA&R Division participated in a total of fourteen (14) hearings. Please refer to the following table for more information about the content and timeline of the hearings:

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Committee/ Subcommittee</th>
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<th>Subject</th>
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<tr>
<td>Sept. 7, 2016</td>
<td>House Veterans’ Affairs (HVAC)</td>
<td>N/A - Submittal</td>
<td>From Tumult to Transformation: The Commission on Care and the Future of the VA Healthcare System</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sept. 14, 2016</td>
<td>Senate Veterans’ Affairs (SVAC)</td>
<td>Jeff Steele</td>
<td>The Future of the VA: Examining the Commission on Care Report &amp; VA’s Response</td>
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<td>Feb. 7, 2017</td>
<td>House Veterans’ Affairs (HVAC)</td>
<td>N/A - Submittal</td>
<td>Assessing the VA IT Landscape: Progress and Challenges</td>
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<td>Feb. 14, 2017</td>
<td>HVAC Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs</td>
<td>Zachary Hearn</td>
<td>Exploring National Work Queue’s Impact on Claims Processing</td>
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<td>Mar. 1, 2017</td>
<td>HVAC/SVAC</td>
<td>Charles Schmidt</td>
<td>Legislative Priorities of The American Legion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mar. 7, 2017</td>
<td>HVAC</td>
<td>N/A – Submittal</td>
<td>VA’s Choice Program and the Future of VA Community Care Programs, Authorities &amp; Budget</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mar 29, 2017</td>
<td>HVAC Subcommittee on Health</td>
<td>N/A – Submittal</td>
<td>Pending Legislation</td>
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<td>Date</td>
<td>Committee/Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>Apr. 5, 2017</td>
<td>HVAC Subcommittee on Disability Assistance &amp; Memorial Affairs</td>
<td>Zachary Hearn</td>
<td>Pending Legislation</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 2, 2017</td>
<td>HVAC</td>
<td>Louis Celli, Jr.</td>
<td>Veterans Appeals Improvement &amp; Modernization Act of 2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 10, 2017</td>
<td>SVAC</td>
<td>Louis Celli, Jr.</td>
<td>Examining the Veterans Choice Program and the Future of Care in the Community</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 17, 2017</td>
<td>SVAC</td>
<td>Louis Celli, Jr.</td>
<td>Pending Legislations and all Subsequent Draft Bills</td>
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<td>May 24, 2017</td>
<td>HVAC Subcommittee on Oversight &amp; Investigations</td>
<td>Julie Larsen</td>
<td>VA Financial Management</td>
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<td>June 7, 2017</td>
<td>HVAC</td>
<td>N/A – Submittal</td>
<td>Overcoming PTSD: Assessing VA’s Efforts to Promote Wellness &amp; Healing</td>
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<tr>
<td>July 11, 2017</td>
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<td>Louis Celli</td>
<td>Pending Health Care Legislation</td>
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<td>July 12, 2017</td>
<td>HVAC</td>
<td>Roscoe Butler</td>
<td>Care Where It Counts: Assessing VA’s Capital Asset Needs</td>
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<tr>
<td>July 13, 2017</td>
<td>HVAC</td>
<td>Zachary Hearn</td>
<td>Examining VA’s Processing of Gulf War Illness Claims</td>
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**Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Division**

The VA&R Division is managed by Louis Celli, Director, VA&R. VA&R is responsible for directing all matters involving veterans’ health care issues, veterans related matters to include compensation, pension, disability indemnity compensation, claims submitted to the Board of Veterans Appeals and Special Claims Unit, the Appeals Management Center, all satellite offices to include Benefits Delivery at discharge offices, PMD/DMC/Insurance, the Department Service Officer School, liaison to the Department Service Officers located in the 57 regional offices, the Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service program, resolutions, and National. To assist him in carrying out these duties, he is assisted by a Deputy Director for Benefits, a Deputy Director for Health Care, a Deputy Director for MEB/PEB & DoD and an office assistant.

This year two new programs have been added to VA&R portfolio, Suicide Prevention and Caregivers Programs. According to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) an average of 20 veterans die by suicide each day in 2014, and veterans accounted for 18 percent of all deaths by suicide among U.S. adults and constituted 8.5 percent of the U.S. adult population. Resolution 28, approved at the spring 2017 National Executive Committee (NEC) Meeting, established a Suicide Prevention Program under the TBI/PTSD Committee. The American Legion Suicide program will examine the recent trends of veteran suicide as it relates to traumatic brain injury, post-traumatic stress disorder, military sexual trauma, etc. and analyzing best practices in veteran suicide.
prevention not currently used by the Department of Defense or the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) for the purpose of encouraging aforementioned government agencies to adopt them. Resolution 24 established the Caregiver Program under the Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Commission. Due to advances in military medical field treatment, over 95 percent of severely injured military personnel are able to be saved and return home, but many will require in-home type care. These wounded and disabled veterans often have horrific service and non-service connected medical conditions, including, but not limited to, multiple amputations, spinal cord injuries, complete loss of vision and/or hearing and according to the RAND (Research and Development) study there are 5.5 million caregivers throughout the United States. The American Legion Caregiver program will address the needs of military and veteran caregivers by assisting with, but not limited to, employment/vocational referral, federal and state education assistance, Post 9/11 caregiver benefit support, veteran directed care, partner support with the Elizabeth Dole Foundation and various caregiver support organizations, assistance with death gratuity (benefit), and terminal illness.

Informational Services/Distribution of VA&R Releases

The American Legion has several pamphlets and brochures available upon request to veterans and organizations in need. In particular to the Department of Veterans’ Affairs and Rehabilitation Division, offer the following pamphlets:

- What to do Before a Veteran Dies – A Guide to Pre-Planning
- Veterans Serving Veterans – A Summary on The American Legion Volunteer Program in the Community
- Agent Orange Benefits & Program – A Guide for Vietnam Veterans and their Families
- Gulf War Era Benefits & Programs – A Guide for Veterans and their Families
- Know Your Benefits
- Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service Handbook
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
- Post Service Officer Guide
- Missing in America Project

The handbooks and pamphlets, as well as those in regards to the Department of Veteran Affairs Voluntary Service (VAVS) Program, are also distributed at seminars, conferences, and Department Conventions. Supplies of these and other VA&R pamphlets are maintained at The American Legion headquarters in Indianapolis, Indiana, and distributed upon request through The American Legion Washington (DC) Headquarters located at 1608 K Street, NW, Washington, DC 20006. Shipping is complimentary and requests can be made by calling Headquarters directly at 202-861-2700 or by email at Wkennedy@legion.org.

VA&R Cemetery Committee Activities

During the 2017 Washington Conference, Ronald E. Walters, Acting Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs, National Cemetery Administration, Department of Veterans Affairs addressed the VA&R Commission about the accomplishments of NCA during FY2016, and the goals for FY 2017. In FY 2016, the NCA interred more than 131,000 veterans and family members, placed more than 365,000 headstones and markers and presented over 689,000 Presidential Memorial Certificates. Mr. Walters also discussed NCA’s long range goals consisting of: increasing access to burial benefits, increasing use of burial and memorial benefits, enhancing memorialization of veterans’ service and sacrifice, increasing trust in NCA based on better accountability and strengthening NCA’s internal capacity.
Members of the Health Policy division also attended two strategic meetings concerning the future of Arlington National Cemetery. Public Law 114-158 directed the Secretary of the Army to submit a report to the Congressional Committees on Veterans’ Affairs and Armed Service on the interment and inurnment capacity of Arlington National Cemetery. The concern is the estimated date that the cemetery will reach maximum capacity. Congress directed the Secretary to provide recommendations for legislative actions and non-legislative options that can be taken to ensure that capacity is not reached until well into the future. The two general areas of consideration are to redefine eligibility criteria for interment or inurnment in the cemetery and/or additional expansion opportunities beyond the cemetery’s current boundaries. At current projections, the cemetery will reach capacity in the early 2040(s). Veterans of the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and the War on Terrorism may not have the option to be buried at ANC if the current projections occur over the next two or three decades. The American Legion, as one of many organizational stakeholders that has a vested interest in the future vision and state of the ANC, is duly represented during the continued national dialogue by members of the VA&R national staff.

Annual Report of the Medical Consultant

Dr. Ann Marie Gordon joined the Staff as the Senior Medical Consultant on September 18, 2000. She is a practicing physician with experience in internal medicine and occupational and environmental medicine.

The Medical Consultant acts as a source of medical and technical knowledge to the Appeals Representatives at the Appeals and Special Claims Unit at the Board of Veterans’ Appeals and the Claims Representatives at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Regional Office, Washington, D.C. These representatives discuss cases during case development and submit inquiries to the Medical Consultant with the VA claims folder for review and evaluation as to the appropriate course of action in presenting the case either to the Board of Veterans Appeals, the VA Regional Office, or the Director, Compensation and Pension Service. The Medical Consultant after reviewing and evaluating the case may (1) discuss the case with the representative and / or (2) prepare a statement explaining the case including providing medical references and a medical opinion relative to the issues.

The American Legion Service Officers in the field also submit difficult cases for review and evaluation to the Medical Consultant. This is accomplished by requesting that the case be called-in for an administrative review or by submitting copies of appropriate portions of the VA claims folder. The Medical Consultant responds directly to the Service Officers. In addition, difficult cases have been submitted by the non-profit organization, Association for Wounded Veterans Changing Lifestyle, Inc. for review and evaluation to the Medical Consultant.

The Medical Consultant is an advisor to the Director, National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission on Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical matters, the attorneys at NVSLP and other attorney groups referred by NVLSP. Each consultation is usually on an informal basis and discussed among several key VA&R staff members. In the past year, the medical consultant has been working more closely with the attorneys at NVLSP providing key information and medical opinions on numerous cases. The staff attorneys have described Dr. Gordon’s reports as thorough and persuasive. Staff attorney at NVLSP, Patrick Berkshire stated: “I have to say your reports are some of the best I have ever read in my six years of doing this type of work. “

A laptop personal computer has been purchased for the Medical Consultant’s use to enable her to keep in touch with daily operations and to present lectures at various schools of training.

During the past year, the Medical Consultant has discussed medical questions with individual Appeals Representatives and Claims Representatives for about 144 cases. She has reviewed 72 cases and submitted written reports on 28 of these cases. The research and medical opinions provided by the Medical Consultant have resulted in numerous grants
and remands for additional development. As an example, one of the claims concerning service connection for a depressive disorder resulted in a full grant with retroactive payment equivalent to an award of $93,962.10 for the veteran. In another case concerning service connection for a knee condition, a case where the veteran had been repeatedly denied service connection based on negative opinions, the Board did not find the negative opinion to be more probative than that of the positive opinion provided by Dr. Gordon, subsequently determining the overall record to be in relative equipoise, satisfying the criteria for entitlement to service connection. Reasonable doubt was resolved in favor of the veteran. Entitlement to service connection for the Veteran’s knee condition was granted.

Additionally, the Medical Consultant has conducted numerous one-on-one medical training sessions for the Appeals and Special Claims Unit staff this year and has conducted presentations at the Washington DC Department Service Officer School, Indianapolis Department Service Officer School, the Virginia Department Service Officer Training and the New York State Service Officer Training.

**Government Life Insurance, Pension & Debt Management Activities**

The United States Government, acting through the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), directly administers four life insurance programs for veterans of the World War I, World War II and Korean War periods, as well as two special on-going programs for veterans in certain service-connected disabled categories. These programs are administered under the titles of United States Government Life Insurance (USGLI) for World War I era veterans, National Service Life Insurance (NSLI) for World War II era, Korean War era and Service-Disabled veterans (SDVI - Service-Disabled Veterans Insurance), and Veterans Mortgage Life Insurance (VMLI) for totally disabled veterans who are approved grants for specially adapted housing purposes by the VA. NSLI and SDVI programs currently have some 657,175 policies in force as of June 30, 2017, with a combined life insurance coverage of some $8.21 billion dollars. NSLI processes some 100,000-120,000 claims annually in addition to a very high number of other policy transactions as the program’s policies are individual in nature and are composed of diverse plans of insurance. The VMLI program insures some 2646 veterans with approximately $349 million dollars of coverage in force. Currently these programs are operated out of the VA Insurance Center in Philadelphia, PA. The National Association of Insurance Commissioners approved the use of the 2001 Commissioners Standard Mortality Table as the new mortality standard for life insurance. Since the law allows the VA Secretary to set the mortality table for the VMLI program, VA began using the 2001 table, rather than the previous 1958 table, effective October 1, 2006. This reduced premiums for the program an average of 37 percent.

In addition to the life insurance programs directly operated by the VA, the Department also has supervisory authority and responsibility over two other major government life insurance program issues. These are the Servicemember’s Group Life Insurance (SGLI) and Veterans Group Life Insurance (VGLI) programs. These programs have provided insurance protection, since 1965 and 1970 respectively, to active duty and reserve military personnel (SGLI), spouses and dependents, and to separated veterans and to retired and separated reservists (VGLI). The SGLI and VGLI programs are administered by the Prudential Insurance Company at a center in Roseland, NJ (the Office of Servicemembers Group Life Insurance – OSGLI), with all administration and other program expenses being paid by the policyholders from a portion of their insurance premiums, save for the extra hazard mortality experience of wartime periods when general tax revenues take over. These insurance issues are solely group Term insurance without dividends, disability benefits, or diverse types of permanent plans with equity values such as the individual policy contracts contained in the VA’s directly administered program. On June 30, 2017 SGLI provided some 5.46 million active duty and reserve personnel, spouses and dependents with more than $1.2 trillion dollars of life insurance coverage, while VGLI covered some 432,000
veterans with insurance in excess of $73.2 billion dollars. Of these policy accounts the OSGLI center in Roseland, NJ maintains only VGLI, with the various military service departments maintaining the rest. The OSGLI center processes between 2500-3500 death claims annually with minimal other transactions due to the very limited nature of the coverage as group term insurance only. Currently, claims arising from military operations in the Middle East and Central Asia are processed in less than two business days from the time the last required document is received at OSGLI. In 1992 VGLI became lifetime renewable instead of the single five year term previously in effect. The amount of VGLI a veteran can hold cannot be in excess of the amount of SGLI he or she held in service. In 1997 Retired Reservists, instead of being insured under the SGLI program until age 60 or the receipt of their first retired pay check, were merged into the VGLI program to allow them the option of retaining their coverage as long as desired. Reservists leaving reserve service without the amount of time needed for full retirement may be covered under VGLI if desired. In addition, veterans are now permitted to convert their SGLI/VGLI insurance, in partial amounts at different times or in whole, to a private plan of insurance with a participating commercial insurance carrier as they leave service, or at any time they are in the VGLI program, without having to wait a stipulated period as was previously the case. Effective April 1, 2001 those entering active duty were automatically covered for a full $250,000 under SGLI as authorized by Public Law 106-419, and members of the Individual Ready Reserve who have volunteered for assignment to a mobilization category were also made eligible for SGLI coverage under that law. In addition, Public Law 107-14 authorized other program enhancements to the SGLI program, effective November 1, 2001, which allows up to $100,000 in spousal coverage on a paid premium basis, and provides $10,000 free life insurance coverage for a member’s children. These dependent coverages still cannot, at present, be carried over into the VGLI program and cannot be doubled in the case of both parents being in service. However, while the member’s SGLI is in force, spousal coverage can be converted to a private plan of insurance with a participating commercial company upon written application in the same manner as a VGLI policy may be so converted. The American Legion insurance unit presented supporting testimony at that time on these legislative changes as they improved greatly the range of financial options available to veterans in these programs, not only at the time of their separation from service, but in later years as their life situation changed as well, and as they permit the SGLI and VGLI programs to more effectively compete with private insurers who have the privilege of excluding applicants as desired and who may, in the case of certain military associations, be co-located on military bases. VGLI policyholders now can increase their coverage every five years by $25,000, if their coverage was below the SGLI maximum of $400,000, up to that level.

New SGLI legislation was enacted in May 2005. Public Law (PL) 109-13, the Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act for Defense, the Global War on Terror, and Tsunami Relief of 2005, was signed into law May 11, 2005 and contained provisions for increases in the Dept. of Defense (DOD) Death Gratuity, for increases in the amount of maximum coverage under the Servicemembers Group Life Insurance (SGLI) program, and for a new SGLI group policy rider for Traumatic Injury Protection. The SGLI Traumatic Injury Protection Rider became effective December 1, 2005 and currently provides over $215.6 billion dollars in traumatic injury coverage as per a published schedule of losses caused by such physical injuries. On November 26, 2008 VA issued new regulations as a result of extensive reviews to expand the TSGLI schedule of losses and the time period involved. Additions to the TSGLI schedule included expansion of definitions for total and permanent loss of sight, hearing, speech, and various types of paralysis. Other additions included certain types of amputation, limb salvage, facial reconstruction, burns, injuries resulting from authorized use of controlled substances and traumatic brain injury effects. Effective September 1, 2005 regular SGLI coverage was automatically increased to $400,000 from the previous $250,000, and is the current maximum amount of SGLI coverage permitted. Servicemembers electing lesser amounts must do so in $50,000
increments. Spousal and dependent coverage was not impacted by the legislation. The Act specified certain spousal and beneficiary notification requirements for members changing beneficiary designations or electing lesser amounts of coverage. The Act also provided for the group traumatic injury insurance rider to be attached to the group coverage provided under SGLI, the premium cost of which to the insured was to be $1.00 per month. This injury protection ranges from $25,000 to $100,000 in accordance with a disability schedule which has been published and which is composed of a list of physical traumatic injuries involving significant loss of use of physical or mental abilities caused by such injury. Coverage under this rider began December 1, 2005. A retroactive provision for qualifying injuries, regardless of location or coverage status, from October 7, 2001 to the effective date is provided for. The Secretary of Defense certifies to the SGLI center the individuals qualifying for retroactive payments. Public Law 111-275, enacted October 13, 2010, expanded this provision to include TSGLI coverage for all covered losses incurred on active duty regardless of location to be effective October 1, 2011. Servicemembers must be covered by SGLI to have this rider, and for members insured under SGLI the rider is mandatory. Rider coverage ceases on midnight on the date the member separates from the uniformed service. No retroactive period was contained in the legislation for the $150,000 SGLI increase, but this was addressed through the Dept. of Defense’s Death Gratuity benefit instead, as insurance underwriting requirements did not permit new coverage increases to be applied retroactively.

On September 30, 2005 the SGLI enhancement Act of 2005 (PL 109-80) was enacted which made permanent the increase in the maximum allowable SGLI regular coverage from $250,000 to $400,000, and which included various spousal notification requirements for beneficiary changes. This last requirement, for an insured married at the time of making a beneficiary election, that the Secretary of Defense notify the insured’s spouse should the insured at any time take action to either reduce the amount of coverage or to name a beneficiary other than the insured’s spouse, did not meet with the support of The American Legion. It has historically been the belief of The American Legion that this type of fundamental insurance benefit is a special contract between the service member (or veteran in the case of veteran’s coverage) and the federal government, and is a matter personal and sacrosanct to those who serve (or have served) the nation in uniform, and that an insured’s beneficiary information should not be released to third parties without the consent of the insured. Such spousal notification, however, does not affect a member’s right to elect or change his/her beneficiary designation or amount of SGLI coverage at any time.

Further legislative changes in the SGLI program included PL 109-163, enacted January 6, 2006, which authorized the payment of an allowance to service members serving in Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom for an amount equal to the premium of $150,000 of SGLI coverage, affording them $150,000 of free SGLI coverage provided they did not decline such coverage, and PL 109-233 enacted June 15, 2006. PL 109-233 extends the duration of SGLI coverage from one to two years for service members who are totally disabled upon the date of their separation from active duty or reserve status, effective upon the date of enactment for members released before October 1, 2011. Service members who were released within one year of the enactment date were also eligible for this extended coverage period. Public Law 111-275, enacted October 1, 2010, makes this extension permanent. This legislation also provided the Secretary of Veterans Affairs the sole authority to determine the period of time between the date of a traumatic event and the date a member suffers a qualifying loss for all losses under the Traumatic SGLI (TSGLI) program. The law also removed the previously existing statutory requirement that quadriplegia, paraplegia, or hemiplegia occur within one year of the traumatic injury. For all losses this period has now been extended to two years.

The American Legion’s National VA&R insurance unit at the Philadelphia, PA center had initiated and worked with the VA insurance management staff to provide added protection to those veterans leaving service in a totally disabled and life threatening status, to attempt to ensure these veterans do not lose coverage (as happens periodically) due to
misunderstanding certain requirements of the SGLI to VGLI transfer system stemming from inconsistencies in the manner these are explained to them as they out process from various military facilities, or failing to respond in a timely manner to initial insurance invitations and premium billings, etc. Recommended safeguards included such items as automatic coverage and premium deduction start-ups from military retired pay or VA disability compensation, policy liens for past due premiums, and closer contacts between the SGLI/VGLI administering office and veterans in this category. VA insurance management completed a staff study through the military service departments, the Defense Manpower Data Center, DPC Austin and OSGLI on the methods such individuals can be identified, and has created an Outreach program to contact by telephone and with additional letters veterans in this class, and advise them of their VGLI options as needed. Currently, separating service members who have been discharged on disability retirement at a rating of 50% to 100% by their branch of service are contacted. Of those contacted by phone, over 80% apply for either the SGLI Disability Extension (free coverage for two years) or VGLI coverages. In June 2011 the VA Insurance Center opened a formal, fully staffed Outreach Center in Philadelphia to expand these operations. An on-line SGLI/VGLI manual is available to all military out processing centers and veterans to ensure these have immediate access to correct information concerning the requirements for veterans being separated to convert their in-service SGLI coverage to VGLI coverage, and in February 2004 a detailed Insurance Needs Calculator was added to the VA Insurance website, for veterans to use to assess their life insurance needs and compare VGLI coverage to other insurance options. The Calculator includes VA, Social Security and military benefits in the final assessment. VGLI policyholders also have the ability now to access their policy information through the VA website as well, using passwords and policy information. For all programs the Department of Veterans Affairs administers and/or supervises some 6.12 million insurance policies for military personnel, spouses, dependents and veterans, with a total in-force coverage of over $1.22 trillion dollars.

In the Service-Disabled Veterans Insurance (SDVI) program many disabled veterans annually continue to take advantage of the new supplemental Service-Disabled insurance provided in the legislative changes of 1992, whereby now an additional Supplemental $30,000 of coverage may be purchased by those veterans having a basic Service-Disabled policy and who become totally disabled before age 65. This option has a limited time period of one year from a grant of premium waiver and if application is made before age 65. The American Legion VA&R insurance office continues to maintain a special notification system for those veterans who choose The American Legion as their representative and who are applying for Service-Disabled Veterans Insurance (SDVI) coverage to ensure they are informed as early as possible of these additional benefits. The notification system has been expanded to include compilation of a database of those qualifying for Supplemental coverage and the release of additional reminder notifications to them prior to expiration of their Supplemental insurance option. This is particularly needful as the current VA system may be faulty in communicating information on benefits such as disability premium waivers and supplemental coverage to veterans who may qualify for it, and who may very well be in life threatening (and therefore time constrained) conditions. A special activity was initiated in this benefit area in 2004 and continued afterward by the VA Compensation and Pension Service to address concerns that many service-connected disabled veterans were not being informed enough on the program. A mailing on SDVI notification was included with the annual cost-of-living increase letters, reaching approximately 2.3 million veterans in 2004-2005, resulting in many thousands of new applications being received. This continues with insurance invitations being sent out on virtually all ratings actions. SDVI applications have also been made available on the VA’s Insurance website through an Autoform program whereby applications can be made, saved, printed for mailing or submitted electronically as desired. This new tool became active March 5, 2004.

The VA Insurance Center continues their on-going effort to provide better service and program enhancements to their veteran policyholders by periodically updating their
computer and communication systems, both as part of the overall VA area networks and through the Internet, and all records and transaction activities, previously done on paper, into their on-line computer systems. Beginning in summer 2001, the VA Insurance Center accelerated a planned program of transforming their insurance operation into a wholly computerized system no longer utilizing any paper insurance files, but using imaging technology instead to replace paper files with electronic ones. The impetus for this was to create space in the Philadelphia Regional Office and Insurance Center for one of the three regional Pension Centers which have been organized to assist in the reduction of the national backlog in compensation and pension cases. The insurance system, known as VICTARS (Veterans Insurance Claims Tracking and Response System) permits on-screen display of all file documents that would previously have been maintained in a paper insurance folder, and gives VA insurance specialists the ability to input and process claims, transactions and responses to inquiries with far greater speed than any earlier system used to date, and to maintain a full history of such in the policyholder’s new electronic file. Currently, over 6 million images are available to insurance specialists via their desktop computers. All previous paper insurance folders (over 2.5 million) have been retired to a nearby Federal Records Center, but are still available for recall as may be needed on certain cases. This accomplishment has resulted in savings of some $1 million annually. Insurance services are further augmented by automated assistance and call routing facilities added to a toll free number (800-669-8477). Faxed correspondence, claims, and transaction requests are acceptable for VA Insurance purposes. Additionally, in accordance with the federal initiative to have all government disbursements done by Direct Deposit (Electronic Transfer of Funds) the VA Insurance Center has completed actions for the direct deposit of monthly insurance installment awards to beneficiaries and those policyholders receiving monthly annuities. All insurance award/annuity payments are by electronic transfer of funds to insurance payees. In this vein, all policy loan, dividend refund and cash surrender payments are also sent to an insured’s bank account if VA benefits are or were on direct deposit, or if an insured is paying premiums by automatic deduction from a checking account, unless requested otherwise. New settlement claim forms for death settlements contain blocks for beneficiaries to include bank information for EFT payment. As with the VGLI program, NSLI/SDVI policyholders may now also access their account information through the VA’s insurance website with a PIN number, and perform certain transactions such as policy loan applications. For VMLI there is now also an on-line Insurance Needs Calculator, similar to that for VGLI, available as well.

Public Law 111-275, the Veterans Benefits Act of 2010, has made the following changes in government insurance programs for veterans and active duty personnel.

Effective October 1, 2011, the maximum amount of life insurance coverage permitted under the Supplemental Service-Disabled Veterans Insurance program (SDVI) increased from the present limit of $20,000 to a new maximum of $30,000. Supplemental SDVI is available to veterans who are approved for a basic SDVI policy ($10,000 maximum), who qualify for a disability waiver of premiums on the basic policy, and who make an application for Supplemental insurance before age 65 and within one year of the date of notification by the VA of the disability premium waiver. Totally disabled veterans who meet the qualifying criteria can therefore be able to have a maximum of $40,000 coverage in force.

Also effective October 1, 2011, the Veterans Mortgage Life Insurance (VMLI) program increased in coverage from the previous $90,000 limit to a new maximum of $150,000. On January 1, 2012 this increased further to $200,000 in the amount of coverage permitted.

Additionally, six months from the date of enactment of PL 111-275, those veterans under age 60 who are insured under the Veterans Group Life Insurance (VGLI) program have an opportunity once every five years, beginning on the one year anniversary of the date of entry into the program, to purchase further VGLI coverage in the amount of
$25,000; the overall amount of coverage held, however, cannot exceed $400,000; the maximum allowed by law for Servicemembers Group Life Insurance (SGLI).

Lastly, as mentioned earlier, the legislation also provided for an expansion of Traumatic Injury SGLI (TSGLI) coverage for the retroactive period of October 7, 2001 to November 30, 2005 provided by Public Law 109-233 for servicemembers incurring covered losses in Operations Iraqi Freedom and/or Enduring Freedom. Public Law 111-275 expanded TSGLI coverage for covered losses for the retroactive period for all such losses incurred on active duty, regardless of location. The effective date of this expansion was also October 1, 2011.

The loss of a dominant hand is added to the TSGLI schedule of covered losses by this legislation.

Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Service Units:

VA Insurance Center at Philadelphia, PA and St. Paul, MN DMC Center

The American Legion Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Commission Staff at Philadelphia consists of a Chief of Insurance Activities/Insurance Representative and a Pension Benefits Assistant Director/ Representative. Associated offices at the St. Paul and Milwaukee VA Pension Centers have one VA&R Pension Assistant Director with Pension Benefits Representative at each of the St. Paul and Milwaukee centers. Prior reviews by the VA Inspector General (VA IG) office of the Philadelphia Pension Center uncovered discrepancies and incorrect claims processing within the Philadelphia VA Center. These have been addressed by appropriate reorganization of activities and the replacement of certain managerial personnel. VA IG continues to review and oversee these solutions and perform on-site inspections. The VA Pension Centers have also moved to activate a centralized mail processing operation to facilitate processing of paper mail into the VA electronic systems.

The Chief of Insurance Activities / Insurance Representative must have a thorough knowledge of government life insurance laws, regulations, and transaction and adjudication procedures, and be able to analyze them correctly in order to properly represent insured veterans and their beneficiaries. The Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Director and other interested personnel are kept informed on policy matters, changes in VA administrative procedures and all related areas to include new legislative initiatives. NSLI re-open periods for service-disabled and non-service disabled veterans with increased face value coverages continues to be an American Legion legislative effort. Coordination has also been effected with the VA Pension Center management in both Philadelphia, St. Paul and Milwaukee for the creation of a system whereby the national VA&R staff personnel can process pension inquiries from Department and Veterans Service Officers as they may require.

Daily operations involve a full range of insurance services to include the representation of insured veterans and their beneficiaries, the review of insurance case files and supporting evidence and Claims files as required, the furnishing of status reports and account assistance to insureds, beneficiaries, accredited field representatives and VA adjudicators and accounts personnel, close liaison with Department Service Officers and other field personnel to ensure prompt and complete service, and the input to, review of, and where necessary the correction of VA actions and records both on cases involving disability and death claims, and on those involving any of a wide variety of insurance accounting and financial transactions that occur on active and matured accounts. General insurance information and guidance is provided to field service officers across the United States, along with assistance in the preparation of insurance appeals and claims submittals. Coordination with VA executive and program management personnel is conducted on both individual cases and broad policy/administrative matters. A fax to PDF capability added to the Philadelphia office has greatly expedited claims processing by enabling rapid receipt of documents needed to complete transactions and claims that would otherwise be significantly delayed due to mailing times, particularly in emergency cases. The
Philadelphia office remains heavily involved in the large increase in SDVI applications beginning in 2004 and 2005, occasioned by the mass mailing of SDVI notifications to virtually all service-connected veterans mentioned earlier. Information, staff analysis, and testimony/comments for major legislative insurance benefit increases, is provided to the Director, National VA&R Commission for presentation to Congress as needed.

The St. Paul office provides similar operations, staff representation and nationwide veteran’s service in the field of VA Debt Management nationally, and for Pension operations for the western third of the nation.

A major new addition to the Philadelphia National VA&R unit occurred effective January 2010 with the acquisition of an experienced service officer for the new role of Pension Benefits Representative, to include all necessary computer and high capacity Fax equipment. A new National Staff representative was also added to the VA Regional office and PMC in Milwaukee for the middle third of the nation as well. The mission of the PMC representatives is to assist in all VA pension, DIC, accrued benefits, burial and dual entitlement claims where The American Legion holds power of attorney.

New web-based sources, provided by the Director, VA&R Commission, and by the VA Pension Center, have now been implemented to enable the processing of incoming paper and faxed claims to be received via E-Mail in pdf format, and to be submitted electronically into the VA system via a direct upload to the VA for electronic input to the VA claims process, to significantly reduce paper usage, related files storage and processing time. For example, a paperwork reduction of over 95% has been experienced in the Philadelphia unit, with service officer review and submittal times to VA vastly speeded up.

All offices have obtained access to the new VA benefits online systems coming on board in 2013: the Stakeholders Entry Portal (SEP), the Veterans Benefits Management System (VBMS) and e-Benefits.

For the period August 1, 2016 to end of July 2017 the following activities of The American Legion’s Philadelphia, St. Paul, and Milwaukee offices were reported:

Insurance, Pension & Debt Management:

(PCM = Debt Management Center)

Letters Received: 13,460
Letters Sent: 15,442
Disability Insurance Claims: 1,886
Death Insurance Claims: 203
Insurance Folders Reviewed: 1,909
In-Force Insurance Policy Accounts Reviewed: 4,736
New Insurance Accounts – SDVI: 3,934
Telephone / E-Mail Contacts: 12,214
Personal Contacts: 7,648
Submitall Memorandums & Reports: 2,974
VA Case Responses Processed: Insurance, 12,046
Pension and Debt Management Cases:
*Live Claims, Evidence and Other 60,472
SubmitallsPresented:
*Excludes death claims and includes policy transactions such as dividend, loan and premium actions, plan conversions, cash surrenders, refunds, beneficiary changes, disability claims with related medical and legal evidence, Wills, estate documents, master record data changes, general inquiries, Debt Management and Pension case claims and supporting documents.

DMC Original Claims: 810
DMC Case Audits / Pension Rating Reviews: 10,068
DMC Grants & Denials 2,794
New Pension Claims: 7,175
Other Insurance Transactions & Inquiries: 2,102
Pension Supporting Submittals (On-Going Cases) 16,765
Pension Appeals 189
Other Pension Transactions & Inquiries 14,136

Claims Service

The National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission provides assistance and representation to all veterans and their survivors in claims and appeals before the Department of Veterans Affairs, as well as, Department of Defense Medical Evaluation Board and Physical Evaluation Board through a staff of thirty representatives.

Within the table of organization, the Deputy Director for Claims Service is responsible for the activities of the Board of Veterans’ Appeals (BVA) and Special Claims Unit. Cases at the BVA Unit are reviewed and written briefs are submitted on the appellant’s behalf or a personal hearing is conducted before a Veterans Law Judge of the BVA with the appellant. The BVA Unit consists of a senior team leader, three team leaders, a senior medical consultant, three administrative assistants and fourteen assistant directors.

The Deputy Director for Medical Evaluation Board/Physical Evaluation Board (MEB/PEB) & Department of Defense (DoD) is responsible for the activities of the MEB/PEB, DoD Boards, Benefits Delivery at Discharge, Pension Maintenance Center, Life Insurance, Debt Management, and Dependency and Indemnity Compensation.

The MEB/PEB team works directly with military members. When military members have a medical condition that may not meet medical retention standards they are referred to the Medical Evaluation Board for further evaluation by DoD. The American Legion representatives assist servicemembers by providing advocacy during the process in the form of counseling, education, writing written rebuttals in their behalf and representation at the formal hearing. Depending on the outcome, the servicemember will be medically retired or separated with severance, the choices made during the IDES process will impact them for the rest of their lives. The American Legion has one MEB/PEB representatives stationed at Joint Base Lewis/McChord, Washington.

Benefits Delivery at Discharge (BDD) allows active duty service members to apply for disability compensation benefits from the VA prior to retirement or separation from military service. This program permits servicemembers with at least 60 days but no more than 180 days remaining on active duty to file. The 60 days is to allow sufficient time to complete the medical examination process prior to separation from service. The American Legion has two BDD representatives that have offices inside VA Regional Offices; one stationed in Winston-Salem, NC and one stationed in Salt Lake City, UT.

The VA Pension Management Centers (PMC) process adjustments of benefits for individuals in receipt of non-service connected disability pension, death pension and dependency indemnity compensation. The VA has three PMC’s and the American Legion has representation to assist all claimants and DSO’s; one at Milwaukee, one at Philadelphia, and two at St. Paul. The St. Paul representatives also handle debt management services for claimants that have been notified of an overpayment.

The VA Life Insurance Agency offers security in the event of the insured’s death and financial protection to survivors. The American Legion has one representative at the Philadelphia VARO to assist veterans and their survivors with life insurance.

Military Review Boards Unit

Title 10, United States Code, sections 1552 and 1553 provide statutory authority for the existence and operation of the Military Discharge Review Boards and the Boards for Correction of Military Records. The American Legion was instrumental in the creation of
these boards shortly after World War II and has represented former servicemembers petitioning them for relief since.

During the period 1 July 2016 through 30 June 2017 the two staff members of the Military Review Boards Unit provided counsel, guidance and representation to former servicemembers seeking correction of their service record by the Army, Air Force, Navy / Marine Corps and Coast Guard discharge review and correction boards. These requests involved a wide variety of issues including character of service upgrades, reason for discharge changes, entitlement or amendment of physical disability severance or retirement, issuance or reissuance of military awards and decorations, requests for military personnel files and service medical records, and administrative corrections to official military records.

The following breaks down the individual administrative actions taken by the staff of the Military Review Board Unit in assisting former servicemembers prepare their cases for review by the respective boards.

### Case Development / Office Tasks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communications</th>
<th>Volume</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phone Calls</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emails</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<th>Consultations</th>
<th>Volume</th>
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<td>Veteran/Other</td>
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<th>Administration</th>
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<td>Tracking Actions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research/Training</td>
<td>611</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clerical Tasks</td>
<td>2019</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following classifies the types of reviews that were presented to the respective service boards.

### Military Discharge Review Boards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Record Reviews</th>
<th>Hearing Reviews</th>
<th>Reconsiderations</th>
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<td>00</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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### Boards for Correction of Military Records

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Record Reviews</th>
<th>Hearing Reviews</th>
<th>Reconsiderations</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>NAVY</td>
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Boards for Correction of Military Records

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<th></th>
<th>Record Reviews</th>
<th>Hearing Reviews</th>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>COAST GUARD</td>
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This final breakdown provides the total number of cases received back from the boards, the number of favorable decisions of petitions.

Military Discharge Review Boards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Total Corrected</th>
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<td>MARINE CORPS</td>
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<tr>
<td>COAST GUARD</td>
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Boards for Correction of Military Records

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total Decided</th>
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<td>NAVY</td>
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<td>MARINE CORPS</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>COAST GUARD</td>
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Each of the discharge review and correction boards is under a congressional mandate to adjudicate cases within one year from the date of acceptance. Currently all are meeting or exceeding their requirements with timeframes ranging from 9 to 12 months.

The Military Review Board Unit also provides training material to our Department Service Officers, instructional guides for our applicants and counsel, on an as needed basis, to veterans petitioning the Combat Related Special Compensation Boards, Physical Disability Board of Review, Awards and Decorations Boards.

Benefits Delivery at Discharge

The American Legion currently has two BDD representatives, one located in Salt Lake City, Utah and the other in Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

BDD is a program designed to allow a servicemember to submit a claim for disability compensation 60 to 180 days prior to separation, retirement, or release from active duty or demobilization. BDD can help you receive your disability benefits sooner, with a goal of within 60 days after release or discharge. (Titles 10 and 32).

Quick start allows a servicemember to submit a claim for disability compensation 1 to 59 days prior to separation, retirement, or release from active duty or demobilization (Title 10 or Title 32). According to VA, submitting a disability compensation claim before discharge makes it possible to receive VA disability benefits as soon as possible after separation, retirement, or demobilization.

The American Legion representatives review on average 3000 claims annually. These claims typically contain nine conditions each and are submitted from around the world by service members prior to separating from all branches of the Armed Forces. Additional research was required on some cases. The offices serve as a point of contact for veterans and Accredited Service Officers wishing to inquire about a claim, question a rating or submit documents in support of a claim. Many of the calls from veterans result from their frustration with getting prompt and accurate information from the VA assistance line and wanting some advocacy from The American Legion. These offices strive to provide immediate answers to questions or concerns. In cases that require further research, answers are normally provided within 48 hours. These offices work with little fanfare, but the
positive effect on veterans and their families is enormous. Between the BDD Offices in Winston Salem, NC and Salt Lake City, UT we reviewed 1,240 BDD Claims with 12,400 issues. Each claim required reviewing the rating, C&P examination, and service treatment records. Additional research was required of some of the cases. The BDD offices also received 411 phone calls from veterans and Department Service Officers throughout the country requesting the status of a claim or questions concerning a rating. The offices provided an update for the status of the claim and provided options concerning the rating. Additionally, 70 veterans visited the offices with general VA benefit questions. The offices received and reviewed 1645 pieces of correspondence and represented 17 veterans at the Rating Board Hearing.

**Board of Veterans Appeals**

Between October 1, 2016 and July 4, 2017, The American Legion represented 6,350 claimants seeking benefits. For the claims receiving dispositions, over 77% of the claims were either determined to have been inadequately developed and prematurely denied or were erroneously denied by the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA).

The American Legion continues to find that VBA inadequately develops and prematurely denies claims in their decisions. Failures to comply with their duty to assist or misapplication of laws when adjudicating are too frequently occurring. Through VBA’s lack of proper development, veterans’ appeals are often remanded for the necessary development and extending the amount of time to have a final disposition on the appeal. Training and the application of knowledge gained continues to lead American Legion personnel to achieve greater outcomes in their advocacy efforts. The National Veterans Legal Services Program (NVLSP) provides new hire training to provide the necessary tools for new employees to successfully represent claimants; moreover, NVLSP provides unit and individual training to update personnel on changes in laws, court decisions, etc. Through the leadership provided by the senior team leader, American Legion personnel also routinely attend training provided by BVA attorneys, and he has implemented a regular training schedule for the unit’s team leaders to provide local training.

**Department Service Officers School**

Beginning in 1985, The American Legion has authorized the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation (VA&R) Commission to conduct Department Service Officer (DSO) schools bi-annually for accredited representatives of The American Legion. It represents the organization’s ongoing commitment to developing a network of highly trained and experienced service officers responsible for effectively advocating for veterans and their families.

The purpose of these sessions is to provide current information about changes in veterans’ law and VA adjudication policies. Through these efforts, American Legion service officers improve their advocacy skills. The program of instruction includes basic training for new service officers, and advanced training on issues relating to claims processing, disability ratings, personal hearings, development of appeals, and the interpretation and application of precedent decisions by the U.S Court of Claims for Veterans’ Claims and the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit.

DSOs received training from the following organizations in 2017:

- Court of Appeals for Veterans’ Claims (CAVC)
- Veterans Health Administration
- Veterans Benefits Administration
- National Personnel Records Center
- Abbvie
During DSO School held in Washington, D.C., attendees welcomed Past National Commander (PNC) and current CAVC Senior Judge Alan Lance. PNC Lance recognized the importance of the efforts of American Legion accredited representatives and introduced CAVC’s Chief Judge Robert N. Davis. Chief Judge Davis discussed recent CAVC decisions, and the impact the decisions will have upon VA and veterans nationwide.

Individual department participation remains high; over 250 accredited representatives attended the trainings in 2017. During this reporting period, DSO School was held:

- July 27-29, 2017 (Columbia Club, Indianapolis, IN)

**Veteran Affairs & Rehabilitation Health Policy Unit**

The Veteran Affairs and Rehabilitation Health Policy Unit national staff includes: Roscoe Butler, Deputy Director for Health Care, three Assistant Directors for Health Care; Warren Goldstein, Edwin Thomas, and Derrick Redd (Military Leave since 2014), Melvin Brown, Assistant Director for Resolutions, Cemetery Committee and VA Voluntary Service (VAVS), Cole Lyle, Assistant Director for TBI/PTSD Programs, Tammy Gillums, Assistant Director for Caregivers Programs, and Wanda Kennedy, Administrative Assistant. The Health Policy staff supports VA&R’s mission through:

- Congressional testimonies,
- System Worth Saving Site visits,
- Attending the Spring and Fall National Advisory Committee (NAC) VAVS meetings,
- Hosting the Washington Conference,
- Resolution support for the Fall/Spring National Executive Committee Meetings and National Convention,
- Providing Administrative support for the Caregivers program,
- Providing Administrative support for the Suicide Prevention program, and;
- Providing Administrative support for the TBI/PTSD program
- System Worth Saving
- Executive Summary A System Worth Saving 2017

**Background and History**

Over the past three years, The Department of Veterans Affairs has been under intense scrutiny by the media, the United States Congress, VA Office of Inspector General (VAOIG), and our nation’s veterans due to the outpatient wait time scandal and poor management oversight. Many have insisted on reforming the VA health care system, while some have recommended privatizing the system. In 2016, The American Legion approved Resolution No. 372, Oppose Closing or Privatization of Department of Veterans Affairs Health Care System at its 98th National Convention in Cincinnati, Ohio.

The American Legion remains true to one of its original purposes stated in the original chartering documentation, “to consecrate the efforts of its members to mutual helpfulness and service to the country.” In 1919, an act of Congress created The American Legion as a patriotic veteran’s organization devoted to mutual benefit. Since then, The American Legion continuously remains committed to mutual helpfulness by ensuring that the VA health care system continues intact and properly funded to achieve President Abraham Lincoln’s charge: “To care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow, and his orphan”.

The American Legion’s two premier programs that monitor veteran’s health care and benefits are the System Worth Saving (SWS) site visits and the Regional Office Action Review (ROAR). The SWS program monitors VA health care facilities, and the ROAR program identifies challenges related to veteran’s benefits, other than health care. SWS pinpoints facilities that may be experiencing clinical and operational challenges and may
benefit from a System Worth Saving town hall meeting, medical center site visit or a special purpose town hall meeting. An example of a special purpose town hall meeting was the one held at the Washington, D.C. VA Medical Center.

On April 13, The American Legion learned the Department of Veterans Affairs removed the director of the Washington, D.C., medical center following the release of an initial VA Inspector General (VAIG) report that cited critical safety and patient welfare concerns. On May 3, 2017, The American Legion hosted a town hall meeting at the Washington, D.C. VAMC to hear firsthand accounts from veterans and their families regarding medical care and other concerns. The American Legion also heard from the interim VA Medical Center Director and staff about the medical center’s plans to address the concerns of those veterans.

American Legion National Commander Charles E. Schmidt praised VA Secretary David Shulkin, M.D. for taking immediate and appropriate actions to relieve the medical center director from his position.

“We believe this is a positive step in increasing accountability and we are hopeful that the new leadership will be able to resolve these issues quickly,” Schmidt said.

System Worth Saving Site Visits

The 12 selected SWS site visits for fiscal year 2017 were submitted and approved during the 2016 Fall NEC meeting. To date, the Health Policy staff and VA&R Commission member(s) have conducted eight SWS site visits to include one special purpose veteran’s town hall meeting.

Completed site visits to date:

- VA Pacific Islands Healthcare System, Honolulu HI
- VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System, Los Angeles, CA
- Tennessee Valley Healthcare System-Alvin York VA Medical Center, Murfreesboro, TN
- Phoenix VA Health Care System, Phoenix, AZ
- VA Gulf Coast Healthcare System, Biloxi, MI
- Alaska VA Healthcare System, Anchorage, AK
- Aleda E. Lutz VA Medical Center, Saginaw, MI
- Iowa City VA Healthcare System, Iowa City, IA

The remaining four scheduled site visits are: (1) Clement Zablocki VA Medical Center, Milwaukee, WI (July); (2) Chalmers P. Wylie VA Ambulatory Care Center, Columbus, OH (Sept.); (3) VA Montana Healthcare System, Ft. Harrison, MT (Oct.); and (4) Manchester VA Medical Center, Manchester, NH (Nov.).

The System Worth Saving site visit, covers two and a half days, beginning with a veteran’s town hall meeting on the first day. The second and third days, the Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation (VA&R) Commission member(s) and National staff visit the local VA health care facility and meet with the executive leadership team and departmental staff to discuss challenges, best practices, and offer recommendations. The American Legion would like to understand the medical centers current situation, progress made since the last visit (if any), and strategic intent. At the end of each System Worth Savings site visit, a report is issued that is shared with the medical center, VA Secretary and Under Secretary of Health, Congressional Members, and the President of the United States.

Regional Office Action Review (ROAR) Visits

For over 20 years, The American Legion has conducted quality review visits at Veterans Affairs Regional Offices (VAROs) throughout the nation. Concerned that veterans were not receiving quality adjudications pertaining to disability claims, The American Legion began dispatching seasoned accredited representatives employed by National Headquarters with representatives from National Veterans Legal Services
Program (NVLSP) to review the adjudications of claims. Historically, The American Legion has noted severe deficiencies in the quality of adjudications and has worked with VA to improve its adjudications. Additionally, The American Legion provides its findings to Congress to ensure that they provide VA with the necessary tools resulting in properly served veterans.

Prior to this year, The American Legion would request a selected VA regional office (VARO) to provide 50 recently adjudicated original claims holding American Legion as power of attorney. American Legion and NVLSP would carefully review the claims and note errors in adjudication. Additionally, American Legion representatives would meet with the local department service officer (DSO) and VA employees to discuss concerns that may be occurring within the VARO.

In 2016, we will be shifting our focus upon decisions of appealed claims at the VARO. Since former VA Secretary Eric Shinseki announced VA’s intent to adjudicate claims with 98 percent accuracy within 125 days, a significant increase within the inventory of appealed claims has occurred. According to the September 28, 2015, Monday Morning Workload Report (MMWR), 312,980 appealed claims were awaiting adjudication. The September 27, 2010, MMWR indicated 205,169 appealed claims were awaiting adjudication. The 107,811 additional claims reflect a 52.5 percent increase in the inventory of appealed claims since Shinseki’s announcement. The American Legion has held significant concerns regarding VA’s sole focus on original claims in an effort to eliminate the backlog of claims meanwhile allowing the inventory of appealed claims to explode in recent years.

Due to these facts, we will be reviewing recently adjudicated appealed claims. Through these examinations, we are seeking to determine the adequacy of adjudications by VA personnel charged with adjudicated appealed claims, and we seek to discover a method to improve the process of reducing the backlog of appeals that is not detrimental to claimants.

VA has divided the nation into the following five areas for its 56 VAROs:
- North Atlantic
- Midwest
- Continental
- Pacific
- Southeast

American Legion personnel will continue to monitor closely the quality of adjudications within each VARO and will work closely with DSO and VA employees to discover “best practices” to ensure that our nation’s veterans receive the service they deserve. Upon conclusion of each VARO visitation, details of our findings and forwarded to senior VA leadership, Congress, and leaders within The American Legion.

The American Legion has conducted visits to the following VAROs in 2017:
- Columbia, SC
- San Diego, CA
- San Juan, PR
- Albuquerque, NM
- Ft. Harrison, MT
- Denver, CO
- Chicago, IL

The following locations are under consideration for future visits:
- Detroit, MI
- White River Junction, VT
- Louisville, KY
- Philadelphia, PA
- Los Angeles, CA
Map to Success

To ensure that The American Legion maximizes its resources, National Headquarters staff created the following timeline to provide detail on how National Headquarters personnel will proceed with VARO visits. Effective reviews of VARO operations include reviewing individual veterans’ records. Consequentially, only American Legion accredited representatives can conduct the reviews of adjudications; however, volunteers can become involved with entrance and exit interviews with VARO senior leadership.

VARO Preparation

The scheduling of the visits will begin 60-90 days prior to departure. National Headquarters staff will notify VA of the scheduled visit. VA’s Benefits Assistance Service Office contacts their Office of Field Operations; VA staff will contact VARO personnel regarding the impending visit. Additionally, The American Legion will request 25-30 recently adjudicated claims to be available for review 30 days prior to the visit and VA will provide another 25-30 recently adjudicated claims upon arrival at the VARO.

One month prior to departure, National Headquarters staff will notify American Legion department personnel. Department commanders, department adjutants, and department service officers will receive notification regarding the impending visit.

Visitation of VARO

Upon arriving at the selected VARO, American Legion personnel will meet with senior VARO personnel and discuss the purpose of the visit. Senior VARO personnel are encouraged to discuss changes in policy, challenges they face, etc. with American Legion personnel; non-accredited American Legion personnel may attend the meeting. The initial meeting should last approximately 1-2 hours. Following the meeting, American Legion and NVLSP personnel will meet with VA’s claims subject matter experts to discuss the previously reviewed claims.

Included in the events on the first day, American Legion personnel will receive a review, briefing, and tour of the mail facility at the selected VARO. A common complaint regarding VARO operations is the processing of mail at VAROs. To ensure that veterans are receive the highest level of service, it is essential to verify that correspondence between veterans and VA is occurring in a timely manner.

American Legion and NVLSP personnel will review 25-30 claims VA selected for review during the second day of the visit. Additionally, one American Legion representative will meet with the DSO and VARO service center personnel to discuss concerns within the VARO. VARO personnel may have union representation present; any information divulged is anonymous to encourage forthright answers from VA personnel.

The final day of the VARO visit will have American Legion and NVLSP personnel concluding the review of the claims in the morning. Throughout the process, VA, Legion, and NVLSP personnel will be discussing individual cases reviewed; if necessary, VA has the opportunity to rescind its previous decision. Reflections of changes performed by VA are included in the post-visit report. American Legion personnel will meet senior VARO leadership for the exit interview; as with the initial interview upon arrival, non-accredited American Legion personnel may attend. Immediate findings and preliminary suggestions occur between American Legion and VARO personnel.

Post-VARO Visit

Immediately following the visit, American Legion National Headquarters staff will combine the findings between their preliminary case review in Washington, D.C., and at the VARO and determine if trends/patterns exist regarding the adjudication of claims. Any alterations to adjudications are noted.
TBI and PTSD Programs

The American Legion’s TBI/PTSD Committee is charged with investigating existing science and procedures as well as alternative treatments for Traumatic-Brain Injury (TBI) and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). The committee’s stated goal is to find complementary and alternative (CAM) treatments that are not being employed by the Department of Defense (DoD) or the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), and encourage them to use these treatments. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs estimates that TBI/PTSD afflicts 31 percent of Vietnam veterans, 10 percent of Gulf War (Desert Storm) veterans, 11 percent of veterans of the war in Afghanistan, and 20 percent of Iraqi war veterans. PTSD has also shown to be highly correlated with the epidemic of suicide within the veteran community.

The TBI/PTSD Committee has multiple Resolutions to better support our nation’s veterans with mental health issues and the veteran community has seen improvements to treatments but there is still important work to be done. The TBI/PTSD Committee recently added a suicide prevention program to its portfolio in an effort to examine ways The American Legion may reduce the rate of veteran suicide, identify best practices and/or gaps in care and evaluate VA medical centers efforts in preventing veterans’ suicides.

Caregivers Program

There are approximately 5.5 million military caregivers throughout the United States. The benefits of establishing a caregiver program will be to ensure that all of The American Legion members and caregivers have support and access to the entitlements they deserve. This program assists the underserved caregiver community by providing outreach resources, benefit information and counseling referral. TAL wants to be the forerunner for a program that has the highest number of membership within the veteran organization community. Our program will support caregivers of all eras and conflicts.

Significant events concerning the Caregiver Program since the 2016 National Convention:

- TAL established a position within the National Headquarters Office in Washington D.C. The incumbent works with the TBI/PTSD Committee to define how TAL can assist caregivers and assists with publishing a strategic plan to accomplish the program’s goals.
- Resolution 24 was passed during the 2017 spring NEC which established The American Legion’s first caregiver program. TAL now has a seat at the table to give input on the VA’s Caregiver program and its current issues.
- In early 2017, TAL gathered research materials concerning the growing number of VA’s caregiver program revocations. TAL met with key VA leaders and requested clarification and justification on the program policies. Because of these efforts along with partner Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs), all revocations have ceased until a thorough review of the program is completed by the VA secretary.
- TAL was represented at the caregiver roundtable held by the House Committee on Veterans’ Affairs to express concerns for all caregivers and suggest expansion of the current program to all eras.
- May 2017 TAL gave written and oral testimony on the VA’s Caregiver program and presented the programs flaws and suggestions for a comprehensive program.
- TAL has proposed to host a quarterly legislative meeting with the 6 major VSO(s), American Legion Auxiliary and The Elizabeth Dole Foundation to collaborate on efforts to advance caregiver legislation.

The caregiver program coordinator is currently working to add a tab under VA&R’s Health Care web link to promote awareness for our members and their caregivers. This tab will feature the latest legislative issues, caregiver benefit awareness, caregiver toolkit and community resources.
Accredited Representatives

In completing VA form 21-22 “Power of Attorney”, the claimant appoints The American Legion as accredited representative in a claim for benefits administered by the Department of Veteran Affairs. It is the duty of the organization to provide assistance, advice, and counsel veterans, survivors and dependents so as to ensure their rights are protected and they receive all benefits to which they may be entitled under the law. The American Legion, as a congressionally chartered organization since 1919, conducts this service program through the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission. Accredited Representatives of The American Legion provide formal representation in claims before VA Regional Offices or the Board of Veterans’ Appeals. Their respective Departments have recommended these representatives for accreditation because of their knowledge, experience, and expertise in the field of federal benefit programs, especially those provided through the Department of Veteran Affairs.

To become an accredited representative of The American Legion, a formal application must be submitted to the National VA&R Director, with an accompanying endorsement signed by the Department Adjutant. The director, as the national certifying officer, will review and forward the request to VA’s Office of General Counsel (OGC) to finalize the request for accreditation. The form is never sent directly to OGC; accreditation will not be approved by VA until certified by the requesting organization. Upon approval of the application, the individual is recognized by VA as an accredited representative of The American Legion and will receive official notification of this action from VA. The accreditation will remain in effect until such time as the VA&R director receives a written request from the Department Commander or Department Adjutant to revoke the individual’s accreditation due to death, retirement, resignation, or on rare occasions for just causes. The director will then notify OGC the accreditation should be cancelled.

New accreditations and cancellations are reported monthly on VA’s general list of accredited representatives- VA information Bulletin IB 2-51. During the reporting period 572 requests for accreditation and 278 requests for cancellation were received from the Departments and submitted to VA for necessary action. As of June 30, 2017, there were 3,569 accredited representatives of The American Legion with 1 pending accreditation. Any questions concerning the proper procedure or regulations pertaining to accreditation of individuals or their representatives should be submitted to the director for the National VA&R Division in the Washington, D.C. office.

Staff Field Assignments

Staff from the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Division, including the director, deputy directors, assistant directors, and representatives from the Health Policy Unit and Board of Veterans Appeals attended various American Legion functions around the country such as: the National Convention, Fall and Spring National Executive Committee (NEC) meetings, the Annual Mid-Winter Conference in Washington, D.C., Department Conventions, Department Leadership Education and Development (LEAD) trainings, Department Seminars, Department Service Officer Schools, Department Claims training, fully developed claims assessment and training at seven VA Regional Offices, fact-finding trips, and various conferences.

Personnel and Organization

As of August 1, 2017, VA&R staffing is reported as follows:

Director .............................................................. 1
Administrative Assistants ...................................... 3
Deputy Director for Health Policy .............................. 1
Assistant Director for Health Policy (Resolutions) ............ 1
Assistant Director for Health Policy ............................ 3
Assistant Director for TBI/PTSD ............................... 0
Assistant Director for Caregivers (Volunteer) .................................................. 1
Deputy Director for Claims .................................................................................. 1
Assistant Director for Claims ................................................................................ 1
Senior Team Leader, BVA .................................................................................... 1
Team Leader, BVA ................................................................................................. 3
Assistant Directors for Appeals ............................................................................ 12
Administrative Assistants ...................................................................................... 3
Deputy Director for MEB/PEB/DoD .................................................................... 1
Assistant Director for DoD Military Review Boards ............................................ 1
Medical Consultant ............................................................................................... 1
Total Personnel – Washington Office ................................................................... 34

Satellite Offices

Insurance Field Office: Philadelphia, PA
Chief of Insurance Activities ................................................................................ 1
Pension Management Center: Philadelphia, PA ................................................... 1
Debt Management Center/PMC St. Paul, MN
Assistant Director .................................................................................................. 1
PMC Representative ............................................................................................... 1
Assistant Director (Restricted Claims) .................................................................... 1
Pension Management Center Milwaukee ............................................................ 1
Benefits Delivery at Discharge Winston Salem .................................................... 1
Benefits Delivery at Discharge Salt Lake City ...................................................... 1
IDES Representative Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Washington ......................... 1
VA&R Total ........................................................................................................... 43

Certificates of Appreciation

Under authority of May 1958 NEC Resolution, we have continued the program of awarding a Certificate of Appreciation to officials of the Department of Veteran Affairs, upon their retirement or resignation, For Services Rendered and Cooperation Extended in Connection with The American Legion’s Rehabilitation Program. Under criteria established in line with the enabling resolution, nominations for the award are submitted by Department or National officials of The American Legion twice a year. The nominations are considered by a committee of the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission at meetings preceding the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Conference, and the National Convention. The Committee recommends to the Commission the names of those considered deserving of the Certificate.

Two Certificates of Appreciation have been awarded during the period July 1, 2016 through June 30, 2017, for an overall total of 1,338 since the program was initiated.

Citation for Meritorious Service

The Citation, authorized by the National Executive Committee in May 1956, seeks to recognize the long and faithful service of Post Service Officers and others. Nominations for the Citation are submitted by Department officials to the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Director at any time; acting for the Chairman and members of the Commission issues the award.

Twenty-three Citations for Meritorious Service and loyal cooperation in The American Legion’s Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation program were presented during the period July 1, 2016 to June 30, 2017. Since this type of recognition and appreciation began, 5,150 citations for meritorious service have been presented.
**Department of Veterans Affairs Health-Care Provider & Physician of the Year Award**

Resolution No. 7 and Resolution No. 8 approved during the 2017 Spring National Executive Committee established two new awards that will be presented yearly beginning in 2018 and beyond. Currently the Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Committee is working with the Internal Affairs Committee to develop guidelines.

**American Legion Auxiliary Veteran Affairs & Rehabilitation**

**Kathy Dungan, National Chairman**

Veterans, military, and their families are the heart of the American Legion Auxiliary mission. Members work our mission every day with enthusiasm and dedication, as evidenced in their reports.

Illinois members were very busy this year. Before women veterans attended their counseling session at the Military Sexual Trauma Program, Unit 703 provided lunch for them. Unit 287 donated money to purchase two electric scooters for the Illiana Medical Center, and their 19th District donated enough money to purchase five scooters!

Iowa’s “Hearts on Fire for Veterans” theme demonstrated members’ burning desire to help. They implemented the Baby Starter Gift Set Project where items such as baby hats, sweaters, afghans, and other items were delivered to VA medical centers. Donations to VA medical centers and Iowa veterans’ homes were numerous — fleece blankets, two adaptive bikes for physical therapy, 360 $10 gift cards, Quilts of Valor, and much more.

Units and departments also held numerous stand downs this year. Kansas provided 512 homeless veterans immunizations, haircuts, shaves, legal assistance, a bathing area, and a job fair at its stand down. Ohio held six stand downs, with one stand down committee focusing on the needs of women veterans.

New to Maine this year was the Betsy Ann Ross House of Hope, a facility for homeless women veterans in Augusta. In preparation for the grand opening, Auxiliary members provided more than $10,000 in donations and more than $10,000 worth of items, ranging from toys to furniture.

Christmas Gift Shops are a wonderful way to help veterans and their families, and each year, many departments sponsor them. Gifts are provided free to veterans for their family members. Gifts range from gift cards, household items, clothing, toiletries, and toys for children. The Department of New York donated more than $46,000 in direct gifts to more than 1,700 hospitalized veterans. Members spent 2,471 hours preparing and distributing these gifts.

From the local level to national level, Auxiliary members supported therapeutic Veterans Creative Arts Festivals this year. The National Veterans Creative Arts Festival was held in Mississippi. The weeklong event recognized 120 veteran gold medal winners in the areas of arts and performance. As Auxiliary members served these talented veterans, they received more than recognition and thanks, but also an appreciation of what these veterans have experienced and the trials they deal with every day.

Whatever it took, Auxiliary members were there to serve and work our mission, and what an awesome job our members did!

**American Legion Auxiliary’s Impact Made Serving America’s Veterans:**

Hours volunteered ........................................................................................................ 6,828,309
Dollars spent .................................................................................................................. $10,544,124
Value of in-kind donations received .......................................................................... $4,225,407
Number of veterans assisted ..................................................................................... 2,622,861
Number of Veterans in Community Schools presentations ...................................... 12,148
Number of poppies or poppy items distributed .......................................................... 5,774,659
Dollars raised from the poppies or poppy items distributed ....................................... $3,915,653
Number of veterans who made the poppies or poppy items for distribution ............ 4,692
Total amount paid to veterans who made poppies .................................................... $316,201
VETERANS EMPLOYMENT & EDUCATION COMMISSION
Paul E. Dillard, Texas, Chairman
Joseph C. Sharpe Jr., Maryland, Director

This report covers the programs, activities and accomplishments of the National Veterans Employment & Education Commission, its two standing committees (Employment and Veterans Preference and Veterans Education, Other Benefits & Homelessness), and the staff from July, 2016, through June 30, 2017. Since the commission and the committees always meet concurrently, all future references to the commission in this report will automatically indicate the inclusion of the committees.

The National Veterans Employment & Education Commission is chaired by Paul Dillard (TX). The division consists of Director Joseph Sharpe, Jr., Deputy Director Mark Walker, Assistant Director Kaitlin Gray, Assistant Director Ariel De Jesus, Jr., Assistant Director John Kamin, and Administrative Assistant Jasmine Davis.

National Veterans Employment & Education Commission
*Employment & Veterans Preference Committee
*Veterans Education, Other Benefits & Homelessness Committee
*Veterans Employment & Education Council
*Awards Subcommittee
*Small Business Task Force Advisory Board
*Homeless Veteran Task Force Advisory Board

2016-2017 Meetings
During the period this report covers, the commission met for four regularly scheduled executive sessions. A list of those meetings follows:

(1) Members and guests of the National Veterans Employment & Education Commission met on Saturday, August 27, 2016, in the Hilton Pavilion Ballroom, Fourth Floor, Cincinnati, Ohio, in conjunction with the Ninety-eighth Annual National Convention. A report on that meeting was made to the National Executive Committee on Monday, August 29, 2016. The complete text of that report appears in the Proceedings of the National Executive Committee’s Pre- and Post-Convention Meetings.

(2) An executive session of the National Veterans Employment & Education Commission was held in the headquarters of The American Legion in Indianapolis, Indiana, on October 12-13, 2016. A complete report on that meeting appears in the Digest of Proceedings of the National Executive Committee, October 2016.

(3) At the 57th Washington Conference, on Monday, February 27, which was held in the Washington Hilton Hotel in Washington, DC; commission members and guests met to hear the latest on subjects of concern to them.


Legislative Appearances
A very important part of the work of the National Veterans Employment & Education Commission is the preparation and presentation of congressional testimony on issues affecting the economic well-being of America’s veterans. During the period covered by this report, the commission staff testified before Congress, and also participated in the
preparation of testimony presented by other members of the Legion staff on several occasions.

The following is a synopsis of the congressional hearings and correspondence held from August 1, 2016 to July 31, 2017, on matters pertaining to the National Veterans Employment & Education Commission:

- On March 30, 2017, the Director testified before the Subcommittee on Contracting and Workforce, House Committee on Small Business on “Entrepreneurial Development Programs Resources to assist Small Business.”
- On June 29, 2017, the Assistant Director testified before the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, House Committee on Veterans’ Affairs on “Pending Legislation regarding Small Business Issues.”
- On July 15, 2017, the Assistant Director testified before the House Committee on Veterans’ Affairs on “Pending Legislation regard Education Issues.”

**Administrative Activities**

The National Veterans Employment & Education Commission and its two standing subcommittees on Employment and Veterans Preference and Veterans Education, Other Benefits & Homelessness are responsible for ensuring that America’s veterans have the opportunity to provide, with honor and dignity, the economic necessities of life for themselves and their families. In order to achieve this goal, the commission and its committees work closely with governmental agencies and liaison to assist the organization’s members.

A staff responsibility is answering the large volume of mail and electronic mail that is received annually from veterans seeking information or assistance on issues which come under the commission's jurisdiction. While the staff can neither place individual veterans in jobs nor represent them in labor disputes, the staff does provide information, guidance and, when appropriate, referral. Besides correspondence from individuals, the staff also receives and answers frequent requests and inquiries from government agencies, members of Congress, congressional committees, private organizations, and other groups regarding veterans' economic issues.

**Employer of the Year Awards**

One of the commission’s major programs is its awards program, which is administered by the staff. Through this program The American Legion pays tribute to those employers across the country who has established outstanding records in the employment and retention of veterans, workers with disabilities and older workers, and to outstanding members of the state employment security agencies.

Each year since 1969, the Legion's National Veterans Employment & Education Commission has sponsored an Employer of the Year Awards Program. This program seeks to honor those employers across the country that has established an outstanding record in the employment and retention of veterans. Prior to this year's Washington Conference, the chairman of the National Veterans Employment & Education Commission, Paul E. Dillard (TX), appointed a seven-person subcommittee to review all of the nominations that had been received during 2016 in the Employer of Veterans Awards Program.

The Commission’s Awards Subcommittee met to select the following National winners:

- **Large Employer**: Sansone Auto Mall, New Jersey
- **Medium Size Employer**: Lowe’s Home Improvement Center, Inc., South Dakota
- **Small Employer**: Precision Moulding & Woodworks, Inc., North Carolina
Employment Service Awards

Beginning in 1993, three awards have been presented to the Local Veterans Employment Representative of the Year, the Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialist of the Year, and the Employment Service Office of the Year. These awards are given in cooperation with local Job Service offices across the country, to recognize truly outstanding veteran-dedicated staff members.

National winners are as follows:
- LVER of the Year: Reginald Parker, Texas
- DVOP of the Year: Bradley Aune, North Dakota
- Employment Local Office: Eau Claire Job Center, Wisconsin

Other Awards:
- Enhance the Lives of the Disabled: Lone Survivor Foundation, Texas
- Employer of Older Workers: Ken’s Super Fair Foods & Shell Express, South Dakota
- Homeless Veterans Outreach Award: The American Legion Department of Nebraska

EMPLOYMENT & VETERANS PREFERENCE COMMITTEE
James Fratolillo, Massachusetts, Chairman
Joseph C. Sharpe Jr., Maryland, Director

The mission of the committee is to promote employment and training opportunities for veterans. To accomplish this, the committee works at the national level with Congress and various federal agencies. The committee does not place veterans in jobs, but rather, relies on its network of employment chairpersons to assist individual veterans in finding employment. Their Posts and Departments appoint these employment chairpersons. Occasionally, Departments also appoint them at the County and District levels. Additionally, this committee is charged with promoting veterans' preference throughout the federal government and ensuring that agencies continue to observe all veterans' preference laws.

VETERANS EDUCATION, OTHER BENEFITS & HOMELESSNESS COMMITTEE
John B. Sampson, New York, Chairman
Joseph C. Sharpe Jr., Maryland, Director

This committee is charged with ensuring that veterans’ educational benefits provided by the federal government are sufficient and that every generation of veterans has substantially the same as, or better benefits than, the previous generation. In addition, this committee is to ensure that all veterans receive the benefits to which they are entitled as recompense for their military service on behalf of a grateful nation while continuing to push for federal and local governments to allocate adequate resources to combat and ultimately eliminate veteran homelessness.

Federal Veterans' Economic Programs

The following is a brief overview of the Commission’s interactions with those federal agencies, and their veterans' programs, with which the commission works regularly.

Education

The Post-9/11 GI Bill passed by Congress in 2008 was an effective upgrade for 21st century veterans using their college education benefits. It was not, nor can it be, a law so
static that it cannot continue evolving to best meet the needs of student-veterans in an ever-
shifting landscape of higher education and career training. The American Legion supports
educational institutions that provide student-veterans with valuable education and support.
Grants to establish or strengthen veteran centers on campuses can go a long way toward
helping students succeed.

On Wednesday, August 2, 2017, the United States Senate passed the Harry W.
Colmery Veterans Education Assistance Act, otherwise known as ‘the Forever GI Bill.’
The measure passed through committees and cleared the House and Senate just 20 days
after it was introduced. With Congress unanimous consent, the bill moves to President
Trump’s desk to become law. This represented the largest expansion of veteran education
benefits in nearly a decade. The bill removes, from those servicemembers who enlisted
from 2013 onward, the 15-year limit on when recipients must use their GI Bill benefits - a
 provision meant to give veterans more flexibility to attend higher education and obtain new
skills later in life. The legislation also boosts education assistance for National Guard and
Reserve troops, Purple Heart recipients and for the dependents of fallen troops. It also sends
funding to nontraditional education providers like coding boot camps.

In addition, the legislation fully restores the GI Bill education benefits for veterans
who were affected by the collapse in recent years of Corinthian Colleges and ITT Tech,
two massive for-profit college chains that had campuses across the country. Students such
as Caleb Bennett were days away from starting the final semester of an associate degree at
ITT Technical Institute outside Indianapolis last fall when he got word that the school had
unexpectedly closed. Instantly he found himself with only a week’s notice, a pregnant wife
and nearly two years of worthless credits paid from his non-reusable store of GI benefits.
When a refund check from ITT bounced a month later, the young family’s finances were
thrown into chaos.

“It’s a real big hit on the chin, but you just have to suck it up and get to it and hope
something happens. Thankfully something did”, said Caleb. That something came in the
form of the Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2017. Yet it is
worth remembering that the legislation was almost never introduced, and wouldn’t have
passed without the aggressive advocacy of The American Legion. Negotiations on the
legislation, which is a combination of 18 different bills, were halted in April following a
rift between Student Veterans of America (SVA) and Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA)
against Iraq & Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA) and the VFW over how to pay
for the expansion. A public hearing was canceled and discussions ceased. Representative
Tim Walz (MN) said it was almost a “death knell” for the GI Bill expansion.

But The American Legion and SVA reignited the momentum for the bill with a
roundtable discussion with over 40 Veterans Service Organizations and academic
associations at our Washington, DC, Headquarters Office, on May 18. The results of this
roundtable were consensus on what was needed out of a new GI Bill. “This bill, as currently
written, will launch a new era for all who have honorably served in uniform, and for the
nation as a whole. It will close current gaps in the existing Post-9/11 GI Bill and guarantee
that veterans have access to their hard-earned GI Bill benefits beyond the current 15-year
time limit,” said National Commander Charles E. Schmidt.

Lastly, American Legion posts have been chartered on campuses nationwide to help
meet the needs of veterans, which can include VA benefits assistance, understanding of
PTSD and networking. The American Legion is concerned about dropout rates and their
relationship to the effectiveness, or presence, of campus veteran programs. The American
Legion supports legislation to fund programs to start, restart or expand student-veterans
centers.

Licensing & Certification

The National Veterans Employment & Education Commission hosted a military
credentialing on Thursday, February 23, in the International Terrace, Terrace Level,
Washington Hilton Hotel, Washington, D.C. This event started with welcome remarks
from National Commander Charles E. Schmidt and a keynote address from Major General Hugh Van Roosen, Deputy G-1 of the U.S. Army. The room was at capacity with over 50 stakeholders present from industry, federal government and academia.

The roundtable unveiled a sneak peak of The American Legion’s State of Military and Veteran Credentialing Report, created with support from a Military.com grant. The report identified eight opportunities for action for the Trump Administration:

i. Improve the Post-9/11 GI Bill Licensing and Certification Benefit (pro-rate the cost of the exam)
ii. Ensure Quality of Certification Programs
iii. Ensure Quality of the Non-traditional Credential Preparation Programs
iv. Better Identify Labor Market Demand for Credentials
v. Track Credential Attainment Outcomes
vi. Reduce State Licensure Barriers
vii. Develop Best Practices for Credentialing Servicemembers and Veterans
viii. Ensure Military and Veteran Interests are Represented in Civilian Workforce Credentialing Initiatives

In addition, briefings were presented from representatives from the Department of Defense, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and the Department of Labor, on initiatives and research studying military credentialing. While the entire ecosystem was discussed, special attention was paid to the Information Technology industry and Supply Chain Management. To that end, representatives from Microsoft, Amazon.com, CompTIA, and Pearson VUE were present to share their efforts to hire veterans and concerns over possible barriers of employment.


Veterans’ Preference

The American Legion is deeply concerned with the protection of veterans and the prevention of illegal hiring practices. Currently, veterans are filing claims after the non-compliance employment event occurred and may become financially disadvantaged while waiting for results of the claim. Proactive measures and continuous oversight must be exercised to protect veterans from unfair hiring practices, not just reactionary investigations.

The following steps taken by the federal government to protect veterans’ employment and demonstrates reactionary measures to assist veterans which may take months to resolve. Many veterans give up or do not file complaints because they must seek employment elsewhere or face serious financial difficulties. The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) administers entitlement to veterans’ preference in employment. The Department of Labor’s Veterans’ Employment and Training Service (DOL-VETS) provides assistance to all persons having claims under the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA). DOL is the enforcement authority for USERRA, and it processes all formal complaints of violations of the law. The veteran may then request that the Department of Justice (DOJ) litigate on their behalf but only after a certain period has passed.

Veterans’ preference is authorized by the Veterans’ Preference Act (VPA) of 1944; it only applies to federal government employment. It provides that most veterans are to receive an extra five points (ten points for disabled veterans) in receiving and keeping federal jobs. The Veterans’ Employment Opportunity Act (VEOA) of 1998 extended
certain rights and remedies to recently separated veterans. VETS were given the responsibility to investigate complaints filed by veterans who believe their veterans’ preference rights have been violated and to conduct an extensive compliance assistance program. Veterans’ preference is being ignored by numerous agencies. Figures show a decline in claims by newer veterans compared to Gulf War I. In reality employment opportunities are not being broadcast. Federal agencies as well as subcontractors are required by law to notify OPM of job opportunities but these vacancies are rarely made available to the public.

In last year’s Senate version of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), the bill that funds the nation’s military and defense budget, was a provision that would limit veterans’ preference in hiring to a one-time use. Disappointed in the decision, The American Legion sent a letter to all members of Congress voicing its opposition to a provision that seeks to undermine the institution of veterans’ preference in federal hiring. The American Legion received a letter from Senator John McCain (AZ), Chairman of the Armed Services Committee, responding to our concerns. McCain stated in his letter, “Given your (The American Legion) and others’ concerns, I will ensure that this provision, which is not included in the House bill, is not included in the NDAA conference report.”

Research conducted by VetAdvisor and Syracuse University’s Institute for Veterans and Military Families, shows approximately two-thirds of veterans are likely to change jobs in the first two years of employment. Therefore, the provision would prevent veterans from utilizing the veterans’ preference benefit in their next job application. “We appreciate Senator McCain’s stalwart defense of an important benefit for all veterans who’ve served and sacrificed for their country,” said American Legion National Commander Charles E. Schmidt. “We look forward to working with the chairman to ensure the final NDAA properly protects this earned benefit.”

The American Legion reiterates its position that protection of veterans’ employment rights should be proactive and continuous oversight must be emplaced to protect veterans from unfair hiring practices. Reactionary investigations and lawsuits are not sufficient. We further believe that the veteran must be protected at the onset of the hiring process, corrective actions to remedy the veteran’s situation in the veteran’s favor are not guaranteed. We recommend that DOJ provide a detailed description of their veterans’ employment activities.

A grateful nation created veterans’ preference to ensure fair treatment for those citizens who served this country in the Armed Forces. Veterans’ preference should play a large role in employing veterans and their spouses. Federal agencies need to make sure that their Human Resource personnel are properly trained to effectively implement veterans’ preference. The federal government has scores of employment opportunities that educated, well-trained, and motivated veterans can fill given a fair and equitable chance to compete. Working together, all federal agencies should identify those vocational fields, especially those with high turnover rates, for transitioning veterans who are trying to continue their service within the federal government.

**Employment and Career Fairs**

The National Veterans Employment & Education Commission of The American Legion collaborated with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce to host a hiring event on Friday, February 24, in the International Terrace, Terrace Level, Washington Hilton Hotel, Washington, D.C. This event started with an opening ceremony, which included speakers Cara Lustig, Senior Manager of Events, U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation; Timothy Green, Director, Office of Strategic Outreach, Department of Labor’s Veterans’ Employment and Training Service (VETS); Verna Jones, Executive Director, Washington, DC Office; and Charles E. Schmidt, National Commander, The American Legion. There were 65 employers from various industries and over 225 attendees that participated in the Career Fair. In addition, the smaller roundtables (at the Career Fair) gave prospective
employers opportunities to engage jobseekers in a more personal manner, creating a relaxed atmosphere where veterans felt comfortable practicing their pitches and seeking job opportunities.

The American Legion manned a table at this event. The table was manned by Ariel De Jesus, Jr., Assistant Director, National Veterans Employment & Education Division and Donna Woods, Assistant Director, Human Resources Division. These Legionnaires discussed how The American Legion assists veterans with reintegrating back to their local communities. Additionally, they answered service members/veterans questions about benefits and described the Legion’s programs as well as explained how to become a member. The employers and participants at this event were pleased with the outcome. The employers stated that the participants were professional and qualified. The participants liked that employers were from different industries and willing to hire veterans.

Additionally, on Friday, February 19, the National Veterans Employment & Education Commission hosted a Financial Literacy and Resume Workshops. The workshops were designed to help veterans, service members and their spouses find meaningful careers in the civilian workforce, expand their networks and gain the tools necessary to stand out throughout the hiring process. The day began with a free networking breakfast, and then segued into financial literacy and resume workshops. Speakers for these workshops included Rodney Rolland, Human Resources Director, The American Legion, and Judy Viccello, Partner, New York Life. Following the morning workshops, attendees were able to mingle with each other and prospective employers during a networking luncheon. The forum speakers included: Lieutenant Colonel Adam Grim, Employment Director, Soldier for Life; Sonny Sandelius, Operations for Academy Programs, SANS CyberTalent; Donald Mills, FDM Senior Project Analyst for Fannie Mae, FDM Group; John Tansill, Head of Veteran Initiatives, FDM Group; and Thomas Abernethy, Associate Director, Accenture Federal Services.

The new Job Fair/Workshop dynamic that The American Legion and U.S. Chamber created really has stepped outside the box, benefitting frustrated jobseekers. The opportunity to polish and use the skills they have been refining during their job searches seemed to tremendously benefit participants. Jobseekers stated that the workshops along with the Job Fair was very informative and filled with quality job opportunities.

The American Legion’s National Veterans Employment & Education Division, through its relationships, continues to play a vital role in assisting American Legion Posts to produce successful Job Fairs, small business development workshops, and employment training services throughout America. In addition, the staff of the National Veterans Employment & Education Division is also involved in a number of advisory committees. Director Joseph Sharpe Jr. is a member of the Small Business Administration's Advisory Committee, and Deputy Director Mark Walker is a member of the Department of Veterans Affairs Homeless Veterans Advisory Committee.

Aside from advisory committees, The American Legion is also a stakeholder and active participant in numerous government agencies and private businesses’ veteran initiatives, where our input into their programs is highly valued. The American Legion has a representative on the Department of Labor’s Advisory Committee Veterans’ Employment, Training and Employer Outreach (ACVETEO) and Interagency Task Force on Veterans Small Business Development. Lastly, The American Legion participates in the Veterans’ Entrepreneurship’s Task Force (VET-FORC) business forums and the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau’s Service Member’s Affairs meetings.

Finally, in this 2016 Veteran Economic Opportunity Report focusing on the Veterans Economic Communities Initiative (VECI), VA provides a condensed update of the national portrait of the veteran population, and offers a framework for community based engagement. VECI was a pilot program offering tailored local support that improves veterans’ economic success in 25 of the most populated metropolitan areas across the country. Listed below are some key findings in the report.
• Much emphasis remains on transitioning servicemembers and assisting them in effectively utilizing their educational benefits. In 2010-2015, DOD separated an average of 309,000 servicemembers. 90 percent of them were enlisted.
• We have seen an increase in positive education outcomes of transitioning enlisted personnel. During the period of 2010-2015, enlisted transitioning servicemembers increased their 4-year college degree attainment to 7 percent from 3 percent.
• While the increase of educational attainment has increased for transitioning military, Post-9/11 GI Bill flexibilities also supports short term training, on-the-job training programs (OJT), and registered apprenticeships. These opportunities provide an opportunity for further exploration and education.
• 1 out of 4 Post-9/11 veterans are employed by the government industry (federal, state, local), followed by manufacturing, and professional and business services. While median income declined for the general population and veterans, both male and female veterans still trend significantly higher wages than their non-veteran counterparts.

Other Key Findings
• Post-9/11 era veterans attain 11 percent higher median earnings than non-veterans with similar demographic characteristics.
• The Post-9/11 GI Bill is key in improving the economic opportunity of veterans and their families.
• Women Veterans are doing well compared with their male and non-veteran female peers in both career earnings and education.
• Women Veterans attain 14 percent higher median earnings than non-veteran women with similar demographic characteristics.

Women Veterans using the Post-9/11 GI Bill had a 10 percent higher completion rate compared with male veterans for all ages combined, an 8 percent higher completion rate across all individual age groups, and a 5 percent higher completion rate when compared with female students in the general population cohort.

National Veterans Employment & Education Commission Forum
On Monday, February 27, the National Veterans Employment & Education Commission assembled in Jefferson West, Concourse Level, Washington Hilton Hotel, Washington D.C., to address education, employment and small business concerns regarding veterans and their families. The meeting started with an update from Colonel Adam Rocke, Director, Soldier for Life Program, on the data and trends of transitioning soldiers into the civilian workforce. The Soldier for Life Program connects Army, governmental, and community efforts to build relationships that facilitate successful reintegration of soldiers, retired soldiers, veterans and their families in order to keep them Army strong and instill their values, ethos and leadership within communities. Listed below are some of the data from Soldier for Life presentation.

• 250,000 servicemembers transition – 135,000 are Soldiers
• 60 percent of Soldiers are married
• 10 percent of enlisted retire; 30 percent of officers retire from the Army
• Army is 85 percent male
• 7 percent of enlisted have 4 year degree

1. The top 5 transitioning military specialties: 1) Infantry; 2) Quartermaster (Logistics); 3) Field Mechanics; 4) Engineers; and 5) Signal/Communications
3. The top 5 state transitions by the numbers: 1) Texas; 2) California; 3) Florida; 4) North Carolina; and 5) Georgia

Barbara Carson, Associate Administrator, Office of Veterans Business Development, Small Business Administration, briefed the commission on the multiple resources that are available for veteran entrepreneurs, such as the Institute for Veterans and Military Families at Syracuse University (IVMF) V-WISE program, Veterans Business Outreach Centers (VBOCs), Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs), SCORE chapters, and their roles in promoting veteran business. Ms. Carson also mentioned the statistics that veterans are 45 percent more likely to start a business than their civilian counterparts; consequently, 2.4 million, or 1 out of 10 small business in the United States are owned by veterans, and these veteran-owned small businesses have generated 1.2 trillion dollars in receipts within the last year.

In addition, Parisa Featherson, Program Manager, Personal & Professional Development, Marine & Family Programs, Marine Corps Community Services (MCCS), briefed the commission on the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) that Marines go through. The Marine TAP program includes an Employer Panel and Career Fair at the end of the TAP course, which the other service branches do not include. The Transition Readiness Seminar (TRS) has emerged from a one-time training event into a self-guided approach located at every Marine Corps installation delivered throughout a Marine’s military career. The Marine For Life Cycle model which begins at recruitment and is extended to veteran Marines, has now incorporated transition readiness action points across the Marines’ service to enable them to gather resources and information to align with their future goals and aspirations. The Marine For Life Cycle approach allows the Marine to meet required Career Readiness Standards prior to attendance at the TRS.

Furthermore, Robert Worley, Director, Education Service, VA, discussed the Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits and other educational benefits within the VA. He noted that as of February 23, VA issued $72.8 billion in Post-9/11 GI Bill benefit payments to 1,731,226 individuals since the program inception, August 2009. Mr. Worley also mentioned that a new law requires institutions to submit to the VA – no later than one year after enactment – an annual report on the academic progress of students receiving Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits. The VA will include this information in its annual reports to Congress. In addition, the threshold for compliance surveys has also changed. Now, the VA will need to conduct a compliance survey on institutions offering approved courses with at least 20 veterans of beneficiaries enrolled. Previously, the enrollment threshold was 300 veterans. The VA must survey each institution at least once every two years. Lastly, the commission hosted a corporate and public sector panel in order to discuss issues that may hinder veterans obtaining gainful employment as well as opportunities for them in high growth industries. Topics included: How Industry is leveraging veteran employees to recruit new veterans; Attracting older veterans (over 45) into the workforce; Outreach and Retention; Veterans’ Preference; Hiring Freeze; and Veterans getting into the Cyber-Security field.

The forum speakers included: Colonel Adam Rocke, Director, Soldier for Life Program, U.S. Department of Defense (DOD); Derek Fronabarger, Chief of Staff, Student Veterans of America (SVA); Linda Brooks-Rix, Co-Chief Executive Officer, AVUE Technologies; Timothy Green, Director, Office of Strategic Outreach Veterans’ Employment and Training Services (VETS), U.S. Department of Labor (DOL); Barbara Debbage, Foreign Service IT Recruiting Manager, U.S. Department of State; Edna Vega, Senior Recruitment Advisor, U.S. Department of State; Mark Escherich, Program Analyst, Veterans Recruitment & Hiring Programs, U.S. Transportation Security Administration (TSA); Hakeem Basheerud-Deen, Director, Veterans Services, Office of Personnel Management (OPM); Michael Michaud, Former Assistant Secretary, Veterans’ Employment and Training Services (VETS), U.S. Department of Labor (DOL); Thomas
Dawkins, Workforce Development & Education Director, Microsoft Corporation; Florent Groberg, Director, Veterans Outreach & the Eastern Region Community, The Boeing Company; Patrick O’Leary, Veterans Affairs Manager, United Parcel Service (UPS); Anthony Paolino, Military & Veterans Affairs Liaison, General Dynamics; and Heather Strawn, Senior Director of Federal Government Affairs, AbbVie, Inc.

VA’s downgrading of lower-level GS positions was discussed as well. The VA Police Officers have been targeted by the VA’s Chief Human Capital Officer (CHCO) and the CHCO’s subordinates for downgrade, VA-wide. VA believes that these police officers do not perform the same work as law enforcement officers, but instead, are primarily engaged in patrols and low level security details. Consequently, the CHCO believes these police officers should have no higher grade than GS-5, and currently, the grade is GS-6. In a study by federal HR experts, conducted independently from the VA, experts found this sentiment to completely mischaracterize the day-to-day work of the VA’s police force. Instead, the study found that the full-performance level of VA’s police officers actually warrant the grade of GS-7 in all locations where the following units are found:

- Medical Centers that provide in-house, inpatient, acute medical and surgical services
- Vet Centers that provide readjustment counseling and outreach services to all veterans who served in a combat zone.
- Domiciliary care for veterans who suffer from a wide range of medical, psychiatric, vocational, educational, or social problems and illnesses.

Furthermore, the study found no basis to downgrade or cap the grades of these positions on a universal basis. While certain facilities, such as Community Based Outreach Clinics (CBOCs), may not exceed GS-5, that grade would misclassify other VA police officer positions in other locations. VA police officers were found to perform police patrol work and crime and incident investigation. Contrary to the VA’s assertions, the study found that VA police officers were engaged in: responding to reports of crimes in progress; pursuing and apprehending offenders fleeing a crime scene or attempting to resist arrest; apprehending offenders and making judgments regarding the arrest, citation, or release of suspects/offenders; advising persons of their constitutional rights; advising employees of their Weingarten rights; conducting frisks and searches; responding to duress calls and interceding in physical assaults or other incidents clearly requiring police intervention to minimize the possibility of injury to all involved parties; subduing unruly individuals who pose a threat to the officer and other individuals; and subduing individuals through physical force and/or the use of non-lethal and lethal weapons, as the situation dictates.

Additionally, and with regard to crime and incident investigations, the following duties were identified:

- Conducting investigations in order to determine if a crime has been committed, identify and apprehend the perpetrator, and provide evidence to support a court conviction;
- Conducting initial discovery and response after being dispatched to the location of a crime scene;
- Completing the initial investigation, including the immediate post-crime activities as the responding police officer arriving on scene;
- Securing and processing accident, crime, and disaster scenes;
- Interviewing witnesses and questioning suspects at the scene;
- Searching the scene for evidence, collecting the evidence, and documenting the chain of custody of the evidence;
- Diagraming crime and accident scenes; and,
- Recovering, recording, and estimating the value of stolen and recovered goods, and transporting goods as evidence.

Based upon the information that the study found, there is no reason for VA to downgrade these police officer positions. In fact, at many locations, VA police officers
warrant a higher grade due to all of the additional duties required. VA police officers are
charged with maintaining order, protecting persons and property, and ensuring safety at
VA facilities. VA police officers need to be respected as such. The American Legion
strongly opposes the downgrading of VA police officer positions.

**Veteran Entrepreneurship**

The National Veterans Employment & Education Commission (along with the
Legion’s Small Business Task Force) conducted a Small Business Workshop on Friday,
February 24, at the Washington Hilton Hotel, Washington, D.C. Approximately 30
veterans and military spouses participated in this event. Participants traveled from as far
away as New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, as well as Maryland and Virginia.

The workshop, “Boots to Business Reboot”, was specifically designed for service
members, veterans, and spouses who own their own businesses or thinking of starting one.
The intensive entrepreneurship course was created by The American Legion in
collaboration with local small businesses such as Vets GSA LLC, Goldschmitt &
Associates LLC, and the National Veterans Small Business Coalition. The workshop
featured informative sessions presented by Charles McCaffrey, Director, Veterans
Business Outreach Center (VBOC), and National Capital Region. Topics at the workshop
included: Introduction to Business Ownership; Basics of Opportunity Recognition;
Understanding Markets and Competition; Small Business Economics; Picking the Right
Legal Entity for your Business; Financing your Business; Introduction to Business
Planning; and Business Resources.

Following the informational sessions, participants were invited to a networking
luncheon where they interacted with federal and private sector representatives. Our
commission understands that for many veterans, entrepreneurship is a viable option,
especially for those veterans who may find the job market tough to navigate. Consequently,
The American Legion recognizes how important it is that we assist and advocate on behalf
for our veterans who are self-employed. This is why The American Legion is one of the
few Veterans Service Organizations that have invested in tangible programs and services
for veteran entrepreneurs.

Additionally, our commission testified on behalf of the Veterans Business Outreach
Centers (VBOCs), funded by the Small Business Administration (SBA), and the positive
effect their programs have on veterans and military spouses. The veteran community’s
demand for entrepreneurial resources is outpacing the 20 VBOCs that’s funded throughout
the country. The average number of staff who conduct the day-to-day business of operating
a VBOC consists of two full-time counselors. The American Legion believes that if the
VBOCs were funded to the maximum capacity or were juggling less number of states
within their region – these centers would be able to meet the veteran demand for services.
Furthermore, this would allow the centers to expand their role in outreach to government
entities, and advocate for veteran-owned small businesses. The American Legion
recommends additional funding of $18 million for the SBA’s Office of Veteran Business
Development. Listed below are specific details of the funding purposes:

- Increase VBOC locations to 50 VBOCs to include Puerto Rico, while adding
  more staffing for advocacy work at the local level
- Increase funding for Boots to Business
- Develop a training program such as Boots to Business Reboot for established
  business owners to sustain, improve financial performance and expand their
  businesses
- Create a government wide Veteran Business Development Program for Service-
  Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Businesses (SDVOSBs) in Federal Contracting

The American Legion’s Small Business Task Force is a consortium of accomplished
veteran business owners who have volunteered to advise the Legion on legislative matters
that pertain to veteran businesses. The group of 30 members shares their experiences --
ranging from the public and private sectors -- to help inform the National Veterans Employment & Education Division on matters relating to federal contracting for veterans, procurement and other areas that affect veteran business owners.

**Home Loan Guaranty Program**

VA’s Home Loan Guaranty program has been in effect since 1944 and has afforded approximately 20 million veterans the opportunity to purchase homes. The Home Loan programs offer veterans a centralized, affordable and accessible method of purchasing homes in return for their service to this nation. The program has been so successful over past years that not only has the program paid for itself, but has also shown a profit in recent years. Administrative costs constitute a relatively small portion - less than 10 percent - of the total capital and operating costs. The predominant costs are claims costs and other costs associated with foreclosure and alternatives taken to avoid foreclosure. Each claim costs the federal government about $20,000. However, revenues that VA collects from different sources, including the funding fee that borrowers pay, property sales, and proceeds from acquired loans and vendee loans, offset this cost. In fiscal year 2016, the number of loans guaranteed through the program was 705,474. The average amount of the loan was $253,243.

In 1982, PL 97-253 was enacted and imposed a ½ percent funding fee (1/2 percent of the loan amount) on all veterans using the loan program, with the exception of those veterans in receipt of compensation for a service connected disability. This was considered to be a temporary measure to help reduce the national debt. Unfortunately, this fee has become a fixture of the home loan program and, even more unfortunately, it has been raised numerous times by Congress since 1982. Presently, veterans using the program for the first time pay 1.40 percent of the loan amount and those using it for a second time subsequently pay 2.15 percent.

Although veterans are permitted to include the fee in the loan amount, it constitutes an added financial burden. For example, a veteran using the program for the first time obtaining a $200,000 loan will pay $2,800. For a second time user the fee on this loan amount would be $4,300. While this is substantial in and of itself, it is even more significant when you consider the amount of interest the veteran will pay on these amounts as a 30 year mortgage is amortized.

The following persons are exempt from paying the funding fee:

- Veterans receiving VA compensation for service-connected disabilities.
- Veterans who would be entitled to receive compensation for service-connected disabilities if they did not receive retirement pay.
- Surviving spouses of veterans who died in service or from service-connected disabilities (whether or not such surviving spouses are veterans with their own entitlement or whether or not they are using their own entitlement on the loan).

The American Legion strongly urges Congress to consider either eliminating this fee or significantly reducing it. Veterans should not have to make such a significant financial sacrifice in order to use a benefit that they have earned as a result of their service to America.

**Veteran Homelessness**

On Tuesday, February 29, the National Veterans Employment & Education Commission hosted a homeless veterans site visit at the U.S.VETS facility in Washington, DC. With 21 residential sites and nine service centers in 13 cities across six states, Washington, DC, and the territory of Guam, U.S.VETS personnel go into local communities to find homeless veterans and guide them to crucial services. The range of
services includes housing and employment assistance, as well as access to veterans benefits and treatment for mental and/or physical disabilities and substance abuse.

On the site visit, The American Legion received a briefing from U.S.VETS about their programs and services. U.S.VETS is the nation’s largest nonprofit provider of comprehensive services to at-risk and homeless veterans. In addition, we had conversations with several veterans about the program and how helpful it has been in assisting them with becoming more independent and hopeful for the future. The American Legion’s Operation Comfort Warriors Program donated $4,800 worth of comfort items and necessities to the U.S.VETS facility during the tour. The in-kind donation was well received by U.S.VETS.

Since 2014, more than 880 mayors, governors, and other state and local officials have answered the call of the Mayors Challenge to End Veteran Homelessness, pledging to do all they can to ensure their communities succeed. And it’s working. A growing list of 50 communities, including the entire states of Connecticut, Delaware, and Virginia, have proven that ending veteran homelessness is possible and sustainable. As documented through the federal criteria and benchmarks, urban, suburban, and rural communities across 26 different states have proven that we can drive down the number of veterans experiencing homelessness to as close to zero as possible, while also building and sustaining systems that can effectively and efficiently address veterans’ housing crises in the future.

The national data tells the same story of remarkable progress. Thanks to unwavering commitment and partnership at the federal, state and local levels, we’ve seen veteran homelessness reduced by 47 percent in this country between 2011 and 2016 – including an extraordinary 17 percent reduction during 2015 alone – and achieved a 56 percent reduction in veterans experiencing unsheltered homelessness. Progress have been driven by urgent action at all levels of government and across all sectors. Federal agencies have engaged in unprecedented coordination and shared responsibility. Congress have expanded investments into federal programs, such as the HUD-VA Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) program and the Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) program, which provide a range of housing and services interventions. State and local entities and the philanthropic community have aligned investments with federal resources. Communities have formed stronger relationships to deploy those resources through best practices, including coordinated entry and Housing First approaches. And governors, mayors, and other public officials have mobilized their communities in support of a clear and ambitious goal to prevent and end veteran homelessness.

The American Legion continues to place special priority on the issue of veteran homelessness. With veterans making up approximately 11 percent of our nation’s total adult homeless population, there is plenty of reason to give the cause special attention. Along with various community partners, The American Legion remains committed to seeing VA’s goal of ending veteran homelessness come to fruition. Our goal is to ensure that every community across America has programs and services in place to get homeless veterans in housing (along with necessary healthcare/treatment) while connecting those at-risk veterans with the local services and resources they need.

AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY
National President
Mary E. Davis, Washington

My term as your president has been most rewarding. The 40 departments whose many units I have visited, to include overseas units, are working the American Legion Auxiliary mission. Throughout the year, I met dedicated members who saw what was needed and found ways to make things happen. What I have not found, across the board, is units creating innovative ways to engage the younger population of prospective young women.

During the year, American Legion National Commander Charles E. Schmidt and I worked in unison to meet members of the military overseas, encouraging them to join our organizations. Along the way, advice has been given twice, by members of the Armed
Forces, concerning engaging the military member. The path to embracing and employing that advice is ours to find.

The first advice was from a three-star Army general in Hawaii who said we must give prospective members two things: something unique -- give them something no one else has, which, I believe, we have with our wide array of programs -- and get younger members and allow them leadership positions. His very valid points, if taken to heart and worked, could net the ALA an entirely new face of the organization.

The second person to give advice was in Vermont: a Washington State Air Force lieutenant colonel. He said to listen to what the members of the Armed Forces and their families need from us to join our organizations. You need to find what interests them and what will get them to not only walk through the door, but keep them coming back. Do you see a theme here? Don’t think we know the answers; find and listen to young military families, develop a strategy to make the suggestions happen, then act.

These two individuals are excited about our mission, care to see our organization flourish and continue serving veterans and the Armed Forces, and want to see their troops engaged in activity serving fellow veterans.

This year, I saw the fruit of collaboration. VA therapists learned of a new innovative treatment for veterans with memory disorders, and units found a way to financially make this new form of therapy a reality by applying for American Legion Auxiliary Foundation grants to support the Music in Memory program. I also visited care centers for veterans which would give their caregivers a day or a few hours of free time. One such location was called the Vet Club. They help caregivers with support groups. Units were stepping up to provide donations on those facilities’ wish lists.

I truly believe our unit members are making a difference in communities around the globe. We should never consider our job completed, though, because there is so much more we could do to network, recruit, collaborate, evaluate what is needed, and most importantly, act and move forward in providing support.

Thank you for a wonderful, once-in-a-lifetime year of service. To all you hardworking members, your work enriches our country. Thank you for staying committed and making a difference in the lives of America’s veterans.

Vice President
Diane Duscheck, Wisconsin

What an honor to have been installed as vice president along with President Mary E. Davis at National Convention in Cincinnati. Throughout the year, Mary has encouraged pride in our organization, pride in our mission and accomplishments, and ALA Member Pride. Her unique perspective as a former service officer gave her insight into the special needs and challenges of veterans.

I have been privileged to represent the American Legion Auxiliary many times this year. At the opening gathering of the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival in Jackson, Miss., I welcomed participants to an exciting week of sharing their talents and learning new avenues of artistic expression in this premiere program that emphasizes the healing power of the arts.

Veterans Day in Indianapolis began with a formal ceremony on the steps of the Indiana War Memorial followed by a parade. National Secretary/Executive Director Mary “Dubbie” Buckler and I enjoyed sampling the fare at a chili cook-off in the veterans transitional housing center in downtown Indianapolis where veterans experiencing homelessness receive the guidance they need to help them become self-sufficient. I engaged in a conversation with a humble veteran who was thankful to have been in the facility for over a month.

What a privilege to be part of history, attending the Presidential Inauguration. The Veterans Inaugural Ball was attended by a host of Medal of Honor recipients who are proud...
to have served the citizens of the United States. Vice President Mike Pence and his wife Karen joined us to express their gratitude to veterans.

May brought graduation week to Annapolis Naval Academy, where I attended a demonstration of the elite Blue Angels flying team, viewed the precision of the Naval Color Parade, and participated in the midshipmen’s Awards Ceremony.

Preparation for the 2017-2018 year began early with financial forecasting, meeting with all ALA National Headquarters divisions, and membership planning. Current leadership partnered with National staff to develop a combined award/reporting coversheet for end-of-year reports to support a new scholarship opportunity designed to encourage Junior members to continue their membership, and to craft a 5-year action plan. In completing these projects, this team worked toward continuity for departments and units.

The Washington DC Conference was a great opportunity to evaluate veterans' needs and the programs and opportunities that exist for these warriors. Following the conference, briefings at The American Legion Family Washington offices allowed ALA leadership to obtain additional information about beneficial programs the Legion Family can work together for the good of veterans, military, and their families.

The National Chairmen's Meeting and Department Leadership National Conference provided professional development, established clear expectations, differentiated governance and management roles, and stressed the principles of servant leadership. Meetings and conference calls for Finance, ALA Foundation, Future Focus, and ALA Centennial Strategic Planning reinforced the essential mission of the ALA and the need and resolve of our organization. It was an honor representing you as your national vice president. I look forward to the future of a vital organization.

Secretary
Mary “Dubbie” Buckler, Indiana

We are over halfway through the American Legion Auxiliary 5-Year Centennial Strategic Plan. Everything we do at ALA National Headquarters (NHQ) is geared toward achieving the five goals adopted by the NEC. Staff members are volunteering their time alongside goal and strategy team members to ensure the ALA’s future.

Resourcing the Plan’s strategies requires investing in ourselves from our reserve funds and adopting the proposed dues structure to address our financial needs in a practical, respectful way. The findings of the ALA Organizational Effectiveness Survey are clear: members think our dues are modest to low; dues are not a factor in membership decline; we must improve organizational effectiveness to strengthen the ALA and develop good leadership at all levels (Goals 4 and 3); and we must improve our internal culture to make membership meaningful. Presentations on clarifying the roles of governance and management, civility, and fiduciary stewardship, plus the Department Secretary Organizational Effectiveness Training at ALA NHQ are all goal-centered successes.

We’re a big corporation. You can be proud that again, our external audits earned us the highest marks on our national finances, NHQ financial processes, federal grant compliance, Foundation finances, benefits, and the magazine. Proudly, your NHQ received stellar findings – and again, no criticism from regulatory or watchdog groups.

Big multi-year project achievements include adding updates to the ALA Department Operations Guide, the updated ALA Poppy Program Guide, additional ALA Branding Guide and PR Toolkit resources, and expanded Foundation resources. The many ALA-branded marketing resources, such as a 100th-year logo, banner and signage templates, can be downloaded and customized for local printing. All help to achieve Goal 5 – With The American Legion, Build Brand Loyalty – which requires increasing awareness. The Members Only area on the national website at www.ALAforVeterans.org has over 2,000 resource documents! The most popular: membership and scholarship applications and the Department Operations Guide.
The online dues renewal payment option continuously grows in popularity: 25% more members paid online or over the phone this year, saving time, plus it’s far more cost effective than mailing. The national website can be accessed by simply tapping an ALA icon on your tablet or smartphone. Now, over one-third of our website access comes via smartphones or mobile devices. ALA NHQ now has over 150,000 members’ email addresses, and the number of online users has increased 66% over three years. We thrive in a digital world. People can donate online, and new members can join online — it’s all about member empowerment and convenience!

The ALA Call to Service Corps AmeriCorps/VISTA Consortium grants expired in July 2017. After seven years, the ALA realized $4.4 million in grants to ALA NHQ from the Corporation for National Community Service (CNCS), resulting in the ALA placing over 300 ALA AmeriCorps VISTAs in some 60 ALA and external organizations. The program greatly expanded national awareness about the ALA. We received a new CNCS grant and just awarded 50 $1,000 grants for 9/11 Day of Service and Remembrance projects. We can also celebrate that we have over 80,000 donors, and half of our donations come from nonmembers!

We must foster an internal culture of goodwill (Goal 2) for the ALA to be around for future generations. Enhancing membership strength (Goal 1) by 2020 can happen if we succeed with the other four goals. Remember: Half of our new members drop out by year three because they aren’t enjoying the experience of belonging to the ALA. We must reverse that brutal fact. Members will renew only if they enjoy the experience of belonging or because they are so proud of what they see the ALA doing that they want to financially support it.

Treasurer

Marta Hedding, Indiana

It’s now been six years since the $4 adult (senior member) dues increase was adopted, and five years since it took effect. The organization’s FY13 and FY14 budgets were the first truly balanced budgets in a decade. But as our external auditor predicted, the dues increase was just a temporary fix; the FY15, FY16, and FY17 adopted budgets projected a deficit. The FY18 budget proposal projects a deficit of more than a quarter million dollars due to less dues income.

In FY12, dues income covered just 53% of expenses. In FY13, after the dues increase went into effect, dues still covered only 70%, and that percentage has dropped each year since. For FY18, dues are projected to cover just 60% of expenses.

The minimum cost to operate and deliver current NHQ services will be the same whether we serve 250,000 or one million members. Looking ahead, we must:

1. Immediately reverse the membership decline: Membership is more than 20,000 behind this time last year -- more than 83,000 less than in 2013 when the last dues increase went into effect. It will take dues from an additional 29,000 adult members to cover the projected FY18 deficit.

2. Fulfill our fiduciary responsibility by adjusting our dues structure this year so that each year we can sufficiently fund our budgets annually adopted by the NEC:
   • Increase senior dues by $3 and Junior dues by $1.25, effective in the 2019 membership year.
   • Thereafter as justified, periodically make nominal indexed increases not to exceed 4%, approved by the NEC through the ALA budget proposal process.

The ALA Organizational Assessment revealed that members think our dues are low, and dues are not a factor in membership growth. The ALA Centennial Strategic Plan is all about where we must be by 2020 to ensure our mission endures for another generation. Our survival depends on our success at enhancing membership strength. With the cost of national meetings and events rising each year, and more members wanting “online, on-
demand resources,” we must look at more cost-effective ways to engage and support members of all ages and walks of life.

As our growth in website traffic attests, we can utilize online resources and learning tools to engage and inform more members from all generations. Everything in the Centennial Strategic Plan requires technology in some way. We have vastly improved technical capabilities the past seven years and continue our digital drive in ways that benefit more members. The ALA Management Information System (ALAMIS) serves an ever-growing number of users at the department, district, and unit levels, nearly 2,000 users. Through the Members Only area on the national website, tied to ALAMIS, members can update their personal information. This year, 25% more members paid 2017 renewal dues online than in 2016. Now, new members can join online – nearly 500 so far! The latest: The first of several online training courses for members at all levels of the organization are now available, with more being rolled out over the next year.

This leap in technical functionality has enabled us to be more efficient and cost-effective in many ways. We can do more with technology to save time and resources for the entire organization, and provide an improved experience for our members!

Because the NHQ lease expires in 2018, NHQ, the national Finance Committee, and the Executive Committee to the NEC have researched all options including building, buying a building, or continuing to lease. Recognizing that a new 10-year lease is equivalent to the cost to buy and maintain a permanent NHQ building, it makes more fiduciary sense to purchase a suitable property now rather than lease at increasing rates.

American Legion Auxiliary Foundation
Linda Boone, Oregon, Board of Directors President

The American Legion Auxiliary has been dedicated to giving back to our veterans, whether through service, donations, or awareness, since its founding nearly 100 years ago. The American Legion Auxiliary Foundation (ALAF) helps ensure our worldwide mission of service to veterans, military, and their families by funding programs of the American Legion Auxiliary today and for future generations.

In alignment with the Auxiliary’s Centennial Strategic Plan, the ALAF is working on accomplishing goals within our own strategic plan, including increasing philanthropic support by growing the donor base and increasing funds raised.

In its ninth year, the ALA Foundation awarded more than $70,000 in grants to ALA entities, grew the mission endowment fund to over $900,000, and provided the National Organization with over $52,000 in support of mission-centric programs. The ALAF Board of Directors called and wrote to more than 500 donors, had over 85 personal conversations about planned giving in conjunction with the ALA national president’s promotions during her department visits, and made countless connections educating members and nonmembers about who we are and why we matter.

Because of your generous support, the ALAF awarded grants for emergent needs to units and departments through the Veteran Projects Fund to:

- Department of Illinois: $2,584 to purchase computers, lawn equipment, and patio furniture for Spring Street Veterans Renaissance, a veterans-only transitional home, allowing veterans to reintegrate into society with the necessary tools for success.
- Unit 28, Department of Delaware: $4,800 for six guitars and six Android tablets with lesson software plus an instructor who will provide 16 one-on-one classes for residents at Home of the Brave, in Milford, Del. The goal is to build self-assurance and esteem for those veterans dealing with post-traumatic stress disorder and other mental challenges using music education to help as a coping mechanism.

The ALA Foundation awarded the following local Veterans Creative Arts Festival mini grants:
• Department of Vermont: $2,500 for printing, postage, promotional materials, and art kits.
• Department of Iowa: $2,500 for art supplies, promotional materials, and awards.
• Unit 1, Department of Washington, D.C.: $2,500 for rental space, art supplies, promotional materials, veteran transportation, and awards.

By using the ALA Foundation’s IRS 501(c)(3) status, we assisted these American Legion Auxiliary entities with sub grants:
• Unit 222, Department of California: $5,000 for improvements to their meeting space.
• ALA National Headquarters: $25,000 to support the *Women of the Holocaust* film project.
• Department of Oregon: $25,000 for ALA Oregon Girls State.

This year has been busy with the continued development of the ALA Foundation’s Board of Directors, progression of our grants, and growth of the Mission Endowment Fund. We have made significant strides, and, with your help, we can continue to mature and ultimately ensure the American Legion Auxiliary’s mission of service endures.

To learn how you can contribute, apply for a grant, or read about those we serve, visit www.ALAFoundation.org.

**Chaplain**

Valerie Brown-Debro, Georgia

What a mighty God we serve. The first four words of our Preamble are “For God and Country.” If it wasn’t for God, we wouldn’t have a country. For God so loved this world that He gave His only begotten son. What are you willing to give? American Legion Auxiliary chaplains are an extension of God’s angels – sharing and spreading His Love around the nation. Our chaplains are prayer warriors for our veterans, active military, their families and communities – serving others and not self.

Just as soldiers in the Army of the Lord, our chaplains put on the full armor of God to get equipped for the battlefield. Praying for one another in our own faith and beliefs — walking by faith and not by sight; walking in integrity, in love and honor. We encouraged our chaplains to trust in the Lord with all of their hearts and lean not unto their own understanding, acknowledging Him in all of our ways and He shall direct their path. What a humbling experience: God’s servants serving together for the good of the American Legion Auxiliary!

Our members attended the Chaplains Conference. There, we shared God’s word, His purpose, plan, and will for our lives. We discussed who chaplains are and when we pray. We participated in Veterans Day, Independence Day, and Memorial Day programs, and sent prayers for National President Mary E. Davis’s Prayer Book. We engaged in social media postings of prayer requests, agreement in unity. During Christmas, I sent every department chaplain a card enclosed with a heart-shaped pin that read, “God is Love.”

Here are highlights of a several reports received:
• California: During a memorial service, members lit a candle for each branch of service with a patriotic angled ribbon on the bottom. Each person who participated wore a scarf to match the ribbons.
• New York: One of our units with the Legion Family and local police placed 2,000 carnations on the gravesites on Memorial Day.
• Georgia: While visiting the state, National President Mary visited the gravesite of Moina Michael -- the Poppy Lady -- and laid a wreath while a member read the poem “In Flanders Fields.” On Memorial Day, members launched a poppy anchor at Tybee Island in remembrance of our fallen servicemembers.
• New Mexico: An online prayer chain was used to communicate with members.
• South Dakota: Prayer pillows, which had pockets on the front stuffed with business card-sized prayers, were made. National President Mary came to visit in April. During her visit, members spent a few hours sewing and stuffing pillows. The next day, they took the pillows to two different VA facilities, and every veteran received a pillow.
• Tennessee: A luncheon recognizing 22 Gold Star Mothers was held. The Gold Star Mothers were given cards and gifts.
• Louisiana: With the theme “Welcome to Flight 2016-2017,” chaplains prepared to take off.
• Nebraska: Toy soldiers were made and given out to take homes as a reminder to pray for our veterans.

Reports Received: ........................................ 31
Members participating: .................................. 8,899
Hours reported: ............................................ 10,750
Grace cards: ............................................... 1,033
Condolences: ............................................. 1,630
Get well: .................................................... 2,890
Cards: ...................................................... 10,906
Deceased: .................................................. 1,393
Monetary donations: .................................... $101,994

Thank you for praying together for me and with me, God and country.

Historian
Coral May Grout, Massachusetts

“History is who we are and why we are the way we are,” according to David McCullough. How applicable this quotation is to our organization!

The historian’s role at every level is vital. Maintaining our history allows us to appreciate our past, understand our present, and build our future. Although five departments were unable to fill the department historian position this year, members ensured that their activities were reported.

Goal champions and strategy captains of the ALA Centennial Strategic Plan gathered in Indianapolis to review their strategies, make adjustments to the collective 150 initiatives underway, and plan for the next 12 months of implementation.

National President Mary E. Davis and her husband traveled to the Far East. The visit began in Hanoi, where there was a tour of historical relics of Hoa Lo Prison, Hanoi, Tuc Back Lake, the John McCain Monument, and the Vietnam Museum of Military History. They met with American Legion Family members and toured Manila. The next stop was in Okinawa for meetings and a tour. The visitation to Seoul, Korea, included events sponsored by two posts with dinner, entertainment by the Korean Traditional Fan Dancers, and gifts to The American Legion national commander and ALA national president. They visited the U.S. Embassy. The group continued to Guam and Andersen Air Force Base. President Mary’s final stop was with the Department of Hawaii. She toured Pearl Harbor and enjoyed traditional Hawaiian food.

Six ALA Mission Training sessions were offered. Attendance at all sessions increased over the previous year. National division vice presidents hosted the sessions. All vice presidents also visited many departments within their divisions for one or more days.

In Oklahoma, wildfires extensively damaged the western part of the state. The department assisted the Midwest Ranch Restoration to benefit communities ravaged by flames. Members raised more than $1,000 to purchase and serve food for workers.

Rhode Island received a $5,000 grant from CVS to provide dental assistance to veterans. One veteran had already received one complete set of dentures.
In Idaho, members held a “Souper Bowl”. Members made their favorite soups for competition. Patients at the veterans homes selected the winning soups. The department adopted the Mountain States Tumor Institute (MSTI) and held a Toy Barn at their mid-winter meeting. All types of toys for all ages, along with financial contributions, were delivered to the hospital for children undergoing treatment.

South Carolina’s Auxiliary raised more than $1,200 for disaster relief. Members also collected items to distribute to families flooded out of their homes during the October floods.

In Pennsylvania, 11 Legion and Auxiliary members, including the department president and department commander, visited 16 VA hospitals and traveled more than 1,300 miles. They had a very worthwhile visit, speaking with many hospitalized veterans.

I encourage you to read this year’s history once it is completed. Perhaps it will inspire you to document your unit or department activities or even provide you with some terrific ideas to show your communities who we are, what we do, and why it matters.

**Central Division National Vice President**

*Carollee Junge, Illinois*

It has been an honor to serve the American Legion Auxiliary in 2016-2017 as the Central Division national vice president. I could not have asked for any greater opportunity than to represent members from the departments of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Missouri, Ohio, West Virginia, and Wisconsin at the national level of this great organization.

My travels to departments in Central Division began after the holidays. These visits offered me an opportunity to share National President Mary E. Davis’s focus on ALA Member Pride and her goals of encouraging members to get back to the basics of the American Legion Auxiliary.

When I visited departments, it was very apparent that department leaders are doing their very best to remind members that we are an organization with the mission of supporting and giving aid to veterans, military, their families, children and youth, and communities.

Department visits included mid-winter conferences, spring conferences, Poppy programs, veterans homes, VA facilities, Truman Day, the ALA Girls State Program, and conventions. New ideas were tried as the programs were presented to membership. Chairmen were very informed about their program. They had materials available for members to take back to their units. Each department had a unique way of supporting programs raising and donating dollars, as well as time to promote the programs.

The departments were equal as they served veterans, military, and their families in many different ways, which all related to the American Legion Auxiliary mission. Each will outline their achievements in their reports.

Membership challenges between districts within the departments were issued. Enthusiasm abounded among the members as they received information about the 2016-2017 programs.

I gained a new respect for our devoted volunteers. These volunteers may not be young in years, but they are young at heart – and they give their devotion to veterans and their families. Volunteers are the spirit and heart of the American Legion Auxiliary. Volunteers enable VA facilities and veteran homes to supply comfort items and smiles to patients on a regular basis.

The friendliness of members across the Central Division earned them a well-deserved positive reputation. How do you explain the camaraderie felt when American Legion Auxiliary members join together for a meeting or project? The devotion of members to the purpose of our organization is unsurpassed.
Branding does pay off. At one of the visits, we stopped for lunch, and when we asked for the check, the waitress informed us that the gentleman across from us had paid our bill. He left before we knew and we were unable to thank him.

It has been a great honor to serve this year as Central Division national vice president. I will always treasure the memories and friendships I acquired through my visits and travels across the great Central Division.

Eastern Division National Vice President
Patricia “Patti” Lach, Maryland

American Legion Auxiliary members of the Eastern Division worked very hard to reach their membership goals. At the time of this writing, the Eastern Division was No. 1!

The Department of Maine reached 100 percent membership in May! Their membership focused on “Being a Super Hero to Someone Today” and was effective, memorable, and something members could embrace and have fun with.

Many departments concentrated on our youth. Units in Massachusetts and Pennsylvania filled backpacks with school supplies for military children, donated many supplies to schools, volunteered in local schools, and worked with their Juniors.

Departments included Juniors in their program activities. The Juniors of Connecticut visited veterans, distributed poppies, placed flags on veterans’ graves, and learned leadership skills.

The ALA Girls State Program strives to prepare girls to be good and productive citizens. New York’s department president spoke with citizens of ALA Empire Girls State daily about Auxiliary programs, our mission, and membership opportunities.

Vermont members concentrated on building brand loyalty. They wore ALA-branded clothing in their communities, unit homes, and at VA medical centers.

Delaware and New Jersey, as well as others, submitted applications and received grants from the ALA Foundation for their VA homes. The District of Columbia coordinated the Holiday Gift Shop for veterans at the DC VA Medical Center. Members volunteered many hours throughout the year.

Art is a form of therapy for veterans. Maryland provided the perfect venue for many veterans to showcase their talents at the annual Creative Arts Festival.

Rhode Island participates in Wreaths Across America and holds a ceremony every year – rain, snow, or shine – to honor its veterans.

Each September, a week after the anniversary of 9/11, New Hampshire holds a Spirit of the Eagle POW/MIA 24-hour vigil.

I think it is safe to say the Eastern Division worked with Service Not Self in mind! It was a privilege and pleasure to serve Eastern Division members. Thank you for the memories, friendships, and courtesies extended to me.

Northwestern Division National Vice President
Virginia Nelsen, Nebraska

Northwestern Division, you have held the line in membership for nine months. Your enthusiasm for what you do is exceptional. Through the American Legion Auxiliary, each of you made a difference for the better in someone’s life every day.

Colorado Department President Evelyn Espinoza put the focus on who, what, and why the Auxiliary matters, bringing membership in at 87 percent.

Minnesota, a steamroller of Auxiliary productivity, succeeded in membership too. Leading by excellent example was Department President Carol Kottom.

Montana Department President Jeanette Bossen was proud that so many units reached 100 percent membership and that the department is currently at 97 percent!
Nebraska focused on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation, Poppy, Americanism, and Membership, which is 90 percent. Department President Debra Albers’ able leadership fostered an attitude of fun while taking care of our veterans.

North Dakota Department President Diane Kraemer reported the department’s pride in members’ dedication to veterans, active duty military, Guard members, and their families.

South Dakota Department President Melanie Martens’ superb leadership was built around teamwork and friendship. They had good dynamics to succeed at anything, and membership is currently at 94 percent.

Wyoming Department President Sonja Wright took pride in the work units did to aid veterans. Fellowship and commitment were keys to members’ success.

Even with two departments yet to visit, it’s important that you know what pleasure and fulfillment my visits have brought me.

My sincere heartfelt congratulations on your hard work to promote love of country plus service to veterans, community, and children and youth.

Southern Division National Vice President
Beverly Mulkey, Arkansas

In October 2016, I traveled to Mississippi to help support the department as members hosted the Creative Arts Festival in the department’s hospitality room. It was organized perfectly by members who worked in shifts throughout the weekend. We also helped with checking veterans in to their meal times. The fellowship between volunteers and veterans in the hospitality room was fun; they enjoyed a sing-along with a veteran who brought his guitar for everyone's enjoyment. Of course, the performances on Sunday were outstanding.

The Department of Virginia was "Wrapping Our Treasures in Service." Their treasures included their members, who the department praised for supporting the ALA mission. I enjoyed the department’s membership breakfast before the opening of their conference, where their Membership chairman and zone vice presidents held a Praises and Bow & Scarf Fashion Show. Membership awards were given for achieving goals. During the conference, all committee chairs gave reports about service to veterans and their families.

The Department of Florida's Fall Conference included breakout sessions for all ALA programs. Chairmen moved among the audience groups, discussing their program with all members. A most inspiring young woman, a captain in the military, was invited as a speaker to the conference. The captain discussed her Final Salute project, a heartfelt project that deals with housing for homeless women veterans and their families. There was not a dry eye at the conference as a parade of checks was presented to the captain for approximately $10,000.

In the Department of Georgia, The American Legion Family visited the Georgia War Nursing Home and the Uptown and Downtown VAs in Augusta. All members of the Legion Family visited with the director of each facility, raising questions and concerns on behalf of the hospitalized veterans. It was very rewarding that the director was so accommodating. We were able to visit with a few of the veterans and give them small gifts. We visited four different posts where fun and fellowship were primary. At all events, we were escorted to our next destination by their contingent of American Legion Riders.

I attended Mission Training in Atlanta, where the facilitators did an excellent presentation of all Auxiliary programs. The attendees there enjoyed it very much. The Juniors were also meeting and holding their election, so I was able to bring greetings to them. I also attended the Washington DC Conference, toured the Vietnam Wall, and attended the Commander's Testimony before Congress.

The Department of Mississippi held a mini-conference for ALA Girls State and then opened its conference. Many chairmen gave their reports, and a fundraiser was done for the Auxiliary Emergency Program. Membership was a focal point. The chairmen spoke of
many, many hours of service to veterans, including activities at VA facilities and sending care packages to our troops.

In the Department of Kentucky, I was honored to cross paths with National President Mary E. Davis and enjoyed our weekend with department officers and members. Their chairmen gave inspiring reports of all of their work for veterans and membership. It was a treat to join Juniors in making treat bags for firefighters and police officers. The Juniors delivered their items while senior members continued their meeting.

I want to thank each and every department I visited for their kindness and hospitality. It has truly been a rewarding experience for me to see all of the hours and dedication given to the ALA in Service Not Self ... southern style!

Western Division National Vice President
Cary Fisher, Utah

I was honored to represent the Western Division as national division vice president this year. The Western Division, home of National President Mary E. Davis, embraced her focus on ALA Member Pride.

Thank you to the departments I visited for your hospitality and friendship. You showed me that we need to put some fun back into our Auxiliary. You introduced me to Simon Sinek and made me really think about What is My Why.

The Western Division made big strides in achieving our membership goals and will continue to do so. Members kept ALA Centennial Strategic Plan Goal 1 as a focus for our future.

All Auxiliary members of the Western Division worked to make a difference in their communities. The Department of Idaho was honored by the Idaho State Legislature with a designation of American Legion Family Youth Programs Day. Members supported the Soldiers Best Friend project for service/companion dogs for veterans with Traumatic Brain Injury or Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

Members obtained a grant from the American Legion Auxiliary Foundation to help construct a gazebo for veterans at Fort Bayard. Poppy puppies made from washcloths were popular with veterans at the Central Utah Veterans Home. All Western Division departments had Christmas Gift Shops, food drives for VA facilities, and volunteered at various VA medical centers, homes, and clinics.

Money was raised toward a fountain for a relaxation garden at Joint Base Lewis-McChord. Members crocheted sleeping mats using plastic grocery bags.

Workshops and conferences were held to help our Juniors learn about the Auxiliary’s mission. ALA Girls State sessions were held, including a session in Hawaii.

The Western Division continues its support of the mission of the American Legion Auxiliary.

Americanism Committee
Sue Britton, New York, Chairman

Members across the nation demonstrated time and again how true patriots exemplified and instilled a valued sense of patriotism and responsible citizenship. Our teachings reached out through the unit activity of our valuable members.

This year, the Americanism Committee work included flag etiquette education with folding and disposal ceremonies. We worked with Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts, home-schooled children, and members of the JROTC. We distributed Flag Code and etiquette pamphlets, pins, bookmarks, stickers, comic books, rulers, coloring books, and flag books in local libraries. Units shared the national ALA In the Know eBulletin on the prohibition of cutting stars from flags. In Mississippi, a unit donated $500 for a state-of-the-art flag disposal facility at a post. Units continued to promote the Pocket Flag Project.
The Americanism Essay Contest was promoted in schools by means of flyers, personal visits, and social media. Winners of the contest received certificates and special recognition. One unit in Kentucky received 160 entries from one school, and Maryland judged 1,666 entries.

Units shared the national list of patriotic holidays. The use of social media and PSAs heightened awareness of these events. Members also went the literal extra mile by participating in parades and color guards, and decorating post rooms in red, white, and blue.

Momentum continues in support of the Flag Amendment through the use of social media, letters, and personal visits to our representatives. The topic was used for Memorial Day speeches and department visits.

Naturalization ceremonies included the distribution of flags, pins, and etiquette pamphlets. The importance of volunteer impact was evident when 265 volunteers from Monroe County in New York welcomed 625 new citizens with flags at naturalization ceremonies.

Members supported the Americanism programs of The American Legion by assisting the Oratorical Contests with donations of prize funds and refreshments, and serving as judges/escorts. Members supported The American Legion’s baseball teams by raising funds for uniforms, providing concession assistance, coaching, and raising money for scholarships to players. We assisted with Shooting Sports through promotion, event planning, and serving as certified Shooting Sports coaches.

Promoting Americanism within our communities is contagious. Patriotism was shared via social, print, and broadcast media. We provided education about when flags are to be flown at half-staff, shared patriotic skits, incorporated the Star Spangled Kids Program into the Americanism Program, wore patriotic clothing/jewelry, and even dressed like patriotic historical figures, including Betsy Ross, George Washington, and Uncle Sam.

Due to the 2016 Presidential election, "Get Out the Vote" was widely promoted. Members voted, registered new voters, worked the polls, distributed "I Voted" stickers, offered rides, held "Meet Your Candidate" events, and held mock school elections to highlight the importance of voting.

Our mission offers us the opportunity to serve our communities by acting as role models to instill the founding principle of Americanism in our citizens of all ages, and our Preamble guides us to "Foster and Perpetuate a 100% Americanism" as we approach our 100th year of volunteerism.

Audit Committee
Pamela Jackson, Ohio, Chairman

The National Audit Committee serves as the Audit Committee for the American Legion Auxiliary and the American Legion Auxiliary Foundation as prescribed by the National Audit Committee Charter adopted by the National Executive Committee (NEC) in 2010.

The Audit Committee purposefully operates at arm’s length from the rest of the organization to ensure an unbiased approach to performing its duties and functions in a conscientious and effective manner and conducts business primarily via emails and conference calls with one face-to-face meeting per year. The meetings consist of planning the audit schedule; engaging a qualified independent external audit firm; examining the annual consolidated financial audits for the Auxiliary and Foundation; reviewing the IRS 990 reports; assessing policies; conducting a risk management exercise; and training.

The committee is comprised of outstanding professionals with expertise in public risk assessment audits and with appropriate backgrounds for fulfilling responsibilities to this organization and its governing board. This year’s five-member committee consists of Nicole Clapp (IA), representing the national Finance Committee for the first part of the year, succeeded by retired CPA and dual-member Helen Riedlinger (SD); Marybeth Revoir
(IL), representing the American Legion Auxiliary Foundation; and the three members confirmed by the NEC: Paula Means (IN); Carol Barbknecht (MN); and Chairman Pamela Jackson (OH).

The Audit Committee engaged Alerding CPA Group Inc., a specialist in nonprofit organizations, to conduct the FY16 audit. The Financial Statements were presented in accordance with accounting principles and audited with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America. The reports were then presented to the National Finance and Executive Committees. The Report to Governance was “clean” with no significant findings. The FY16 Audit was duly accepted by the NEC.

The Audit Committee also thoroughly reviewed the Internal Revenue Service 990 reports prepared by the external auditor for both the National Headquarters and the Foundation. The IRS 990 serves as the American Legion Auxiliary’s annual report to the federal government and to the public. The reports are quite lengthy and serve as documentation that the American Legion Auxiliary operates in a manner consistent with the purpose identified and detailed in the IRS regulations. The 990 provides information to the IRS that demonstrated that the Auxiliary is in compliance with all federal regulations so as to maintain a tax-exempt status. In keeping with the expectations for transparency by the IRS, the reports are posted on the American Legion Auxiliary website upon approval.

The external auditor, once again, complimented the American Legion Auxiliary National Headquarters management staff and organization for outstanding financial operations and a stellar audit. The National Organization may be very proud of the above-standard outcome of spending 90 percent of every dollar on our mission and purpose. The national leadership is to be commended for ensuring that the budget is sound, frugal, and well-monitored. The national staff is to be highly praised and admired for its professionalism and knowledge in preparation of the annual in-depth audit. Much appreciation is extended to all involved in this vital and monumental task.

Besides overseeing the annual audit, the Audit Committee also serves in a risk management role and ensures that the ALA, as a corporate entity, has appropriate governance policies with internal and financial reporting controls that mitigate the organization’s policies, standards, compliance, and potential for risk. We are happy to report that National Headquarters, again, has not received any accusations of fraud and no conflicts of interest have been disclosed. The files for compliance are up to date for all those required to submit.

The national Audit Committee appreciates the knowledge and expertise of the Alerding CPA Group and recognizes, with gratitude, the efficiency and dedication of our national staff. May we all continue to enhance the lives of our veterans, military, and their families, in the spirit of Service Not Self, for generations to come.

Auxiliary Emergency Fund Committee
Lisa Williamson, Alaska, Chairman

As you can imagine, the ALA 5-Year Centennial Strategic Plan encompasses all American Legion Auxiliary programs, including the Auxiliary Emergency Fund.

Two of the Strategic Plan goals — Goal 5: With The American Legion, Build Brand Loyalty, and Goal 1: Enhance Membership Strength — were the focus this year as the AEF provided temporary financial assistance to members in need.

The AEF Committee undertook Goal 5 by featuring an ALA In The Know eBulletin series, promoting dozens of new and different ways to raise funds for the AEF — some that take months of planning and others that can be completed in a day. Those eBulletins also featured stories from grant recipients that demonstrated how the AEF helps our members.

Working with Goals 1 through 5, the ALA’s Goal 1 of enhancing membership is realized. Unit members were successful in combining membership and the AEF in a variety of ways.
For instance, the Department of Wyoming held a fundraiser, “Drawing for a Free 2018 Senior Auxiliary Membership.” For a $5 donation, entrants would receive six entries with the possibility of winning a year’s membership dues. Units promoted information about the department drawing, including one unit that sent the fundraising information to members with their 2017 membership card. By Christmas, the drawing had raised $525. This fundraiser was so successful, they did it again; the drawing was held at their department convention. Funds raised above the cost of the two memberships were contributed to the AEF!

As a reminder, one eligibility requirement when applying for an AEF grant is that the applicant must have been an ALA member for at least the immediate past two consecutive years and their current membership dues should be paid at the time the emergency occurs (three consecutive years’ dues). By stressing the AEF as a benefit of membership, Wyoming tied the AEF and membership, ultimately embodying Goal 1. And what an exciting and fun way to do it!

One unit in Alabama held a similar fundraiser, giving away a year’s membership to the lucky winner and money raised over the cost of membership also went to AEF.

In a similar fundraiser done in Arizona, a unit offered small Christmas cacti and aloe vera plants (complete with soil and pots) at public events, remembering to use the ALA brand. All proceeds went to the AEF. But the real winner was the ALA. By offering these branded items within the community, the ALA offered opportunities to encourage new membership.

We can be proud that we made a difference to our members — members helping members, or as our National President Mary E. Davis would say, “ALA Member Pride.”

Children & Youth Committee
Nicole Clapp, Iowa, Chairman

This year, American Legion Auxiliary members demonstrated daily pride in protecting, caring for, and supporting our children and youth — particularly those of veterans and military families. Departments used their own creativity and generosity to carry out the Auxiliary’s motto of Service Not Self in countless ways on the path to achieving Goal 5, With The American Legion, Build Brand Loyalty, of the Centennial Strategic Plan. In shaping our future leaders, the American Legion Auxiliary focused on educating youth. Children learned about being a “Star Spangled Kid” through education on the history of the United States, the U.S. Constitution, and flag etiquette — all especially during a presidential election and inauguration year. New York members brought back the cartoon School House Rocks: Constitution Preamble as a fun way of learning.

Divisions focused on what is important to today’s youth, while keeping in mind their safety and security. Annual safe Trunks with Treat events, Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter parties delighted children and youth of all ages. Units collaborated with area school districts and social service departments across the country to identify children who are the silent victims of neglect, abuse, and bullying. Assistance was provided with the distribution of The American Legion’s Bridging the Gap comic books. An even greater task was the physical care of children by supporting their basic human needs with tangible items such as food, health care, supplies, and shelter. These items were distributed through the Sleep Train, Project Linus, Dignity Bags, and the Children’s Organ Transplant Association (COTA) initiatives. Eighteen-year-old Drew Moffitt of Twin Falls, Idaho, and his pet alpaca, Sprite, visited healthcare centers as a method of pet therapy.

Just as important was addressing our children’s emotional needs through support with the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS). Children and animals have a natural connection. Josh Dogs and Klinger the Horse were welcomed sights when presented to our military children. Additional emphasis centered on the Military Child Table Setting Ceremony, performed countless times across America, which reminded
individuals that Kids of Deployed are Heroes 2 (KDH2) and to “Purple Up” for military kids during April.

Units recognized our young citizens’ heroic and generous efforts of Service Not Self with Youth Hero and Good Deed awards. Thirteen Youth Hero Awards were presented this year. One of the recipients was Wyatt Cahoy, age 15, from South Dakota. Wyatt managed to stop a school bus when the driver suffered a fatal heart attack. Across the country so far this year, 113 youth were honored with Good Deed Awards.

Not a day went by this year without Auxiliary units carrying out events and activities related to the Children & Youth Program’s three objectives: Support Children and Youth in Your Community, Support Military Children and Youth, and Support Veterans’ Children and Youth.

**Community Service Committee**  
**Carol Edwards, South Dakota, Chairman**

As we embark on the 100th anniversary of the American Legion Auxiliary, we continue to battle a concept that has existed for decades: People do not know who we are, what we do, or why we matter. Through Community Service, we can increase our visibility by working with other organizations and spread awareness of our service to veterans, servicemembers, their families, and the community. And this year, we have done very well!

The Community Service Committee challenged members to become the go-to organization when the community was in need of support, assistance, or organization skills. Units and members conducted blood drives, worked election booths, rang bells for the Salvation Army, and assisted with suicide prevention programs.

The Departments of Mississippi, Wisconsin, Arkansas, and others saw terrible disasters this year, including floods, fires, blizzards, and tornadoes. American Legion posts with generators opened their posts as emergency shelters, and the Auxiliary was there to lend support, food, and comfort to victims. Hot meals were served, showers were available, and volunteers had a place to retreat to.

Reagan Junge, a Junior member of Keystone Unit 107 in Iowa, operates her own nonprofit, which buys items to give to those less fortunate. For the past six years, Unit 107 has provided aid to families who are victims of natural disasters.

Members were also challenged to flaunt ALA Member Pride. Becoming more visible as an organization means we need to focus on brand identity. Some departments’ members who wore ALA shirts and nametags were rewarded with gift certificates to American Legion Flag & Emblem Sales — what a great idea!

The department president of Texas used a theme — “Bee-Lieve in Our Mission.” The membership theme was “Buzzin’ for Members.” Shirts with the membership theme on the back drew a lot of attention at every event, and members were ready with applications!

Thousands of meals were served or packaged for families to prepare during Thanksgiving and Christmas. Toiletries were donated in the form of Blessing Bags, School Back Packs, and Socks of Love, just to name a few. These items were distributed through food banks, schools, and emergency medical personnel.

Unit 41 of Oregon President Dani Huck said it best: “Recruiting community volunteers is very easy when we are all prepared and everyone has all the information available to them. We are infectious when we are happy and engaged with a project. People ask us what we are doing and get involved.”

By working together and demonstrating ALA Member Pride, we become community leaders and we fulfill our commitment to our veterans, servicemembers, and their families.
Constitution & Bylaws Committee
Vickie Koutz, Indiana, Chairman

At the beginning of this American Legion Auxiliary year, units received the Programs Action Plan, which included guidelines, ideas, resources, definitions of resolutions and amendments, and how-to sheets.

The plan also explained what our Constitution & Bylaws Program is and why we have it:

“The Constitution & Bylaws Program informs and educates members of the American Legion Auxiliary on the importance and power of properly written, reviewed and updated documents, policies and procedures at all levels. Constitution & Bylaws are the basis for governance of your department, district, county, and unit. Preparing and adhering to updated Constitution, Bylaws, and Standing Rules will ensure a more successful organization proves and provides the structures to follow at all levels of our organization.”

Robert’s Rules of Order, Newly Revised is the parliamentary authority for our organization.

The Code of Ethics was front and center this year and discussed throughout the year. Although no one reported about the Code of Ethics, every unit, district, and department should have already adopted them.

The majority of departments revised their Constitution & Bylaws in 2016 after the National Convention, and some finished revisions in 2017.

A unit in Missouri sent a copy of the unit’s Constitution & Bylaws to all new members with their membership cards, addressing Goal 1 of the Centennial Strategic Plan: “Enhance Membership Strength.”

The Department of New York provided a leadership conference, during which it offered a history of the Preamble, and establishment of Constitution & Bylaws. These efforts emphasized the value of the governing documents in fostering a culture of goodwill and addressed Goal 2.

The Department of Iowa shared that most of its members welcomed and appreciated assistance with governing documents, which addressed Goal 4, Strengthen Departments and Units.

The Department of California advised that Constitution & Bylaws should be used as a guide on how to do things appropriately and orderly. They are created to protect the rights of members, and give them guidance on how units and districts are run.

The Department of Vermont moved details from Bylaws to Standing Rules, and the Department of Georgia distributed pocket-size Preambles and encouraged its members to memorize them.

Several departments held workshops at conferences and conventions, performed skits, and quizzed their members to teach them about Constitution & Bylaws — making learning fun!

The Department of Rhode Island has its first Standing Rules, and the Department of New Mexico sent reminders to units via monthly newsletters.

The Programs Action Plan: “Always remember that department, district, and unit Constitutions, Bylaws, and Standing Rules cannot be in conflict with national governing documents.”

Thanks to all of the hardworking chairmen (unit, district, and department) who compiled annual reports.

Education Committee
Norma Tramm, Minnesota, Chairman

“The whole purpose of education is to turn mirrors into windows.” - Sydney J. Harris

Our national president focused on scholarships this year, which found many units donating and providing their own scholarships to students in need.
The American Legion Auxiliary is very good at saying “thank you” to teachers and staff. This year, for Teacher Appreciation Week and American Education Week, members shared thank-you cards, certificates, and apples, and filled the lounge fridge with soft drinks, goodies, and lunches for school staff.

Give 10 to Education is a program in which units have shared much of their time and talents. The Department of Iowa donated 50 headsets, and a New York unit made arrangements to transcribe a student’s textbook from print to braille. Units also provided notebooks, pencils, tissues, markers and other essentials, and participated in Backpack Buddies – a program to send food home with students on weekends and vacations.

Wisconsin Unit 523 met with an elementary school principal to share information about ALA programs and provide a copy of Educator’s Guide to the Military Child During Deployment.

My father was a World War II veteran who loved to tell stories, as do many veterans. Veterans in Community Schools is not only an avenue for veterans to tell their stories, but provides a wealth of information for students. Montana Unit 111 escorted a 98-year-old WWII veteran for a speaking engagement at Sky View High School to share events and conditions of his four years in Europe and Alaska. Veterans sharing their stories with students in North Myrtle Beach, N.C. are pictured in this report. Notice the small flags that were given to the children. The flag is a physical reminder of information shared by veterans. There are accounts from all departments of veterans sharing facts with students. For units not already engaged in this program, consider making it part of your yearly calendar of events. Goal 1 and Goal 5 of the Centennial Strategic Plan were fulfilled as members made a difference and showed pride in this program.

When veterans return home needing further education, unit members are available with a helping hand. This was evident in California as one unit provided meals to a junior college with a large veteran enrollment. When the school requested a donation to the food pantry, the unit contributed $50 every month. Units all over the nation have the ability to assist veterans, but unfortunately not many have discovered how to make it happen. Check out ALA In The Know eBulletin’s July education message for some ideas to get started. You will help accomplish Goal 1 when you connect with veterans and their families.

Unit reports showed the American Legion Auxiliary’s Education Program had the ability to collaborate with other programs and also the community. ALA Member Pride was evident as accomplishments were publicized.

Finance Committee
Peggy Thomas, Virginia, Chairman

The National Finance Committee continues to meet the challenges of good fiscal planning to meet today’s needs as well as future fiduciary requirements.

This committee is comprised of five appointed members, each serving a five-year term. Currently, the committee is made up of three Past National Presidents, one Certified Public Accountant, and one retired Credit Union CEO. The committee reviews the draft budget, makes any adjustments that may be necessary to reflect new or changing goals, and recommends a budget for the National Executive Committee’s (NEC) consideration and adoption. Also, in carrying out its role as fiduciary stewards, the ALA National Finance Committee is responsible for investment planning; reviewing financial statements; monitoring member benefits and fundraising campaigns; overseeing the financial policies of the organization; reviewing the annual audit of the Auxiliary and the ALA Foundation; and making fiscal policy recommendations for NEC action to ensure that the ALA National Organization is meeting nonprofit benchmarks and governmental requirements.

The national Finance Committee designates one committee member as a liaison member to the ALA Foundation Board and another committee member as liaison member to the ALA National Audit Committee.
Due to responsible oversight, we were able to continue to fund visits to departments by our five divisional vice presidents and continue the department secretary training at National Headquarters. Your Finance Committee believes strongly in the value to members of ALA Mission Trainings and national Junior meetings. In fiscal 2017, ALA Mission Training attendance grew 33 percent from the previous fiscal year, and the number of Juniors attending national Junior meetings increased 47 percent from the previous fiscal year.

The successful fundraising efforts by our direct mail vendor Innovairre continued this year with three appeals for the ALA and one for the ALA Foundation. Fiscal year direct mail donations for the ALA as of May 31, 2017, totaled a net $356,000. The analysis of 2016 direct mail donations indicated a total of 105,749 gifts were received; of those gifts, 74,407 came from ALA members, and 31,342 came from non-ALA members. The Auxiliary continues to be fortunate to have such generous donors both inside the ALA and outside the ALA.

The number of people applying for, and using, Auxiliary USAA Credit Cards continued to increase. Since inception, $40 million has been charged by cardholders, resulting in $12,500 in revenue to the ALA shared with departments.

However, in order to continue to fulfill our future obligations to our members and our veterans, action is needed to address the declining operating revenue from dues. It has been five years since the $4 annual senior dues increase was adopted, an amount less than was needed then. With that increase, the National Organization restored many budget items beneficial to departments that had been cut due to not having had a dues increase for 17 years, plus added many important benefits such as increasing scholarships and awareness, publishing critical resources and increasing training for departments and units, and implementing numerous Centennial Strategic Plan initiatives to help the American Legion Auxiliary at all levels. Now, dues must be raised to become effective with the 2019 membership year to meet the needs of the ALA and keep up with inflation. The national Finance Committee addressed the reality that the past three national ALA budgets have been “in the red,” and voted to have the national controller and his staff perform a comprehensive analysis of how much of an increase in membership dues is needed, present these numbers to the ALA national Finance Committee for review and subsequent presentation to the NEC for their review and vote by the NEC to recommend a dues proposal to National Convention in 2017. This thorough process was completed, with over 80 members having reviewed the numbers and needs. The national Finance Committee urges each member to increase her financial knowledge of her department, district, and unit levels in order for the ALA to be able to carry out our obligations to our military and our veterans for years to come.

**ALA Girls Nation Committee**

Melanie Taylor, California, Chairman

American Legion Auxiliary Girls State chairmen across the country provided an outstanding educational opportunity for their ALA Girls State delegates during this past year. They instilled in the delegates a sense of patriotism and love of country, thereby preparing future leaders and responsible citizens for our nation.

Chairmen and directors provided a wide variety of service projects and speakers. Mock trials and moot courts were held. Connecticut’s General Assembly Legislative Commissioners’ Office attended its ALA Girls State and taught delegates the proper procedure and guidance for writing bills.

In Maine, the New England School of Communications offered its staff and technology in order to establish the first ALA Dirigo Girls State news team.

ALA Girls State service projects this year included folding pocket flags to send to troops in Afghanistan, collecting donations to assist military and their families in their recovery from post-traumatic stress disorder, collecting nonperishable food items for their
local food banks, providing laundry items and personal care supplies to long-term care patients in VA hospitals, supporting the Ontario USO, making poppy wreaths for presentations at memorial sites, and writing thank-you notes for veterans in nursing homes and VA facilities.

The Department of New York ALA Girls State delegates decorated felt squares with personal messages and pictures. The squares were then sewn together to make several large quilts that were put on display at several Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS) events.

Illinois’ ALA Girls State chose two special mission-related projects. One was Socks of Love, where the delegates were asked to bring a pair of socks that could be filled with personal hygiene items. The second will be creating police survival kits to take home and give to their local police departments. Both of these will be given to homeless veterans by the police officers.

Colorado added an additional day to its ALA Girls State session, allowing for a field trip to the state capitol in Denver.

In an effort to modernize, many departments required online registration for their delegates. By doing so, there was an increase in the number of ALA Girls State delegates attending. Departments used websites and social media to bring awareness to the ALA Girls State Program.

Membership in the American Legion Auxiliary was stressed at all ALA Girls State sessions — applications were placed on the delegates’ beds. Program fairs explained the benefits of membership, and ALA Junior members spoke to the girls. Blue Star banners and pins were also presented.

These are just a few highlights shared from departments across our nation. “Thank you” is such a small thing to say to our department ALA Girls State chairmen and directors, but it speaks volumes. You should all feel proud of what you have accomplished in providing support to our veterans, military, and their families, and molding the lives of future leaders.

**History Committee**
**Cathi Taylor, Indiana, Chairman**

Over the past several years, there have been numerous articles and discussions about the failure of schools to teach children civics and the history of the United States. Ashley Bateman, a writer for the New York Post, provided some astounding statistics relative to her claim in a 2014 article that “while most students recite the Pledge of Allegiance every day, their understanding of their own history and civic engagement fails.” Is the same thing happening with ALA members when they recite the mission statement?

As we approach our 100th anniversary, I am happy to report there is much effort across our units and departments to not only preserve the Auxiliary’s history, but to share it with everyone. In Florida, 59 senior members created 16 new cavalcades and donated 1,328 hours. Even the Junior members engaged in the activity — so much so that Florida now has two new Junior cavalcades! The department cavalcade chairman placed pins from national and department events on an old jean jacket. It is the topic of conversation wherever it goes.

The Department of Georgia decided to use Women’s History Month in March as a time to share stories about past Auxiliary presidents who mentored them. They also interviewed and recorded senior members’ history. One Past Department President was interviewed by a local magazine and showed off her collection of Auxiliary memorabilia. A member of Unit 192 received a photo by a charter member of the post home when it was first established.

Unit 227 in Clifton, Kan. was the recipient of an immense collection of memorabilia belonging to a member who recently passed away. Her husband donated items from department and national conventions as well as ALA Girls State.
The Department of Kentucky’s new goal is to have every unit’s history posted on the Legion’s centennial website by the end of 2018.

Montana Unit 1 interviewed three senior members for department archives. Dutton Unit 64 is staying up-to-date on their 2013 ALA Girls State delegate as she does ambassador work in Ghana. A Unit 41 member donated her Navy uniform to a local museum. Units are also encouraging Junior members to work on the Members Remember project.

Unit 19 from Tennessee donated items to a local archive for safekeeping as well. They cleaned out their files, making an index of items so they know where reports, newsletters, and other items are located.

It is evident that while the American Legion Auxiliary collects, the ALA teaches and shares. Let us continue in this endeavor so the next time we recite the Auxiliary’s mission statement, we will know our story, continue our civic engagement of serving our veterans, and encourage others to join us.

**Junior Activities Committee**

*Pamela Ray, Illinois, Chairman*

American Legion Auxiliary Juniors worked our mission by serving our veterans and assisting The American Legion in their communities. The motto of Service Not Self was represented well by our Junior members of all ages.

A Junior in Iowa presented copies of the book *Indivisible: The Story of our Flag* to schools in Des Moines and Ankeny. The Juniors and their advisors in Wisconsin had a great year and more than doubled the number of active Juniors compared to last year. Goal 1 of the Centennial Strategic Plan, Enhance Membership Strength, and Goal 4, Strengthen Departments and Units, were certainly working there. So far this year, more than $3,000 has been raised for the Veterans Equine Trail Services (V.E.T.S.). This organization provides free therapy for veterans and serves as a nonjudgmental outlet for veterans to deal with their daily struggles.

In the Department of New Jersey, Juniors rejuvenated used Barbie dolls for local women’s abuse shelters and held a forum titled, “If I were President.” They created a bulletin board to share with The American Legion Family. A Junior unit in the Department of New York held a dinner for 75 Medal of Honor recipients. Each attendee received a card made by students at their schools.

Plattsmouth Unit 56 in the Department of Nebraska made 250 cards for troops at Christmas. To increase Junior membership, the unit paid new members’ dues for the first year and gave them a T-shirt. Goal 1 of our strategic plan is at work here, but Goal 2, Create an Internal Culture of Goodwill, is also apparent by giving the first year’s membership free. Fort Atkinson Junior Unit 348 decorated a Christmas tree with local past and present military photos to honor active-duty military and veterans.

Department of Texas Juniors filled more than 500 pairs of socks for homeless Texas veterans at their mid-winter conference. Goal 5’s focus, branding, was done by labeling where each pair of socks came from. Fort Worth Unit 838 held monthly puppet shows for veterans and their families.

Dolan-Wetzel Junior Unit 139 stuffed Santa hats with goodies for children of deployed parents. Goal 3, Develop Leadership at All Levels, was done by the Department of California. They held three workshops in different parts of the state and held a leadership training weekend at their Junior Conference.

We more than doubled our attendance at our national Junior meetings from recent years. Juniors took a very active part in leading the meetings. Female soldiers spoke to the girls and shared why they chose the military and how it has enriched their lives. The Juniors enjoyed learning how to salute, exercise a proper push-up, and more. We need to continue to promote our Juniors and continue to grow our numbers at our national Junior meetings.
Leadership Committee  
Jeri Brooks Greenwell, Maine, Chairman

Building leadership capacity within our organization is an integral part of our strategic planning process and was a central activity in every department.

“Leadership is a behavior, not a position of power,” said Arizona’s department chairman. “Leadership is a quality not inherently found in all people. However, the American Legion Auxiliary recognizes the importance of good leadership, beginning with the unit and stretching all the way to the National Organization.”

Members benefitted from trainings and workshops — ABC Schools, DEC101, “boot camps,” and American Legion Family Colleges. The Department of Kentucky designed a fun and interesting curriculum that covered the fundamentals of the American Legion Auxiliary along with specific hands-on exercises illustrating how to work through some of the tougher challenges leaders face.

There was an increase in the number of members who reported enhancing their knowledge by completing the ALA Basics Courses; Mission Trainings increased by 37 percent, and 490 members attended; and many availed themselves to the ALA Academy, a new self-guided learning opportunity.

Once provided with a snapshot of demographics, personal information, and member interest, chairmen reported adapting new strategies to engage members — keeping them connected and involved.

Management guides, PowerPoint presentations, and videos were developed and/or updated; and social media was used to share our ongoing mission-related activities. Michigan reported numerous viewings of *Decades of Making a Difference*, not only for its historical and relevant content, but to highlight materials available to all members.

Encouraging goodwill, cohesion, teamwork, and civility, members were challenged to visualize our future, embrace change, and accept diversity — promoting an atmosphere where all ideas are valued, considered, and, whenever possible, implemented.

The Department of Georgia held open discussions on turning “ill will into goodwill,” and a unit in Wisconsin facilitated a presentation titled, “It Begins with Me and Ends with Us” based on the children’s television character Barney’s song “I Love You.”

Recognizing the countless attributes of our Junior members, senior members seized opportunities to capitalize on their talents by embracing their ideas and fresh approaches. An example of mentorship: The South Carolina Leadership chairman and the honorary Junior president teamed up to present leadership trainings this year.

Ohio’s mantra should be “increased, increased, increased” since attendance at Mission Training increased by over 50 percent — which translates into increased training opportunities, increased reporting, and increased award submissions.

“By educating our members through leadership processes, Auxiliary customs, and mission programs, we ensure our survival and guarantee the next generation the privilege and opportunity to support the American Legion Auxiliary,” said one representative from the Department of Colorado.

Members accepted the challenge in raising awareness of leadership development opportunities and ultimately shared their ALA Member Pride.

Legislative Committee  
Elaine Mackenzie, Vermont, Chairman

It was an exciting and busy year for the American Legion Auxiliary’s Legislative Program. While our job in nonpartisan advocacy for our veterans continues year in and year out, the issues seem more urgent during an election cycle.

Department and unit leaders hit the ground running early last fall, sharing The American Legion’s legislative agenda. Many departments held trainings during their full conference, instructing members to sign up for the Legion’s Action Alerts, and showing
them how to follow up by contacting their lawmakers — whether in person, by telephone, or in writing. Training materials included The American Legion’s legislative agenda and the ALA Legislative Advocacy Guide. The Department of Illinois distributed the Guide during its membership caravan. Multiple departments shared that they posted these educational materials on department websites and social media pages.

Members showed their ALA Member Pride by coordinating and attending town hall meetings and having coffee with prospective leaders at the local and national levels. Department of Nebraska unit members joined their Legionnaires in the State House for a veterans council legislative day and wore their pins and branded attire.

In the spirit of Service Not Self, members worked tirelessly, writing thousands of letters to Congress as well as state and local leaders, advocating for our veterans, the military, and their families, as well as protection of the flag.

When the first session of the 115th Congress convened in January, the committee began work on a new legislative mini-council, pairing members up with lawmakers on the House and Senate Veterans Affairs Committees. Members in all five divisions stepped up to develop personal relationships with these lawmakers and their staff. These members agree to make a direct contact when The American Legion needs immediate action on an issue.

Members from virtually every department attended the Washington DC Conference, participating in the Commander’s Call to learn about the issues important to our veterans as outlined by The American Legion. We then went to Capitol Hill on Feb. 28, 2017, armed with this information and the newly printed American Legion drop sheets. Department of Kentucky members were provided with a bound book to guide them in making their appointments and discussing the issues with their lawmakers.

In April, The American Legion asked ALA members to contact their lawmakers in Washington to advocate for co-sponsorship of a bill needed to authorize the U.S. Mint to make a centennial commemorative coin. This was a time-sensitive issue, and you members stepped up, making telephone calls to your lawmakers’ local and Washington offices.

Based on the reports submitted by units and departments, our members feel very successful in realizing the positive impact their collective voice can make in advocating for our veterans!

Liaison To The Child Welfare Foundation Committee
Linda Newsome, Maryland, Chairman

In 1954, The American Legion endorsed the separate incorporation of the American Legion Child Welfare Foundation (CWF). Since then, the CWF has granted more than $14.9 million to support youth-serving projects that seek to enhance the lives of children by addressing their physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual needs. The CWF, in its 62nd year, considered 144 grant applications that were received for review and consideration by the grant screening committee. The Foundation board of directors awarded 20 grants totaling $618,606. The following is a brief summary of the 2017 grants awarded.

Angels & Doves of Indianapolis: awarded $19,900 for its project “Reduce School Bullying and Youth Violence.”
Angel Flight West of Santa Monica, Calif.: awarded $10,000 for its project “Promoting Fly-Anthropy – the charitable use of aviation to help children in need.”
Bethany Christian Services of Grand Rapids, Mich.: awarded $25,000 for its project “Post Adoption Support for Military Families Awareness Campaign.”
Books Aloud of San Jose, Calif.: awarded $10,000 for its project “Books Aloud Youth Program.”
Building Better Days of Edgewater, Md.: awarded $11,230 for its project “Benefits of Building.”
Child Find of America Inc., of New Paltz, N.Y.: awarded $40,500 for its project “In Safe Hands Information Kits.”
Childhood Domestic Violence Association of New York: awarded $20,750 for its project “Childhood Domestic Violence Toolkit Distribution Campaign.”

Childhood Leukemia Foundation of Brick, N.J.: awarded $60,000 for its project, “Hope Binder.”

Children’s Brain Tumor Foundation of New York: $20,000 for its project “Finding Your Way – A Guide for Childhood Brain Tumor Families from Diagnosis & Beyond.”

Children’s Hospital of The King’s Daughters Inc., of Norfolk, Va.: awarded $31,000 for its project “Educational Materials for Children with Craniosynostosis and Cleft Lip/Palate Deformities.”

CureSearch for Children’s Cancer of Bethesda, Md.: awarded $22,250 for its project “Childhood Cancer Educational Video and Companion Ebook.”

Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance of Chicago: awarded $25,000 for its project “Online Child Mood Disorder Screeners and Marketing Campaign.”

KEYS of Sherrill, N.Y.: awarded $5,362 for its project “KEYS Music Toolkits: Delivering Music, Hope, and Smiles to Kids Battling Cancer.”

Mercy Medical Angels of Virginia Beach, Va.: awarded $45,000 for its project “Angel Flights for Children.”

Minnesota Organization on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome of Saint Paul, Minn.: awarded $54,735 for its project “National Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Educational Equity Project.”

National Autism Association of Portsmouth, R.I.: awarded $59,375 for its project “Big Red Safety Box.”

National Meningitis Association of Fort Myers, Fla.: awarded $29,000 for its project “Get Vaccinated.”

Our Military Kids of McLean, Va.: awarded $56,055 for its project “In Their Own Voice: Military Children Tell Their Stories.”

Schwacman-Diamond Syndrome Foundation of Avon, N.Y.: awarded $4,449 for its project “I Have SDS.”

The American Legion National Headquarters of Indianapolis: awarded $69,000 for its project “American Legion National Oratorical Contest 2017.”

Visit www.legion.org/childwelfare to learn more about the grant recipients’ projects.

Membership Committee
Martha Corrheimer, North Carolina, Chairman

Membership started the year with catchy themes by department Membership chairmen: “Hats Off To Veterans,” “Soar For Our Veterans,” “Jump Out Of Your Fish Bowl and Into the Ocean,” and “Heroes for Membership,” just to name a few.

The one theme reflected throughout department reports was the love for the American Legion Auxiliary. Even with units struggling with membership challenges, the love for our veterans, programs, and the mission never wavered.

Each division is unique and takes a different approach with membership. In the Central Division, the Department of Illinois held classes to explain membership recruiting techniques; Ohio set booths up at fairs and festivals to share what the ALA had to offer our members, veterans, active-duty, and their families; and Wisconsin encouraged the units to work closer with their posts as a family unit.

In the Eastern Division, the Department of Connecticut sponsored two revitalization programs working with the National Organization to assist units needing a little extra boost. In Maine, units used the “paying it forward method” to retain members. Some units and members would pay members’ dues, enclose their membership card with a note stating the dues had been paid, and explained the kind gesture.

From the Northwestern Division, the Department of Nebraska reported one unit that created a Proud Member Poster project highlighting a member – posting it as a way to promote the accomplishment of the member and to spotlight the unit. The Department of
South Dakota decided Centennial Strategic Plan Goal 2 was the way to go by Creating a Culture of Goodwill and using hats to tell the story of getting along.

In the Southern Division, the Department of Alabama emphasized the ALAMIS system to the units as a great tool to work and access all of their membership needs. The Department of Georgia honored women veterans as a way to increase its numbers. The Department of Louisiana found that even with a catastrophic event, ALA members were resilient and willing to help each other out with membership. In Mississippi, units held a meet-and-greet day for members and potential members as a way to share the programs.

From the Western Division, the Department of Arizona used the Early Bird Program for a free meal for paying before Veterans Day. The Department of Idaho used “I’ve got 2, How about You?” as a contest to recruit members. The contest was open the Legion Family. The Department of Washington decided to get back to basics and communicate with units by encouraging letters and memos.

Departments embraced the member interest forms provided by ALA National Headquarters. This tool provides complete information on potential members to departments, allowing them to place those that have shown interest in units that fit location and interest of the potential members.

As the world’s largest women’s patriotic service organization, one thing remains — it is not for our glory that we volunteer to help veterans. It’s not for a paycheck that we do what we do. It’s because we honor, love, and recognize the sacrifices by the men and women who serve and have served our country. What we do is valuable, but what they gave and give to us daily is priceless.

National Security Committee
Beth McGinn, Delaware, Chairman

Supporting our military and their families is not only the purpose of the American Legion Auxiliary National Security Program, it’s also an emphasis in our mission statement.

Members of Unit 34 in Lawrenceburg, Ky. fulfilled the wish of a member’s grandson who requested funds to provide a Christmas dinner for soldiers stationed in Korea. For many of them, it was their first experience being away from home for the holidays, and the dinner provided an opportunity to be together. The ALA National Security Program plays a vital role in the lives of many military families by providing financial and emotional needs. This is reflected through welcome-home and deployment events, mailing packages to the troops, cutting coupons, and providing comfort items for wounded servicemembers recuperating at VA facilities. The Department of Illinois provided stuffed bears with notes from deployed parents in the bears’ pockets during Operation Military Kids.

All departments reported recognition of Blue Star and Gold Star families by hosting dinners and providing banners to display. Unit 23 in Aurora, Colo., participated in a statewide run to honor Gold Star families. Units and departments sponsored events for Gold Star families and sent cards, flowers, and wreaths to families in honor of the fallen.

Unit members encouraged the wearing of red shirts on Fridays to “Remember Everyone Deployed,” and some even had shirts on hand to sell. Unit members completed Community Emergency Response Training (CERT) and donated blood in their communities.

Using the yellow ribbon to show moral support, Unit 28 in Millsboro, Del., displayed a small tree on which post guests were invited to hang a yellow ribbon in memory of family members and friends. Donations collected were used for monthly troop packages mailed to military relatives of post family members. To raise money for their troop packages, the Department of Florida distributed yellow ribbon magnets to members who promoted appreciation for servicemembers by decorating cars, buses, posts, businesses, and even golf carts in their communities.
Department of Kansas members volunteered at the Fort Riley North Pole Express by donating cookies, cakes, and toys to the families of wounded and deployed soldiers. Fifty boxes filled with activity items were left for inpatients at the facility.

Social media sites allowed many members and departments to get the word out about their activities to a large amount of people quickly and stimulate interest in how the American Legion Auxiliary supports our military families and invites members and potential members to participate. Members are supporting Goals 1 and 2 of the Centennial Strategic Plan while supporting servicemembers and their families.

**Past Presidents Parley Committee**
*Virginia Hobbs, Kentucky, Chairman*

Information accumulated for the Past Presidents Parley is inclusive of 27 departments that shared their accomplishments. Despite the number of reports, these departments reported a broad array of activities embracing the focal points of the year’s program.

Promoting and participating in mentoring opportunities was a key part of this year’s program. Each department reported participating in efforts to involve past presidents as mentors to improve the unit and department operations, as well as develop leaders at every level of our organization. Oregon Chairman Angelina McKinney reported using their Past Department Presidents to restructure their department and rebuild their membership. Florida Chairman Dee Bell spread encouragement with a weekly mentoring suggestion of TGIF: Teach, Guide, Inspire, Friend. This acronym reflects a wonderful description of what a mentor does.

Program efforts continue to be strong in providing recognition for former servicewomen and in working in areas of the Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Program. Units honored their women veterans with luncheons, dinners, gifts, flowers, and cards. Some units honored our servicewomen by continuing to pay their Auxiliary dues, and some departments reported waiving the per capita on dues for servicewomen.

Adopting servicewomen in veterans’ facilities is a continuing project. While many units reported visits and remembrances during the holidays, two California units hosted all-female veteran stand downs, and another hosted a special party at the West LA VAMC Naomi House for transitioning homeless women veterans.

Some members returned to the roots of service by females in the military by awarding scholarships in healthcare fields. As servicewomen began in the military, largely in the field of nursing, units and departments expanded their scholarship programs to include multiple healthcare fields. This year, scholarships continue at both the unit and department levels with awards ranging from $300 to $4,000. The Illinois Parley Program presented 20 $1,000 scholarships at its department convention.

Recognition of past presidents continued in a variety of ways. While luncheons, dinners, and small gifts are often mentioned, the Wall of Honor reflecting the service of past presidents is an ongoing reminder of service to the American Legion Auxiliary. Many of our units and departments have vacancies in these walls due to the absence of photos, but one Tennessee unit proudly displays a complete history of its leaders running from 1920 to 2017 with the deceased leaders denoted by a black ribbon across the picture.

Regrettfully, submissions for both the Unit Member of the Year and the Salute to Servicewomen awards appear down significantly over recent years. Multiple departments reported no entries for the Unit Member of the Year. Additionally, entries were not received for all five branches of service.

**Poppy Committee**
*Kathy Daudistel, Kentucky, Chairman*

In 1918, Moina Michael, an American teacher, had an idea to use the red poppy as a symbol of remembrance for fallen heroes and to support those who served or are serving
our country. She spent her life campaigning to have this simple yet beautiful flower recognized by governments, veterans agencies, and the public. The red poppy flower has been the memorial flower of The American Legion Family since 1920, and members have made it their job to continue Moina’s vision. Congress is poised to start a new tradition of proclaiming the Friday before Memorial Day as National Poppy Day.

Traditionally, poppies distributed to the public are made by veterans. Unfortunately, the number of traditional veteran poppy makers is rapidly declining. Therefore, it is getting harder each year to meet the demand needed by departments. For some areas of the country, tradition is still strong. Eleven departments reported that they have poppy production groups in several VA facilities, and a few veterans work from home. South Dakota Poppy Chairman Sue Frantzick reports that she drives 120 miles, round trip, to work with veterans in Hot Springs, S.D. While there, she distributes poppy kits, gives poppy-making lessons to new veterans, collects the poppies, and pays the makers. This year, 27 veterans put in 4,500 hours making poppies for Sue. She also serves treats to the veterans to show her appreciation. One veteran said it was great therapy and kept his mind occupied — he also said he appreciated being paid.

Patricia Taylor, Poppy chairman from Ohio, reported that one veteran at the Ohio Veterans Home in Sandusky has been making poppies for nearly 30 years. He arrives at his workstation early in the morning and doesn’t leave until dinner time, nearly a 12-hour shift. Making poppies gives him a reason to get up in the morning, he said, and is a way to help others.

Kat Stricklin, Western Division Poppy chairman, knows a veteran who suddenly became disabled. He struggled for months to find a new way of living. Everything he knew before, he could no longer take part in. When asked if he would consider making poppies, he was hesitant, but after a few months decided to give it a try. With the help of his entire family, he is now a veteran poppy maker. To some of us, this task may not seem hard, but to him, it is a huge step toward finding a new normal.

Once the poppies are made, Legion Family members work together to distribute them while raising awareness of the meaning. The poppy is a symbol of our dedication and drive to honor and provide for our veterans and active military personnel.

Public Relations Committee
Brenda Collins, South Carolina, Chairman

Newspapers, radio, television, as well as all social media, are exceptional ways to publicize who we are, what we do, and why we matter. In some rural areas, small town newspapers are always looking for articles to fill their papers. Although it is more difficult to get articles published in larger markets, local media will usually run public service announcements (PSAs) for American Legion Auxiliary units and departments.

PSAs are one of the ways we have of getting the message about the ALA out to the public. Members in the Department of Tennessee were able to get PSAs aired 309 times. This publicity helped to bring the name of the American Legion Auxiliary to the forefront throughout Tennessee. They also helped bring in members and volunteers to continue carrying out our mission.

Auxiliary members in Iowa support the Honor Flight Program. Eastern Iowa units were especially generous with donations totaling more than $5,000, which allowed more than 10 veterans to make the trip to Washington, D.C. In honor of their donations, the April flight was named the American Legion Posts and Auxiliary Units of Eastern Iowa Honor Flight, and all veterans on the flight wore T-shirts embroidered with that designation — a great way to not only help veterans, but also publicize our mission.

The Department of New York’s website and Facebook page helped to promote Centennial Strategic Plan Goal 5: With The American Legion, Build Brand Loyalty. Members reported 149,800 minutes spent on radio, television and social media. The department had 1,575 Facebook posts encouraging new members to join our organization.
There were 625 units that posted in newspapers and social media about working alongside their Legion posts, while always wearing branded Auxiliary clothing. There were also 15 units and one district which started new Facebook pages.

In the Department of California, ALA member Kim Vincent was asked to work on the Memory Gardens Cemetery Restoration Project. The cemetery has been an eyesore for nearly 20 years. She joined others and volunteered four to six hours every week helping to clear graves and headstones. Volunteers created a list of 78 veterans interred in the cemetery. One of the veterans served during the Spanish-American War. This project was a heartfelt way for this member to showcase our mission of Service Not Self.

Movies and popcorn — what better way to spend an evening? Members of Colorado’s Pueblo Unit 2, along with their Juniors, visited a local veterans home specializing in Alzheimer’s and dementia care several times a year. The Juniors always benefit from interactions with the veterans, while all enjoy the night eating popcorn and watching a movie.

ALA members showed their Member Pride this year while honoring the veterans we served.

Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Committee  
Kathy Dungan, Mississippi, Chairman

Veterans, military, and their families are the heart of the American Legion Auxiliary mission. Members work our mission every day with enthusiasm and dedication, as evidenced in their reports.

Illinois members were very busy this year. Before women veterans attended their counseling session at the Military Sexual Trauma Program, Unit 703 provided lunch for them. Unit 287 donated money to purchase two electric scooters for the Illiana Medical Center, and their 19th District donated enough money to purchase five scooters!

Iowa’s “Hearts on Fire for Veterans” theme demonstrated members’ burning desire to help. They implemented the Baby Starter Gift Set Project where items such as baby hats, sweaters, afghans, and other items were delivered to VA medical centers. Donations to VA medical centers and Iowa veterans homes were numerous — fleece blankets, two adaptive bikes for physical therapy, 360 $10 gift cards, Quilts of Valor, and much more.

Units and departments also held numerous stand downs this year. Kansas provided 512 homeless veterans immunizations, haircuts, shaves, legal assistance, a bathing area, and a job fair at its stand down. Ohio held six stand downs, with one stand down committee focusing on the needs of women veterans.

New to Maine this year was the Betsy Ann Ross House of Hope, a facility for homeless women veterans in Augusta. In preparation for the grand opening, Auxiliary members provided more than $10,000 in donations and more than $10,000 worth of items, ranging from toys to furniture.

Christmas Gift Shops are a wonderful way to help veterans and their families, and each year, many departments sponsor them. Gifts are provided free to veterans for their family members. Gifts range from gift cards, household items, clothing, toiletries, and toys for children. The Department of New York donated more than $46,000 in direct gifts to more than 1,700 hospitalized veterans. Members spent 2,471 hours preparing and distributing these gifts.

From the local level to national level, Auxiliary members supported therapeutic Veterans Creative Arts Festivals this year. The National Veterans Creative Arts Festival was held in Mississippi. The weeklong event recognized 120 veteran gold medal winners in the areas of arts and performance. As Auxiliary members served these talented veterans, they received more than recognition and thanks, but also an appreciation of what these veterans have experienced and the trials they deal with every day.

Whatever it took, our members were there to serve and work our mission, and what an awesome job our members did!
INDEPENDENT AUDITOR’S REPORT

Members of the National Finance Commission
The American Legion National Headquarters
Indianapolis, Indiana

Report on Financial Statements
We have audited the accompanying consolidated financial statements of The American Legion National Headquarters ("Legion"), which comprise the consolidated statements of financial position as of December 31, 2016 and 2015, and the related consolidated statements of activities and cash flows for the years then ended, and the related notes to the financial statements.

Management's Responsibility for the Financial Statements
Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of these consolidated financial statements in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America; this includes the design, implementation, and maintenance of internal control relevant to the preparation and fair presentation of consolidated financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

Auditor's Responsibility
Our responsibility is to express an opinion on these consolidated financial statements based on our audits. We conducted our audits in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the consolidated financial statements are free of material misstatement.

An audit involves performing procedures to obtain audit evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the consolidated financial statements. The procedures selected depend on the auditor's judgment, including the assessment of the risks of material misstatement of the consolidated financial statements, whether due to fraud or error. In making those risk assessments, the auditor considers internal control relevant to the entity's preparation and fair presentation of the consolidated financial statements in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the entity's internal control. Accordingly, we express no such opinion. An audit also includes evaluating the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of significant accounting estimates made by management, as well as evaluating the overall presentation of the consolidated financial statements.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our audit opinion.

Opinion
In our opinion, the consolidated financial statements referred to above present fairly, in all material respects, the consolidated financial position of The American Legion National Headquarters as of December 31, 2016 and 2015, and the changes in its net assets and its cash flows for the years then ended in conformity with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America.

Other Matter
Our audits were conducted for the purpose of forming an opinion on the consolidated financial statements as a whole. The consolidating statements of financial position and activities are presented for purposes of additional analysis of the consolidated financial statements rather than to present the financial position and results of operations of the individual companies, and are not a required part of the consolidated financial statements. Such information is the responsibility of management and was derived from and relates directly to the underlying accounting and other records used to prepare the consolidated financial statements. The information has been subjected to the auditing procedures applied in the audits of the consolidated financial statements and certain additional procedures, including comparing and reconciling such information directly to the underlying accounting and other records used to prepare the consolidated financial statements or to the consolidated financial statements themselves, and other additional procedures in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America. In our opinion, the information is fairly stated in all material respects in relation to the consolidated financial statements as a whole.

Crowe Horwath LLP
Indianapolis, Indiana
April 28, 2017
The American Legion National Headquarters
Consolidated Statements of Financial Position
December 31, 2016 and 2015

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<td>13,141,457</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other liabilities</td>
<td>1,529,684</td>
<td>1,545,295</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes payable</td>
<td>831,449</td>
<td>1,025,149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deferred dues income – Paid-Up-For-Life membership</td>
<td>23,532,607</td>
<td>22,915,052</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life memberships due to state and local posts</td>
<td>26,693,304</td>
<td>24,962,632</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>102,374,883</td>
<td>96,536,814</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NET ASSETS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unrestricted</td>
<td>8,742,165</td>
<td>12,636,051</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporarily restricted</td>
<td>24,729,158</td>
<td>21,934,483</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permanently restricted</td>
<td>12,995,779</td>
<td>13,000,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total net assets</td>
<td>46,465,102</td>
<td>47,570,634</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$148,843,085 $143,566,558

See accompanying notes to consolidated financial statements.
The American Legion National Headquarters
Consolidated Statement of Activities
Year ended December 31, 2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Revenue, gains and other support</th>
<th>Unrestricted</th>
<th>Temporary Restricted</th>
<th>Permanently Restricted</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National member dues</td>
<td>$25,782,809</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>$25,782,809</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct membership solicitations</td>
<td>6,165,333</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6,165,333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member service fees income</td>
<td>63,110,108</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>63,110,108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affinity income</td>
<td>2,506,181</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2,506,181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales of emblem items</td>
<td>13,020,287</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>13,020,287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertising</td>
<td>9,663,462</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>9,663,462</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contributions</td>
<td>12,410,731</td>
<td>3,282,236</td>
<td>55,232</td>
<td>15,748,199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Label and printing fees</td>
<td>1,568,817</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1,568,817</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest and dividends, net of Trustee fees of $345,294</td>
<td>1,752,993</td>
<td>1,007,686</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2,770,679</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net realized gains (losses)</td>
<td>174,520</td>
<td>30,590</td>
<td>(38,142)</td>
<td>166,968</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2,722,247</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2,772,247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>76,345,486</td>
<td>4,330,512</td>
<td>17,090</td>
<td>80,694,088</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Net assets released from restriction   | 1,284,235    | (1,284,235)          | -                      | -        |
| Total revenues, gains, and other support | 77,630,721  | 3,046,277            | 17,090                 | 80,694,088 |

| Expenses                               |              |                     |                       |          |
| Salaries                               | 16,196,035   | -                   | -                     | 18,196,035 |
| Employee benefits                      | 4,207,101    | -                   | -                     | 4,207,101 |
| Cost of sales – Legion                  | 7,036,004    | -                   | -                     | 7,036,004 |
| Department and magazine costs           | 2,943,026    | -                   | -                     | 2,943,026 |
| Direct publications                     | 10,863,367   | -                   | -                     | 10,863,367 |
| Executive, staff and program travel     | 3,633,261    | -                   | -                     | 3,633,261 |
| Commission and committee                | 1,758,466    | -                   | -                     | 1,758,466 |
| Printing and postage                   | 12,910,600   | -                   | -                     | 12,910,600 |
| Scholarships, grants and awards        | 1,969,396    | -                   | -                     | 1,969,396 |
| Office and other operating             | 13,345,446   | -                   | -                     | 13,345,446 |
| Occupancy and usage                    | 2,049,531    | -                   | -                     | 2,049,531 |
| Special projects and programs           | 2,794,203    | -                   | -                     | 2,794,203 |
| Change in net assets from operations   | (2,097,735)  | 3,046,277           | 17,090                 | 965,832  |
| Net unrealized loss – investments      | (319,591)    | (251,612)           | (80,411)               | (650,614) |
| Net change in PUFL                     | (1,885,814)  | -                   | -                     | (1,885,814) |
| Amortization of pension loss           | (2,505,774)  | -                   | -                     | (2,505,774) |
| Pension-related changes other than net periodic pension cost | 2,916,028 | - | - | 2,916,028 |
| Change in net assets                   | (3,893,886)  | 2,794,665           | (63,321)               | (1,162,542) |
| Net assets, beginning of year          | 12,636,051   | 21,934,493          | 13,060,100            | 46,630,644 |
| Net assets, end of year                | $8,742,165   | $24,729,158         | $12,666,779           | $46,468,102 |

See accompanying notes to consolidated financial statements.
### The American Legion National Headquarters

#### Consolidated Statement of Activities

**Year ended December 31, 2015**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Revenue, gains and other support</th>
<th>Unrestricted</th>
<th>Temporary Restricted</th>
<th>Permanently Restricted</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National member dues</td>
<td>$25,741,665</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>$25,741,665</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct membership solicitations</td>
<td>8,990,067</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>8,990,057</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member service fees income</td>
<td>703,326</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>703,326</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affinity income</td>
<td>2,830,783</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2,830,783</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales of emblem items</td>
<td>13,142,697</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>13,142,697</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertising</td>
<td>10,132,570</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10,132,570</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contributions</td>
<td>11,239,150</td>
<td>3,283,091</td>
<td>137,774</td>
<td>14,640,015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Label and printing fees</td>
<td>2,297,959</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2,297,959</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest and dividends, net of</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trustee fees of $380,485</td>
<td>1,719,980</td>
<td>872,869</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2,592,839</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net realized gains (losses)</td>
<td>277,285</td>
<td>(8,335)</td>
<td>1,837</td>
<td>270,787</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2,731,630</td>
<td>42,000</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2,773,630</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net assets released from restriction</td>
<td>1,296,836</td>
<td>(1,296,836)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total revenues, gains, and other support</td>
<td>79,109,939</td>
<td>2,872,778</td>
<td>139,611</td>
<td>82,222,328</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Expenses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expenses</th>
<th>Unrestricted</th>
<th>Temporary Restricted</th>
<th>Permanently Restricted</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Salaries</td>
<td>15,857,984</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>15,857,984</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee benefits</td>
<td>3,970,750</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3,970,750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of sales – Legion</td>
<td>7,126,612</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7,126,612</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department and magazine costs</td>
<td>3,068,596</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3,068,596</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct publications</td>
<td>11,373,424</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>11,373,424</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive, staff and program travel</td>
<td>3,660,681</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3,660,681</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commission and committee</td>
<td>1,555,462</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1,555,462</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Printing and postage</td>
<td>13,091,362</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>13,091,362</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scholarships, grants and awards</td>
<td>1,977,428</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1,977,428</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office and other operating</td>
<td>15,205,040</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>15,205,040</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupancy and usage</td>
<td>1,966,164</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1,966,164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special projects and programs</td>
<td>2,042,405</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2,042,405</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in net assets from operations</td>
<td>(1,906,989)</td>
<td>2,872,778</td>
<td>139,611</td>
<td>1,106,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net unrealized gains - investments</td>
<td>(989,751)</td>
<td>(328,989)</td>
<td>(67,346)</td>
<td>(1,366,086)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in PUF1</td>
<td>751,375</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>751,375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amortization of pension loss</td>
<td>(2,470,872)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>(2,470,872)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pension-related changes other than net periodic pension cost</td>
<td>956,164</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>956,164</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total change in net assets**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total change in net assets</th>
<th>Unrestricted</th>
<th>Temporary Restricted</th>
<th>Permanently Restricted</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(3,659,073)</td>
<td>2,543,789</td>
<td>72,265</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>(1,043,010)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net assets, beginning of year</td>
<td>16,295,124</td>
<td>19,390,704</td>
<td>12,987,835</td>
<td>48,673,663</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Net assets, end of year</strong></td>
<td><strong>$12,636,051</strong></td>
<td><strong>$21,934,493</strong></td>
<td><strong>$13,080,100</strong></td>
<td><strong>$47,650,644</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

See accompanying notes to consolidated financial statements.
The American Legion National Headquarters  
Consolidated Statements of Cash Flows  
Years ended December 31, 2016 and 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cash flows from operating activities</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Change in net assets</td>
<td>(1,162,542)</td>
<td>(1,043,019)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjustments to reconcile change in net assets to net cash from operating activities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depreciation expense</td>
<td>795,306</td>
<td>829,447</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss on disposal of property and equipment</td>
<td>72</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Realized gain on sale of investments</td>
<td>(166,968)</td>
<td>(270,787)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unrealized loss on investments</td>
<td>650,614</td>
<td>1,386,086</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net change in Paid-Up-For-Life annuity</td>
<td>1,886,814</td>
<td>(751,375)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amortization of pension loss</td>
<td>2,508,774</td>
<td>2,470,872</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pension-related changes other than net periodic pension cost</td>
<td>(2,916,028)</td>
<td>(956,154)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contributions restricted for long-term purposes</td>
<td>(55,232)</td>
<td>(137,774)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changes in assets and liabilities:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accounts receivable</td>
<td>376,622</td>
<td>(274,483)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest receivable</td>
<td>(6,531)</td>
<td>(131,093)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepaid expenses and deposits</td>
<td>1,109,503</td>
<td>(1,440,416)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deferred membership expense</td>
<td>(945,856)</td>
<td>1,615,046</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inventories</td>
<td>(28,878)</td>
<td>(114,258)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beneficial interest in trust</td>
<td>33,740</td>
<td>32,157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accounts and scholarships payable</td>
<td>(163,071)</td>
<td>2,234,063</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deferred income</td>
<td>6,404,112</td>
<td>4,392,433</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accrued pension expense</td>
<td>(573,495)</td>
<td>(1,017,532)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other accrued liabilities</td>
<td>(412,537)</td>
<td>721,911</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net cash from operating activities</td>
<td>7,232,556</td>
<td>7,645,173</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Cash flows from investing activities |       |       |
| Purchase of property and equipment  | (202,316) | (438,840) |
| Purchase of investments             | (66,209,480) | (60,419,613) |
| Sales and maturities of investments | 59,352,265 | 52,309,666 |
| Investments in affiliate (CFA)      | 839    | 2,358  |
| Net cash from investing activities  | (7,058,972) | (8,546,431) |

| Cash flows from financing activities |       |       |
| Contributions restricted for long-term purposes | 55,232 | 137,774 |
| Repayment on notes payable           | (203,278) | (186,832) |
| Net cash from financing activities   | (138,046) | (49,050) |

| Net increase (decrease) in cash and cash equivalents | 35,216 | (1,050,284) |
| Cash and cash equivalents, beginning of year | 1,221,375 | 2,271,659 |
| **Cash and cash equivalents, end of year** | **$ 1,256,591** | **$ 1,221,375** |
| Supplemental cash flows information:  |       |       |
| Interest paid                        | 25,424 | 34,495 |

See accompanying notes to consolidated financial statements.
NOTE 1 — NATURE OF OPERATIONS AND SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT ACCOUNTING POLICIES

Nature of Organization: The American Legion National Headquarters ("Legion") is a national veterans organization which was declared to be a corporate body by an Act of the United States Congress on September 16, 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 to honor the sacrifices of those who served in the Armed Forces of the United States and their families; and to promote traditional American values and character in our youth and all other persons." The Legion maintains all of its cash deposits in banks and brokerage firms. This may result in a concentration of credit risk in the event of a severe regional financial failure. The maximum amount at risk is the excess of the deposit liabilities reported by the banks over the amounts that would have been covered by federal insurance. The Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation ("FDIC") insures deposits up to $250,000 per financial institution.

Accounts Receivable and Allowance for Uncollectible Accounts: The Legion billes members, posts, and departments for dues and bills agencies for advertising in the Legion magazine. Interest is not normally charged on receivables.

Management establishes a reserve for losses on its investment portfolio based on changes in the fair values of the investment. Changes in the fair value of investments are recognized on the Equity in earnings of non-consolidated subsidiaries and nonconsolidated subsidiaries.

Basis of Accounting: The financial statements have been prepared on the accrual basis of accounting in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America ("GAAP").

Use of Estimates in Preparation of Financial Statements: The preparation of financial statements in conformity with GAAP requires management to make estimates and assumptions that affect the reported amounts of assets and liabilities and disclosures of contingent assets and liabilities at the date of the financial statements and the reported amounts of revenues, expenses, gains, losses and other changes in net assets during the reporting period. Actual results could differ from those estimates.

Financial Statement Presentation: The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with GAAP which requires, among other things, that the financial statements report the changes in and total of the net asset classes, based upon donor restrictions, as applicable. Net assets are to be classified as unrestricted, temporarily restricted and permanently restricted.

The following classes of net assets are maintained:

Restrained Net Assets — The restricted net asset class includes general assets and liabilities of the Legion, as well as assets and liabilities designated by the National Executive Committee, the governing body of the Legion. The unrestricted net assets of the Legion may be used at the discretion of management to fund the various purposes and operations.

Temporarily Restricted Net Assets — The temporarily restricted net asset class includes assets of the Legion related to gifts with explicit donor-imposed restrictions that have not been met as specified purpose or in later periods of time after specified dates. Donor-imposed restrictions to give that are due in future periods and are not permanently restricted are classified as temporarily restricted net assets. As the restrictions are met, the net assets are released from restrictions and included in unrestricted net assets. Contributions for which the restrictions are not in the same period in which the contribution is received are also recorded at temporarily restricted revenue and released from restrictions.

Permanently Restricted Net Assets — The permanently restricted net asset class includes assets of the Legion for which the donor has stipulated that the contribution be maintained in perpetuity, donor-imposed restrictions limiting the use of the assets or its economic benefit neither expire with the passage of time nor can be removed by satisfying a specific purpose.

Cash and Cash Equivalents: Cash and cash equivalents include cash on hand and less than 90 day deposits balances with banks. The Legion maintains all of its cash deposits in banks and brokerage firms. This may result in a concentration of credit risk in the event of a severe regional financial failure. The maximum amount at risk is the excess of the deposit liabilities reported by the banks over the amounts that would have been covered by federal insurance. The Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation ("FDIC") insures deposits up to $250,000 per financial institution.

Inventories: Inventory consists of uniform items held for resale, magazine paper and publication rights and is stated at the lower of cost or market using the first-in, first-out ("FIFO") method. Supplies which are not intended for sale are expensed when purchased.

Investments: Investments are carried at fair value. The fair values of investments are based on quoted market prices, where available. If quoted market prices are not available, fair values are based on quoted market prices of comparable instruments. Realized and unrealized gains and losses are reflected in the consolidated statements of activities. Premiums or discounts on investments are generally recognized at the time of acquisition or maturity.

Property and Equipment: Expenditures for property and equipment and all other capital assets are depreciated over their useful lives (three to seven years). The Legion records depreciation on the straight-line method of accounting to reflect the economic life of the assets.

Impairment of Long-Lived Assets: In accordance with GAAP, the Legion reviews its property and equipment for impairment whenever events or changes in circumstances indicate that the carrying amount of an asset is not recoverable. If the fair value is less than the carrying amount of the asset, an impairment loss is recognized for the difference. Impairment losses have been recognized during the years ended December 31, 2016 and 2015.

Collections: The Legion's summary of currently due and uncollectible accounts receivable includes amounts presented in the statement of activities as net assets released from restrictions.

Dues Income and Expense: Dues are recognized as income over the applicable membership period, which is on a calendar-year basis. In addition to other methods of obtaining new members, the Legion uses direct mail and other marketing approaches. The income generated from direct membership solicitation is recognized over the applicable membership period (calendar year).

The direct response expenses incurred in obtaining new members are deferred and recognized in the subsequent membership year.
Income Taxes: The Legacy is exempt from federal income taxes under section 501(c)(3) of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code. ASE, ALEF and NEF are exempt from federal income taxes under Section 501(c)(3) of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code. None of the entities are considered to be a private foundation. The Legacy is subject to income tax on unrelated business income. In 2016 and 2015, the Legacy incurred no tax expense.

Current accounting standards require the Legacy to disclose the amount of potential benefit or obligation to be realized as a result of an examination performed by a taxing authority. For the years ended December 31, 2016 and 2015, management determined that the Legacy does not have any tax positions that result in any uncertainties regarding the possible impact on the Legacy's financial statements. The Legacy does not expect the total amount of unrecognized tax benefits to significantly change in the next 12 months. The Legacy recognizes interest and or penalties related to income tax returns in income tax expense. The Legacy did not have any amounts accrued for interest and penalties at December 31, 2016 and 2015.

Fair Value of Financial Instruments: The carrying amount of all financial instruments of the Legacy, which include cash and cash equivalents, accounts receivable, beneficial interest in trust, investments, accounts payable, and notes payable are approximate fair value.

Expense Allocation: As disclosed in Note 16, expenses have been classified as program services, management and general, member development, and fund raising based on actual direct expenditures. Additionally, some expenses are allocated among departments based on estimates of the amount of time spent by Legacy employees performing services for the departments.

Subsequent Events: Management has performed an analysis of the activities and transactions subsequent to December 31, 2016, to determine the need for any adjustments or disclosures to the financial statements for the year ended December 31, 2016. Management has performed their analysis through April 28, 2017, the date the financial statements were available to be issued.

NOTE 2 - COLLECTIONS
The Legacy owns many collectible military related items and historical documents which were not recorded as they were acquired. It is often impractical to determine a value for such collections and accordingly, the Legacy has concluded that they need not be capitalized. These items have been appraised, or are in the process of being appraised for insurance purposes and are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appraisal Date</th>
<th>Replacement Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>World War I Posters</td>
<td>$42,204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World War II Posters</td>
<td>469,039</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military Unit Histories</td>
<td>112,610</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fine Art Collection</td>
<td>580,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Museum Collection</td>
<td>124,475</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE 3 - INVESTMENT IN AFFILIATE
The Legacy, in conjunction with approximately 120 other organizations, has created a nonprofit corporation known as The Citizens Flag Alliance, Inc. ("CFA") for the purpose of aiding in the campaign to secure a constitutional amendment empowering the Congress and the States to enact legislation to protect the Flag of the United States of America from physical desecration.

CFA received a change in net assets of $6,595 and $2,350 in 2016 and 2015, respectively. Accordingly, the Legacy's investment in CFA has been changed by these amounts and corresponding adjustments have been reflected in unrestricted net assets for 2016 and 2015.

NOTE 4 - BENEFICIAL INTEREST IN CHARITABLE LEAD TRUST
The ALEF has named a beneficiary of a charitable lead trust. Under the charitable trust, the ALEF is to receive quarterly distributions in the amount of $9,919 until December 2030, or until the funds of the trust are exhausted. Based on the terms of the trust and a 2.05% discount rate in 2016 and a 2.54% discount rate in 2015, the present value of future benefits expected to be received by the ALEF is estimated to be $511,994 and $481,743 at December 31, 2016 and 2015, respectively.

NOTE 5--FAIR VALUE OF FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS
Fair value is defined as the price that would be received for an asset or paid to transfer a liability (an exit price) in the Legacy's principal or most advantageous market for the asset or liability in an orderly transaction between market participants at the measurement date.

GAAP establishes a fair value hierarchy which requires an entity to maximize the use of observable inputs and minimize the use of unobservable inputs when measuring fair value. GAAP describes three levels of inputs that may be used to measure fair value:

Level 1: Quoted prices for identical assets or liabilities in active markets that the entity has the ability to access as of the measurement date.

Level 2: Significant other observable inputs other than level 1 prices such as quoted prices for similar assets or liabilities, quoted prices in markets that are not active, or inputs that are observable or can be corroborated by observable market data.

Level 3: Significant unobservable inputs that reflect a reporting entity's own assumptions about the assumptions that market participants would use in pricing an asset or liability in inactive markets.

Fair values of marketable equity securities are based on quoted market prices.

Assets and Liabilities Measured at a Recurring Basis: Assets and liabilities measured at fair value on a recurring basis are summarized below:

| Fair Value Measurements at Dec. 31, 2016 using | Quoted Prices in Active Markets for Identical Assets (Level 1) | Significant Other Observable Inputs (Level 2) | Significant Unobservable Inputs (Level 3) |
|-----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| Assets:                                      |                                                               |                                               |                                           |
| Beneficial interest in trust                  | $5                                                          | $5                                            | $511,994                                  |
| Money market accounts                         | 16,023,777                                                   |                                               |                                            |
| U.S. Government obligations                   | 39,610,787                                                   |                                               |                                            |
| State and municipal bonds                      | 28,765,453                                                   |                                               |                                            |
| Corporate bonds                               | 43,767,903                                                   |                                               |                                            |
| **Total**                                     | **$16,023,777**                                             | **$410,084,663**                              | **$511,994**                               |

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The table below presents a reconciliation and statement of activities, classification of gains and losses for all assets measured at fair value on a recurring basis using significant unobservable inputs (Level 3) for the years ended December 31, 2016 and 2015:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assets</th>
<th>Fair Value Measurements at Dec. 31, 2015, using</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quoted Prices in Active Markets for Identifiable Assets (Level 1)</td>
<td>Significant Other Observable Inputs (Level 2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beneficial interest in trust</td>
<td>$ -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Money market accounts</td>
<td>11,835,530</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. Government obligations</td>
<td>46,012,144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State and municipal bonds</td>
<td>23,663,167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate bonds</td>
<td>39,681,439</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>13,813,530</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interest expense was $35,434 and $34,495 for the years ended December 31, 2016 and 2015, respectively. As an entity operating in the risk of interest rate fluctuations, the Legian entered into an interest rate swap agreement on the long-term debt on December 3, 2013. This interest rate swap has been designated as a derivative and is recorded on the balance sheet at fair value. The terms of the swap are to receive a fixed interest rate of 2.80% on the notional amount of $138,449 and $1,025,749 at December 31, 2016 and December 31, 2015, respectively. The interest rate swap matures in 2029. Under the agreement, the Legian pays or receives the cash amount monthly, with the monthly settlements included in interest expense.

**NOTE 8 – LEASES**
The Legian has several non-cancelable operating leases, primarily for facilities, computer equipment, and copiers that expire at various dates through 2026. Rent expense under these leases for the years ended December 31, 2016 and 2015 was $418,864 and $418,873, respectively. Minimum lease commitments are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>514,925</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>70,023</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>69,076</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>4,052</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>6,309,476</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition, the Legian had a lease with the State of Indiana for rental of the National Headquarters building in Indianapolis which expired on June 30, 2013. The Legian is operating on a month-to-month basis until a new lease agreement extending the lease term is finalized. According to the terms of the lease, the Legian is required to maintain in the interior of the building and provide adequate insurance on the building in lieu of lease payments. The cost of maintenance for 2016 and 2015 was $592,679 and $597,940, respectively. Insurance coverage is included in the Legian’s general insurance policy.

**NOTE 9 – 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 the plan, the assets of the Paid-Up-For-Life ("PFU") Membership Fund are invested in unrestricted, bond-graded net assets and 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 Legian 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.

Under the terms of the PFU program, participating member’s national, state and local dues are paid by the Legian for the remainder of the individual’s life. Management has estimated and recognized a liability for the future payments to state and local Legian organizations. Likewise, management has deferred recognition of the national dues portions of the members’ payment. Deferred PFUPL dues are recognized in annual amounts equal to the national dues in effect each year. The liability and deferred revenue amounts are estimated by the Legian’s activities using PFUPL membership summaries and discount rates comparable to the Legian’s recent investment performance.
NOTE 10 - RESTRICTED AND RESERVE DESIGNATED FUNDS
The restricted fund is designated for use by the National Finance Commission and National Executive Committee and reported as unrestricted, board-designated net assets. Earnings of the restricted fund, along with the principal, can be expended only upon recommendation of the National Finance Commission and a two-thirds affirmative vote of the National Executive Committee at two successive meetings. It is the policy of the Legion to transfer 10% of the prior year’s net income from operations to the restricted fund. The Legion made no transfers to the restricted fund in 2014 and 2015.

The reserve fund is also designated for use by the National Finance Commission and National Executive Committee and reported as unrestricted, board-designated net assets. However, earnings of the reserve fund may be used for the general operations of the Legion. The principal can be expended only by action of the Legion at its national convention, or by a two-thirds affirmative vote of the National Executive Committee in two successive meetings not less than 60 days apart.

NOTE 11 - TEMPORARILY RESTRICTED NET ASSETS
Temporarily restricted net assets are donor-restricted for specific purposes. At December 31, 2016 and 2015 the restricted purposes are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fund Name</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overseas Graves Decoration Fund</td>
<td>$87,957</td>
<td>$99,237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samsung scholarships</td>
<td>1,099,276</td>
<td>1,096,659</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Legion Fund</td>
<td>12,429,174</td>
<td>11,058,380</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Emergency Fund</td>
<td>4,557,824</td>
<td>4,622,366</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boy Scouts</td>
<td>467,899</td>
<td>462,899</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operation Comfort Warriors</td>
<td>2,510,222</td>
<td>2,062,416</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Divine</td>
<td>316,809</td>
<td>308,546</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edwin J. Boettler Jr. State</td>
<td>662,236</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samsung American Legion</td>
<td>280,277</td>
<td>372,240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alumni Association</td>
<td>154,514</td>
<td>66,915</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>154,514</td>
<td>66,915</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$24,729,158</strong></td>
<td><strong>$23,934,403</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE 12 - NET ASSETS RELEASED FROM RESTRICTION
Net assets were released from donor restrictions by incurring expenses satisfying the restricted purposes or by occurrence of other events specified by donors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose restrictions accomplished</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overseas graves decoration</td>
<td>$12,341</td>
<td>$13,469</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scholarships and grants (including relief aid)</td>
<td>575,196</td>
<td>343,694</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veterans Affairs &amp; Rehabilitation</td>
<td>685,644</td>
<td>931,682</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children &amp; Youth programs</td>
<td>1,264,235</td>
<td>1,296,836</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE 13 - PERMANENTLY RESTRICTED NET ASSETS
Permanently restricted net assets represent donor-restricted gifts that have been invested and are to be maintained in perpetuity. Income from the Samsung scholarship fund is to be used to fund endowment scholarships for descendants of Korean War veterans and other nurses in which U.S. servicemen and servicewomen participated. Income from the American Legion Endowment Fund is to be used to support the veterans affairs and rehabilitation and children and youth activities of the Legion.

At December 31, 2016 and 2015 the permanently restricted net assets are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fund Name</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Samsung scholarships</td>
<td>$5,000,000</td>
<td>$5,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Legion Endowment Fund</td>
<td>2,966,779</td>
<td>8,060,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$12,960,779</strong></td>
<td><strong>$13,060,000</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE 14 - ENDOWMENT COMPOSITION
The Legion's endowments include donor-restricted endowment funds and are comprised of two separate funds, the American Legion Endowment Fund and the Samsung scholarship fund. In accordance with GAAP, net assets associated with endowment funds, including funds designated by the National Executive Committee to function as endowments, are classified and reported based on the existence or absence of donor-imposed restrictions.

Interpretation of Relevant Laws:
The National Executive Committee has interpreted the State of Indiana's Student Management of Institutional Funds Act ("SMIFA") as requiring the preservation of the fair value of the original gift as of the gift date of the donor-restricted endowment funds absent explicit donor stipulations to the contrary. As a result of this interpretation, the Legion classifies as permanently restricted net assets (a) the original fair value of gifts donated to the permanent endowment, and (b) the original fair value of subsequent gifts to the permanent endowment and (c) net accumulations to the permanent endowment made in accordance with the governing documents of the Legion.

The remaining portion of the donor-restricted endowment fund that is not classified in permanently restricted net assets is classified as temporarily restricted net assets until those amounts are appropriated for expenditure by the Legion in a manner consistent with the standard of prudence prescribed by SMIFA.

In accordance with SMIFA, the Legion considers the following factors in making a determination to appropriate or accumulate donor-restricted endowment funds:

(1) The duration and preservation of the fund,
(2) The purposes of the Legion and the donor-restricted endowment fund,
(3) General economic conditions,
(4) The possible effect of inflation and deflation,
(5) The expected total return from income and the appreciation of investments,
(6) Other resources of the Legion,
(7) The investment policies of the Legion.

Endowment net asset composition by type of fund as of December 31, 2016:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fund Name</th>
<th>Unrestricted</th>
<th>Temporarily restricted</th>
<th>Permanently restricted</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Donor restricted endowment funds</td>
<td>$29,252</td>
<td>$1,999,776</td>
<td>$12,996,779</td>
<td>$14,877,303</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Funds</td>
<td>$29,252</td>
<td>$1,999,776</td>
<td>$12,996,779</td>
<td>$14,877,303</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Endowment net asset composition by type of fund as of December 31, 2015:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fund Name</th>
<th>Unrestricted</th>
<th>Temporarily restricted</th>
<th>Permanently restricted</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Donor restricted endowment funds</td>
<td>$13,976</td>
<td>$5,000,000</td>
<td>$3,103,000</td>
<td>$15,017,052</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Funds</td>
<td>$13,976</td>
<td>$5,000,000</td>
<td>$3,103,000</td>
<td>$15,017,052</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Changes in endowment net assets for the year ended December 31, 2016:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fund Name</th>
<th>Unrestricted</th>
<th>Temporarily restricted</th>
<th>Permanently restricted</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Net assets, beginning of year</td>
<td>$ -</td>
<td>$5,000,000</td>
<td>$3,103,000</td>
<td>$8,103,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investment gains/ (loss):</td>
<td>$3,977</td>
<td>432,865</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>426,842</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investment income, net of fees</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net appreciation (realized and unrealized)</td>
<td>(11,974)</td>
<td>2,792</td>
<td>(118,553)</td>
<td>(121,541)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total investment gains/ (loss)</td>
<td>$42,083</td>
<td>$425,777</td>
<td>(118,553)</td>
<td>$340,227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New gifts</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>$55,232</td>
<td>$55,232</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
NOTE 15 — EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

The Legion has a defined benefit pension plan covering substantially all of its employees as well as those of certain affiliated and subordinated 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.

In May 2008, the Legion voted to freeze the plan effective June 30, 2008 and voted to adopt a 401(k) savings plan with a qualified automatic contribution arrangement effective July 1, 2008. The result of the freeze is that current employees still received the benefits they had earned as of June 30, 2008, but no future benefits were earned and no new employees were added. The 401(k) savings plan calls for a 100% match of the first 1% contributed by the employee and a 50% match of the net 5% contributed by the employee. Thus, the maximum matching percentage an employee will receive is 3.5%. The Legion made contributions of $355,821 and $359,522 in 2016 and 2015, respectively.

The following tables set 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, 2016 and 2015:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Benefit obligation</td>
<td>$202,288,946</td>
<td>$188,427,737</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair value of plan assets</td>
<td>45,271,772</td>
<td>45,270,838</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funded status</td>
<td>$(156,017,174)</td>
<td>$(143,149,900)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Cost</td>
<td>$13</td>
<td>$13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest cost</td>
<td>2,236,367</td>
<td>2,237,343</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actual cost (income) on assets</td>
<td>(2,344,029)</td>
<td>(2,346,082)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amortization of prior service costs</td>
<td>121,085</td>
<td>121,085</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amortization of loss</td>
<td>2,506,774</td>
<td>2,470,872</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difference between expected and actual return on assets</td>
<td>(66,857)</td>
<td>(53,044)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net periodic pension cost</td>
<td>$1,833,299</td>
<td>$1,453,340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net loss</td>
<td>$(2,294,943)</td>
<td>$(385,079)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prior service cost</td>
<td>(121,085)</td>
<td>(121,085)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pension-related changes other than net periodic pension cost</td>
<td>$(2,996,028)</td>
<td>$(156,364)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepaid benefit cost</td>
<td>5,968,806</td>
<td>5,712,005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accumulated benefit obligation</td>
<td>57,286,490</td>
<td>58,482,375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vested benefit obligation</td>
<td>57,286,490</td>
<td>57,251,311</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net periodic pension cost</td>
<td>1,833,299</td>
<td>1,453,340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits paid</td>
<td>3,092,128</td>
<td>2,805,686</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measurement date</td>
<td>12/31/2016</td>
<td>12/31/2015</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The estimated future benefit payments:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$3,385,763</td>
<td>$3,436,172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3,422,881</td>
<td>3,460,443</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3,571,816</td>
<td>3,571,816</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2022-2026</td>
<td>17,701,836</td>
<td>17,701,836</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The asset investment policy is a lower risk strategy with the primary objective of preserving capital with an emphasis on long-term growth and generation of current income to provide adequate cash flows needed for benefit payments. The target asset allocation is 60-65% in cash or cash equivalents, 30-35% in fixed income and 40-65% in equities. Prohibited investments include real estate investment trusts, real estate partnerships, mutual funds, private equity, hedge funds and guaranteed investment certificates.

The fair value of the Legion's defined benefit plan assets at December 31, 2016 and 2015 are as follows. See Note 5 for descriptions of inputs for each type of asset.
## Fair Value Measurements at Dec. 31, 2016, using

| Quoted Prices in | Significant | Significant | Money market accounts | $1,578,962 | $ - | $ - |
| Active Markets for | Other Observable | Observable | U.S. Government and | - | 8,914,944 | - |
| Identical Assets | Inputs (Level 2) | Inputs (Level 3) | agency obligations | - | - | - |
| Asset backed securities | 1,264,657 | - | Municipal bonds | - | 2,960,339 | - |
| Corporate bonds | 16,027,525 | - | Common stock: | Materials | 1,027,005 | - |
| | | | | Industrials | 2,178,214 | - |
| | | | | Consumer discretionary | 7,186,041 | - |
| | | | | Consumer staples | 1,231,381 | - |
| | | | | Energy | 1,249,367 | - |
| | | | | Health care | 1,369,658 | - |
| | | | | Financials | 1,972,249 | - |
| | | | | Telecommunication | 385,062 | - |
| | | | | Technology | 3,322,340 | - |
| | | | | Utilities | 492,252 | - |
| | | | | | $10,104,606 | $29,177,166 | $ - |

## Fair Value Measurements at Dec. 31, 2015, using

| Quoted Prices in | Significant | Significant | Money market accounts | $1,411,874 | $ - | $ - |
| Active Markets for | Other Observable | Observable | U.S. Government and | - | 9,544,325 | - |
| Identical Assets | Inputs (Level 2) | Inputs (Level 3) | agency obligations | - | - | - |
| Asset backed securities | 1,277,298 | - | Municipal bonds | - | 1,309,374 | - |
| Corporate bonds | 9,956,149 | - | Common stock: | Materials | 1,495,624 | - |
| | | | | Industrials | 3,015,574 | - |
| | | | | Consumer discretionary | 1,747,117 | - |
| | | | | Consumer staples | 3,477,641 | - |
| | | | | Energy | 1,174,212 | - |
| | | | | Health care | 2,343,873 | - |
| | | | | Financials | 3,417,533 | - |
| | | | | Telecommunication | 3,851,025 | - |
| | | | | Technology | 2,874,532 | - |
| | | | | Utilities | 358,791 | - |
| | | | | Other | 219,104 | - |
| | | | | Accounts receivable | 171,239 | - |
| | | | | | $22,887,512 | $32,393,396 | $ - |

Historical returns of multiple asset classes were analyzed to develop a risk-free real rate of return and risk premium for each asset class. The overall rate for each asset class was developed by combining a long-term inflation component, the risk-free real rate of return, and the associated risk premium. A weighted average rate was developed based on these overall rates and the target asset allocation of the plan.

Weighted-average assumptions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discount rate</td>
<td>3.81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expected return on plan assets</td>
<td>7.04%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rate of compensation increase</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The amounts of net loss and net prior service cost expected to be recognized as components of net periodic benefit cost for the year ending December 31, 2016 are $1,833,229 and $121,085, respectively.

### NOTE 16 — FUNCTIONAL EXPENSES

The following represents a functional breakdown of the Legion's expenses by program and supporting services:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Veterans programs and services</td>
<td>$38,293,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Americanism, Children &amp; Youth activities</td>
<td>2,900,234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management and general</td>
<td>41,698,834</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member development</td>
<td>9,123,226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fundraising</td>
<td>11,240,641</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>58,029,622</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$79,228,456</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### NOTE 17 — LITIGATION

The Legion is currently involved in and/or has been mentioned as a defendant or co-defendant in several legal actions. It is the opinion of the National Judge Advocate that these claims are without merit and any ultimate liability of the Legion with respect to these actions will not materially affect the financial statements of the Legion.
## SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

The American Legion National Headquarters

Consolidating Statement of Financial Position

December 31, 2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ASSETS</th>
<th>American Legion National Headquarters</th>
<th>American Legion Charities</th>
<th>American Legion Enidowment Fund</th>
<th>American Legion Emergency Fund</th>
<th>Eliminations</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<td>$9,987,537</td>
<td>$4,671,625</td>
<td>(2,332,068)</td>
<td>$148,643,065</td>
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<tr>
<th>LIABILITIES</th>
<th>American Legion National Headquarters</th>
<th>American Legion Charities</th>
<th>American Legion Enidowment Fund</th>
<th>American Legion Emergency Fund</th>
<th>Eliminations</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accounts payable</td>
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<table>
<thead>
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<th>NET ASSETS</th>
<th>American Legion National Headquarters</th>
<th>American Legion Charities</th>
<th>American Legion Enidowment Fund</th>
<th>American Legion Emergency Fund</th>
<th>Eliminations</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unrestricted</td>
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<td>$4,671,625</td>
<td>(2,332,068)</td>
<td>$148,643,065</td>
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### SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

The American Legion National Headquarters
Consolidating Statement of Financial Position
December 31, 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ASSETS</th>
<th>American Legion National Headquarters</th>
<th>American Legion Charities</th>
<th>American Legion Endowment Fund</th>
<th>National Emergency Fund</th>
<th>Eliminations</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cash and cash equivalents</td>
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<td>Due from American Legion Endowment Fund</td>
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<td>7,770,450</td>
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<td>($2,399,129)</td>
<td>$143,505,558</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>LIABILITIES</th>
<th>American Legion National Headquarters</th>
<th>American Legion Charities</th>
<th>American Legion Endowment Fund</th>
<th>National Emergency Fund</th>
<th>Eliminations</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
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<td>-</td>
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<td>22,915,052</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<td>24,950,032</td>
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<td>4,622,166</td>
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<tr>
<td>$127,855,473</td>
<td>$3,427,655</td>
<td>$40,062,414</td>
<td>$4,692,170</td>
<td>($2,399,129)</td>
<td>$143,505,558</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION
The American Legion National Headquarters
Consolidating Statement of Activities,
Year ended December 31, 2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Revenue, gains and other support</th>
<th>American Legion National Headquarters</th>
<th>American Legion Charities</th>
<th>American Legion Endowment Fund</th>
<th>National Emergency Fund</th>
<th>Eliminations</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National membership dues</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>$ 25,782,809</td>
</tr>
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<td>Direct membership solicitation</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6,169,333</td>
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<tr>
<td>Member service fees income</td>
<td>631,108</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>631,108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affinity income</td>
<td>2,506,181</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2,506,181</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sales of emblem items</td>
<td>13,020,287</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>13,020,287</td>
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<tr>
<td>Advertising</td>
<td>9,583,462</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>9,583,462</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contributions</td>
<td>14,131,471</td>
<td>1,028,800</td>
<td>55,232</td>
<td>405,002</td>
<td>(532,856)</td>
<td>15,748,199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Label and printing fees</td>
<td>1,560,817</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1,560,817</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest and dividends, net of fees</td>
<td>2,290,062</td>
<td>93,631</td>
<td>239,800</td>
<td>136,186</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2,770,079</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net realized gains (losses)</td>
<td>182,926</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>(41,874)</td>
<td>25,574</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>156,908</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Legion Endowment Fund Income</td>
<td>235,551</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>(235,551)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2,772,247</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2,772,247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>79,850,204</td>
<td>1,722,831</td>
<td>253,158</td>
<td>850,302</td>
<td>(768,407)</td>
<td>80,954,088</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expenses</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Salaries</td>
<td>10,196,035</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>16,188,035</td>
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<td>Employee benefits</td>
<td>4,207,101</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4,207,101</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cost of sales – Legion</td>
<td>7,030,004</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>7,030,004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department and magazine costs</td>
<td>2,643,026</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2,643,026</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct publications</td>
<td>13,668,597</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>13,668,597</td>
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<tr>
<td>Executive, staff and program travel</td>
<td>3,630,516</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3,630,516</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commission and committee</td>
<td>1,760,486</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1,760,486</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Printing and postage</td>
<td>12,510,500</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>12,510,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scholarships, grants and awards</td>
<td>1,672,325</td>
<td>889,963</td>
<td>235,551</td>
<td>194,944</td>
<td>(963,407)</td>
<td>1,989,306</td>
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<td>Office and other operating</td>
<td>13,290,278</td>
<td>19,110</td>
<td>19,007</td>
<td>7,861</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>13,345,446</td>
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<td>Occupancy and usage</td>
<td>2,042,831</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2,042,831</td>
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<tr>
<td>Special projects and programs</td>
<td>2,747,803</td>
<td>121,400</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>(75,000)</td>
<td>2,794,203</td>
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<td>Total</td>
<td>79,216,172</td>
<td>920,493</td>
<td>257,369</td>
<td>192,805</td>
<td>(768,407)</td>
<td>79,728,496</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

| Change in net assets from operations | (358,968) | 852,303 | (4,235) | 437,497 | - | 965,022 |
| Change in net assets – investments | (515,048) | 41,126 | (88,052) | (88,040) | - | (550,014) |
| Net unrealized gains (losses) | (1,838,814) | - | (88,052) | (88,040) | - | (1,868,814) |
| Amortization of pension loss    | (2,506,774) | - | - | - | - | (2,506,774) |
| Pension-related changes other than net periodic pension cost | 2,510,028 | - | - | - | - | 2,916,028 |
| Change in net assets           | (2,352,576) | 933,454 | (92,887) | 349,457 | - | (1,162,543) |
| Net assets, beginning of year  | 31,929,840 | 3,021,224 | 8,009,414 | 4,622,196 | - | 47,530,644 |
| Net assets, end of year        | $ 29,574,264 | $ 3,954,688 | $ 7,967,527 | $ 4,971,623 | - | $ 46,468,103 |
## SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

The American Legion National Headquarters

Consolidating Statement of Activities,

Year ended December 31, 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Revenue, gains and other support</th>
<th>American Legion National Headquarters</th>
<th>American Legion Charities</th>
<th>American Legion Emergency Endowment Fund</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National member dues' $73,741,665</td>
<td>$29,741,665</td>
<td>$ -</td>
<td>$ -</td>
<td>$ -</td>
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<tr>
<td>Direct membership solicitation</td>
<td>6,996,057</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Member service fees income</td>
<td>703,326</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Affinity income</td>
<td>2,830,783</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sales of written items</td>
<td>13,142,697</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Advertising</td>
<td>10,132,570</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Contributions</td>
<td>13,104,677</td>
<td>1,637,066</td>
<td>137,774</td>
<td>814,516</td>
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<tr>
<td>Label and printing fees</td>
<td>2,267,969</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interest and dividends, net of fee</td>
<td>2,229,878</td>
<td>48,389</td>
<td>203,953</td>
<td>119,819</td>
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<tr>
<td>Net realized gains (losses)</td>
<td>280,988</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>(9,901)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Legion Endowment Fund</td>
<td>163,363</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2,783,830</td>
<td>26,800</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>80,418,313</td>
<td>1,710,457</td>
<td>331,826</td>
<td>734,134</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expenses</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Salaries</td>
<td>15,887,984</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee benefits</td>
<td>3,970,760</td>
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<td>-</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of sales – Legion</td>
<td>7,126,612</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>Department and magazine costs</td>
<td>3,068,596</td>
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<tr>
<td>Direct publications</td>
<td>11,375,242</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<td>Executive and staff travel</td>
<td>8,856,401</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
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<td>Commission and committee</td>
<td>1,555,462</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Printing and postage</td>
<td>13,191,452</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scholarships, grants and awards</td>
<td>1,536,281</td>
<td>1,206,466</td>
<td>185,383</td>
<td>43,700</td>
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<td>15,167,068</td>
<td>19,951</td>
<td>16,299</td>
<td>1,092</td>
</tr>
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<td>Occupancy and usage</td>
<td>1,966,164</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>Special projects and programs</td>
<td>1,291,979</td>
<td>114,426</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>60,468,213</td>
<td>1,340,883</td>
<td>203,842</td>
<td>46,302</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Change in net assets from operations | 379,900 | 369,574 | 127,964 | 686,242 | - | 1,106,400 |
| Net unrealized losses - investments (1,173,344) | (61,354) | (67,861) | (53,467) | - | (1,398,008) |
| Net change in PUPF (751,375) | - | - | - | - | 751,375 |
| Amortization of pension loss (2,472,872) | - | - | - | - | 2,472,872 |
| Other expenses (750,164) | - | - | - | - | 750,164 |
| Total                             | 2,018,577 | 298,190 | 50,103 | 625,275 | - | (1,043,019) |

Net assets, beginning of year $39,943,417 | $2,735,844 | $6,000,311 | $3,996,891 | - | $48,673,863 |

Net assets, end of year $31,928,840 | $3,021,224 | $8,060,414 | $4,622,165 | - | $47,650,644 |