THE AMERICAN LEGION
Dispatch
April 20, 2012 • Vol. 21, No. 8 — A National Headquarters Publication

TRAINING

AMERICAN LEGION EXTENSION INSTITUTE AVAILABLE ONLINE

Legion's official training program can now be taken electronically.

The American Legion's official training program for officers, members, Legion College applicants, and those who simply want to expand their knowledge of the nation's largest veterans service organization, is now available online.

The American Legion Extension Institute has been rewritten, updated, streamlined and enhanced with videos, digital photos, clickable links, a historical timeline and additional features. The program should take less than two hours to complete. It is divided into six sections with a quiz at the end of each, followed by a final exam.

The sections closely follow the Legion's Four Pillars of service – Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation, National Security, Americanism, and Children & Youth – while also touching on the Legion's history and organization.

Upon completion, a participant must pass the final online exam to receive a digital certificate of recognition; a lapel/cap pin will also be delivered to those who successfully complete the course. The names of those who have passed will be recorded and indexed at National Headquarters in Indianapolis. Graduates will have the option to click a box upon completion to recognize their accomplishment on the National Headquarters website, **legion.org**.

The online course is $4.95 for members of the Legion and the Sons of The American Legion. There is a $9.95 registration fee for nonmembers. Payment can be accepted securely and conveniently on the course-registration page.

The American Legion Extension Institute online training program replaces the series of printed booklets that had been printed and sold through National Headquarters.

www.legion.org/alei

VETERANS BENEFITS

Legion DSO testifies on VA claims process

At The American Legion's request, the House Veterans Affairs Committee (HVAC) held a hearing April 18 to hear the views of veterans service officers (VSOs) on how VA handles disability claims for veterans.

Committee Chairman Jeff Miller, R-Fla., opened the hearing by thanking the Legion for calling his attention to the often unheralded role of VSOs in the claims process. He cited a letter written to him on March 5 by American Legion National Commander Fang Wong, who wrote that several of the Legion's own VSOs "expressed their concern that an ever-increasing workload due to changing VA policies, high denial rates, and other factors were beginning to hamper the ability to provide adequate and timely service to veterans."

Wong pointed out in his letter that VSOs are in a unique position to offer insight into how the claims backlog might be reduced. "Congress must hear from those who work with veterans on claims each day to better understand ways that VA and veterans service organizations can work effectively to improve representation, decrease the backlog, and provide veterans with their earned benefits."

Randall Fisher, a VSO for the Legion's Department of Kentucky, testified to the committee that VA claims processors often lack sufficient training to tackle the "staggering" problem of nearly 900,000 backlogged claims – over 65 percent of them pending for more than 165 days.

Questioned by the committee on how VA could improve its training, Fisher noted that VA employees often lack basic medical understanding. As an example, he cited one claims examiner insisting that a doctor who mentioned that a patient

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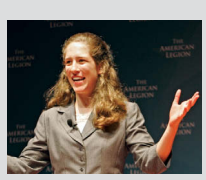

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MAY

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5-6 SAL Spring NEC Meetings, Indianapolis

6 Child Welfare Foundation board of directors meeting, Indianapolis

7-10 Spring NEC Meetings, Indianapolis

9 100-percent membership target date

15 Peace Officers Memorial Day

19 Armed Forces Day

28 Memorial Day

31 End of Child Welfare Foundation award year

JUNE

14 Flag Day (Pause for the Pledge, 7 p.m. EDT)

JULY

1 Department Children & Youth reports due to National Headquarters

4 Independence Day

15 Child Welfare Foundation grant applications due to National Headquarters (postmarked NLT)

20-27 American Legion Boys Nation, Washington

26-28 National Membership Workshop, Indianapolis

26-28 Department Service Officers School, Indianapolis

COMMANDER'S MESSAGE

Protecting the flag worth the fight

Have you ever had the privilege of attending the funeral of a veteran or a servicemember killed in the line of duty? I'm quite certain that most Legionnaires, at one time or another, have stood at the graveside of an American who wore the uniform, rendering a final salute. In fact, thousands regularly volunteer their time to be part of their post's honor guard, considering it a sacred duty to pay tribute to our departed comrades and their families.

Fang A. Wong
National Commander

Every moment of these ceremonies is moving, but perhaps the most powerful is when a servicemember steps forward to present the U.S. flag to the surviving family. Every time, that flag has been meticulously folded, usually by two representatives from the deceased's branch of service, and is gently placed in the hands of the widow, the parents or the children, on behalf of a grateful nation.

Sometime between the folding of the flag and the presentation, a lump forms in my throat. At times, I've had to blink back tears. Even the most stoic of men labor to keep their emotions in check as Old Glory – folded smartly so that only the blue and the stars are showing – is received by surviving family members. There is no greater sendoff to Americans who in wartime put our country first, and no better way to thank the loved ones who supported them.

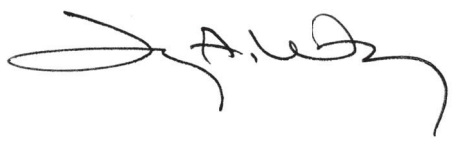
For more than 200 years, U.S. flags have draped the caskets of young and old alike, from those who made the supreme sacrifice in battle to those who made it home. In every case, the flag honors what they gave to America and, for their loved ones, conveys the nation's gratitude.

At other times, the Stars and Stripes rallies Americans. Raised at Ground Zero in the grim days following 9/11, our flag sent a message to friends and enemies that the United States wouldn't go quietly into the night. For legal immigrants aspiring to American citizenship, the flag has long meant the hope for a better life. For Olympic athletes about to receive a medal, the flag embodies pride in self and country.

There is no symbol more powerful in our nation, yet because of a 1989 Supreme Court decision, that symbol remains unprotected against physical desecration. Every time the U.S. flag is burned or ripped, it's an affront to those of us who know it's far more than a piece of cloth.

For more than 20 years, The American Legion has led the campaign against flag desecration, lobbying Congress on behalf of the millions of Americans who support a constitutional amendment that would return to the people the right to protect their flag. Currently, two pieces of legislation – H.J. Res 13 in the House, S.J. Res. 13 in the Senate – await action. They say, simply: "The Congress shall have power to prohibit the physical desecration of the flag of the United States."

So far, there are 82 co-sponsors in the House, and 33 have signed on in the Senate. That's not enough. Contact your elected senators and representatives. If they're co-sponsors, thank them. If they're not, ask them to sign on to show their support for the legislation. We've made it easy to contact them online through the Legislative Action Center (**capwiz.com/legion/home/**). There is no symbol more powerful or more worth protecting than our flag.



Memoranda

NATIONAL CONVENTION HITS FACEBOOK

A new American Legion National Convention page has been created on Facebook. The page is designed to allow American Legion family members to share information about American Legion national conventions and interact with other Legionnaires who plan on attending the national convention. All Legion family members are encouraged to visit the page and click "Like."

www.facebook.com/TheAmericanLegionNationalConvention

'PAUSE FOR THE PLEDGE' JUNE 14

On June 14 at 7 p.m., Americans across the country will pause to recite the Pledge of Allegiance. The Pause for the Pledge was started in 1980 by a small group of patriotic Baltimore business leaders. It has since evolved into a national event, with communities and organizations across the country conducting their own Pause for the Pledge.

Dispatch

Published monthly.
Printed by HNE Printers, Columbus, Ind.

All American Legion publications are entitled and encouraged to reproduce all staff-written stories within, but please credit *Dispatch* as the source.

A proud member of The National American Legion Press Association.

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P.O. Box 1055
Indianapolis, IN 46206

Subscriptions or customer service:
(317) 630-1298

Annual subscription rate: **$15**

Editorial office: **(317) 630-1352**

Fax: **(317) 630-1280**

Online: **www.legion.org**

STILL SERVING AMERICA

*Does your post have a unique community program, an innovative recruiting method or a creative way of spreading the Legion message that could be implemented at posts across the country? Tell us how your post and its members are **Still Serving America.***

*In submitting your information, include your full name, address and telephone number. Send your items, labeled **Still Serving America**, to the correspondence address at left.*

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ACTIVATION

Want to get involved in one of The American Legion's many national programs? Do you have a question about veterans affairs, national defense or what is going on in Washington? All you have to do is pick up the phone or send an e-mail.

Americanism/Children & Youth
(317) 630-1203
acy@legion.org

Economic
(202) 861-2700
econ@legion.org

Finance
317-630-1222
finance@legion.org

Internal Affairs
(317) 630-1330
ia@legion.org

Legislation
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emblem@legion.org
emblem.legion.org

Public Relations
(317) 630-1253
pr@legion.org

The American Legion Magazine
(317) 630-1298
magazine@legion.org

The American Legion Library
(317) 630-1366
library@legion.org

Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation
(202) 861-2700
var@legion.org

American Legion Baseball
(317) 630-1249
jquinlan@legion.org
legion.org/baseball

American Legion Child Welfare Foundation
(317) 630-1202
www.cwf-inc.org

American Legion Endowment Fund
(317) 630-1202

American Legion Riders
(317) 630-1327
legionriders@legion.org

Boys Nation
(317) 630-1207
acy@legion.org

Family Support Network
(317) 630-1395
(800) 504-4098
familysupport@legion.org

Junior Shooting Sports
(317) 630-1249
cshort@legion.org

Legion College
(317) 630-1265
mherndon@legion.org

National Emergency Fund
(317) 630-1321
ia@legion.org

National Oratorical Contest
(317) 630-1249
cshort@legion.org

Sons of The American Legion
SAL@legion.org

NATIONAL ADJUTANT'S MESSAGE

'You just do it'

Gary, Ind., Legion post opens its doors to workers following Easter Sunday train derailment.

By Daniel S. Wheeler

American Legion posts aren't in the business of closing themselves off to the rest of their community. Many times, the post itself is the center of the community – whether it's hosting celebrations, organization Memorial and Veterans Day parades, or serving as a source for many of the community's youth programs.

But sometimes, community involvement takes on another meaning: stepping up in a time of need. It's when Post 279 in Gary, Ind., came to the aid of UPS and CSX train workers when an Easter Sunday derailment sent six train cars off the track and scattered UPS packages throughout the crash area.

Dozens of UPS trucks descended on the area in an attempt to recover as many of its customers' packages as possible. And when UPS got word of the situation, so did some Post 279 Legionnaires. "We were closed at the time, but when I heard about it I got a few people together and headed to the post," Post Commander Billy Rose said. "There were packages in the post's yard, and there were workers everywhere trying to clean things up. It was a pretty chaotic scene."

The post was able to bring some order to the chaos, immediately opening its doors and offering the use of its rest room facilities and providing a place for workers to rest. The kitchen also opened up, and post workers spent the better part of 24 straight hours making sure the UPS and CSX employees were fed during their recovery efforts.

"We just wanted to do whatever we could to make the situation a little easier," Rose said. "It's what you do when you're part of a community. You help out when someone needs you. We knew it was a dire situation. When that happens, you just do it. I told them, 'You tell them what you need, and we'll do it."

Post 279's efforts went noticed by those affected. Robert Latchford, UPS' Chicago Area Consolidation Hub operations manager, thanked Rose and the post in a letter, writing "It is often through adversity that the true character of a human being is revealed. The April 8th train derailment in Gary, Indiana, that brought an army of UPSers to the scene for the recovery of customers' packages, provided such an opportunity.

"You are to be commended for demonstrating a spirit of service to the entire UPS team. Your thoughtfulness is very much appreciated by all of the workers at the scene. It will forever be remembered in future years as this event is relived in the minds of all of those involved."

Rose was impressed with the letter but doesn't feel comfortable talking about it. "That's not why we did this," he said. "It was superb, and we appreciated it, but we did it because this is part of being in The American Legion. It was another chance to serve."

I didn't hear about Post 279's efforts from the post itself. It took UPS sending a copy of Mr. Latchford's letter to me for bringing word to National Headquarters. I'm not surprised as legionnaires aren't ones to sing their own accolades. They don't do what they do to see their names in the paper, hear about themselves on TV or receive accolades from this building.

As they have since 1919, they do it because it's who they are.

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"(with) neuropathy in all extremities" had made no mention of "hands and feet."

In written testimony submitted to the committee, the Legion noted, "Too often in speaking to VA employees, we hear of training as an afterthought, something that gets in the way of working .... We hear VA employees at the regional offices dismiss cases by the CAVC (Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims) as 'something the Board (of Veterans Appeals) deals with, not the RO,' when, unfortunately, that is far from the truth. If regional offices better implemented the (precedent-setting) decisions from the CAVC at the local level, claims wouldn't have to go to the Board."

Tom Murphy, VA's director of compensation service, also testified at the hearing. He noted that well-trained VSOs "provide invaluable guidance to veterans filing claims" and work with the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) to "ensure that complete and accurate information is available to facilitate correct disability and compensation decisions."

Since 2008, VSOs have been able to participate in VA's Training, Responsibility, Involvement and Preparation of Claims (TRIP) program. The program was developed to improve overall service to veterans by training VSOs in claims processing and familiarizing them with VBA computer systems. So far, more than 4,100 VSOs have registered for TRIP, with 3,385 passing the final exam.

"TRIP training is a critical part of VBA's goals to improve access and transparency to the disability-claims process, and thereby improve efficiency," Murphy told the committee.

VBA is also implementing its Transformation Plan, a series of initiatives designed to eliminate the claims backlog and achieve VA's goal of processing all claims within 125 days, with 98-percent accuracy, by 2015. "We are confident that we are on the right path to deliver more timely and accurate benefits decisions to our nation's veterans," Murphy said. "VSO involvement in our Transformation Plan is extremely important, especially as we shift from a paper-based to a paperless electronic process system."

Another initiative VA is working with VSOs to fully implement is the Fully Developed Claims (FDC) initiative, which aims to process claims within 90 days of their receipt. FDC's one-year pilot program was so successful that VA decided to expand it across all regional offices. "Claims representatives are critical to the FDC initiative, as they assist in gathering supporting evidence for a disability claim and helping the veteran to certify that no additional evidence is necessary to make a decision on the claim," Murphy said.

The Legion's testimony also looked at VA's work-credit system for its claims processors: "Much of the inherent culture at VA revolves around the number of claims completed. Unfortunately, it is somewhat lacking in the critical accuracy component of getting the claim done right .... Accuracy and training just don't merit the same consideration as meeting the quotas and getting the right number of claims done each week."

The VA claims process could also benefit greatly by hiring more veterans to get the job done. Their military experience and training gives them an automatic advantage over nonveterans in understanding the context and details of disability claims. "Whether we are understanding abbreviations used on a DD-214 discharge document or understanding the nature of noise exposure suffered by a lance corporal assigned to an artillery unit, we know how to read a veteran's file because the language of the military subculture is our native language," the Legion wrote.

To reduce the VA claims backlog and improve the claims-adjudication process, the Legion offered three recommendations: Hire more veterans, make training a priority and re-evaluate the work-credit system.

Fisher, a former nurse manager who retired from VA, said after the hearing that claims processors "do have quotas and that really puts a lot of pressure on them at the end of the month. A lot of times, they adjudicate claims that probably need further development. This causes a lot of appeals and delays the claims process."

As to whether the work-credit system for claims processors is necessary as an incentive, Fisher said, "The (VA) pay is good and people would love to have jobs at the VA, especially the veterans coming back. We think they need to hire more veterans because they have that knowledge about what it means to be on a firing line, a flight line, or being a combat engineer. A lot of the kids they're hiring are straight out of college, and they don't have that kind of experience."

SOCIAL MEDIA

New National Convention Facebook page launched

The American Legion has launched a new National Convention Facebook page. The page is designed to allow American Legion family members to share information about Legion national conventions, and interact with other Legionnaires who plan on attending the national convention.

The 2012 National Convention will take place Aug. 24-30 in Indianapolis, home of The American Legion National Headquarters. Leading up to the event, Facebook users are encouraged to share their favorite local spots in Indianapolis – dining, entertainment, historical or otherwise – on the page, to provide an insider's perspective on the Hoosier State.

The page will also provide pertinent information about the national convention, such as hotel assignments, airfare discounts and tourist attractions; as well as valuable links, an updated convention calendar, and whatever other items Legion members want to post regarding Indianapolis and this year's national convention, as well as for future national conventions.

Legion family members are encouraged to go to the page and click "Like."

www.facebook.com/TheAmericanLegionNationalConvention

CONVENTION

Color guard contest moved to Friday

This year's American Legion color guard contest has been moved from its normal day of Saturday to Friday, Aug. 24, during the 94th National Convention in Indianapolis.

"The decision to move the National Color Guard Contest to Friday evening is a great step forward," said Dave Priester, chief contest judge. "This move allows delegates, usually in meetings on Saturday morning, an opportunity to watch and support their favorite American Legion color guard.

"I cannot think of a better way to start the convention weekend. The pageantry of the contest is not only a testament to past and present military members, but also to our national flag."

The band contest will be Saturday, Aug. 25, its traditional day. Contact the Convention & Meetings Office at **(317) 630-1292** with any questions. Updated rules and entry forms for both contests are available on the Convention Web page.

www.legion.org/convention

SCHOLARSHIPS

Indiana youth claims Oratorical win

Rebecca Frazer of Morgantown, Ind., is The American Legion's 75th High School Oratorical Scholarship Program champion.

Rebecca Frazer of Morgantown, Ind., was crowned The American Legion's 75th High School Oratorical Scholarship Program champion April 15 in Indianapolis. Frazer's winning oration, "Maintaining Liberty, the People's Call," earned her first place and an $18,000 scholarship.

Frazer is a returning Oratorical candidate, but she didn't advance past the national quarterfinals in 2011. So Frazer, sponsored by Post 230 in Martinsville, was more than elated after earning a spot in this year's finals, and eventually claiming the first-place finish.

"I was so excited, I was thrilled, and ever since last year I have wanted to talk on the big stage in front of everyone," Frazer said. "I have enjoyed the experience, and I'm so thankful."

Second place was awarded to Charles Baines of Meridian, Idaho, who was sponsored by Post 113 and earned a $16,000 scholarship for his oration, "Good Fences Make Good Neighbors." Third place was awarded to John Donaldson IV of Eden Prairie, Minn., who was sponsored by Post 118 and earned a $14,000 scholarship for his oration, "The Constitution the Framers Loaned to Us."

Once Frazer, Baines and Donaldson took the auditorium stage, they each presented their rehearsed eight- to 10-minute oration in front of a large audience filled with family, Legionnaires, the other 49 Oratorical candidates and a panel of six judges. These judges consisted of attorneys, law professors, speech and debate coaches, and journalists.

Preceding the orations, the three finalists presented a three- to five-minute speech on an assigned topic discourse – a phase of the Constitution selected from Articles and Sections. The assigned topic for the championship finals was drawn by National Commander Fang A. Wong and was made known to the audience and each finalist five minutes prior to the time of delivery.

The assigned topic chosen was Amendment 15, Section 1: "The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude."

The amendment chosen gave Frazer the extra confidence needed to take the overall win.

"This was the first time I got to speak on Amendment 15 during this competition, and it was my favorite (assigned topic) that I had written," Frazer said. "I was actually praying before the contest, 'God, let me get Amendment 15,' because I wanted to give my speech. So I was thrilled when they drew it. I think my prep monitor saw a little jump in the room of excitement."

Visit **www.legion.org** to watch Frazer's winning oration and assigned topic, as well as an interview with the 75th Oratorical champion.

Meanwhile, all 52 Oratorical participants received a monetary award for their achievement and involvement in the contest. Everyone who participated in the quarterfinals received a $1,500 scholarship, while the nine contestants who advanced to semifinals received an additional $1,500. More importantly, Joseph Caouette, chairman of the Legion's National Americanism Commission, provided remarks of encouragement to the candidates, emphasizing that "you are all champions. You did not lose here. Remember that."

Frazer now joins an elite group of Oratorical champions. Review the list of past champions online.

www.legion.org/oratorical/champions

Top: Indiana's Rebecca Frazer delivers her winning oration, earning an $18,000 scholarship. Above: (from left) second-place finisher Charles Baines, Frazer, and third-place finisher John Donaldson IV. *Tom Strattman*

VETERANS HEALTH CARE

Legion's VA site visits underway

The Legion has begun its next round of System Worth Saving trips to VA medical centers.

Focusing on patient satisfaction and overall quality of health care, The American Legion's System Worth Saving (SWS) Task Force will evaluate 25 Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical facilities throughout the next three months.

Created in 2003, the SWS program conducts site visits to VA facilities every six months, getting feedback from patients and staff about the quality and timeliness of health care. For each round of visits, an area of special concern is highlighted; last fall, SWS focused on the quality of health care in rural areas. Reports from site visits are published biannually and distributed to Legion leadership, VA officials, all members of Congress and the president.

"Our task force wants to examine how quality of care and patient satisfaction is defined, measured and managed," said Jacob Gadd, deputy director of health care in the Legion's Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Division. "We also want to know about the positive experiences veterans have with VA health care, as well as the challenges."

From April 16 to June 14, SWS Task Force members will evaluate VA medical facilities in the following cities: New York, St. Louis, Baltimore, Washington, Milwaukee, Chicago, Cincinnati, New Orleans, San Diego, San Francisco, Lyons, N.J.; Des Moines, Iowa; Omaha, Neb.; Columbia and Charleston, S.C.; Durham and Salisbury, N.C.; Nashville and Memphis, Tenn.; Biloxi, Miss.; Tacoma and Vancouver, Wash.; Sacramento and Long Beach, Calif.; and Columbus, Ohio.

A full schedule for this spring's remaining SWS site visits is below and can be viewed at the Legion's website.

During site visits, SWS Task Force members will also hold veterans focus groups at Legion posts and department headquarters. Gadd said the focus groups are an excellent opportunity to hear firsthand from local veterans about experiences and concerns over health care at their respective VA facilities. "If you're a veteran getting health care at one of the medical centers our task force is visiting, we encourage you to attend one of these focus groups," Gadd said.

Veterans are also encouraged to participate in the Legion's online survey, which asks questions about patient satisfaction and health-care quality at VA medical centers.

For more information on the SWS program, or to discuss successes or challenges encountered at VA facilities, email **jgadd@legion.org**.

www.legion.org/systemworthsaving
www.surveymonkey.com/s/N39VLTY

VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System in Omaha, Neb., received a visit from System Worth Saving (SWS) Task Force members in mid-April. *Veterans Health*

Site visit schedule

- May 13-18 – Nashville, Tenn. (VMAC), Memphis, Tenn. (VMAC), St. Louis (VMAC)
- May 14-18 – Baltimore (VMAC), Washington, D.C. (VMAC)
- May 14-18 – Milwaukee (VMAC), Chicago (VMAC)
- May 20-23 – New Orleans (VMAC), Biloxi, Miss. (VMAC)
- May 21-24 – Tacoma, Wash. (VMAC), Vancouver, Wash. (VMAC)
- June 4-8 – San Diego (VMAC), Long Beach, Calif. (VMAC)
- June 4-8 – Sacramento, Calif. (VMAC), San Francisco (VMAC)
- June 11-14 – Columbus, Ohio (VMAC), Cincinnati (VMAC)

EMPLOYMENT

The right set of skills, values for the job

Nearly 1,000 veterans and their spouses turn out for Hiring Our Heroes career fair in Chicago, bringing with them the tools to do the job.

By Steve B. Brooks

When Tony Segalla left the Air Force and wanted to pursue a career in the financial industry, he wasn't exactly welcomed with open arms. He and fellow veteran Mark Powell – both Chicago-area financial advisors for Edward Jones – manned a booth for four hours on March 28 to make sure fellow veterans aren't getting the same treatment.

The pair participated in the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's Hiring Our Heroes job fair at the Chicago Hilton. The fair – a celebration, of sorts, of the Chamber's one-year anniversary of the program – featured 135 local and national companies. More than 900 veterans and spouses preregistered to attend the fair; dozens more showed up at the door.

"When I applied (at one financial company), they told me, 'You're not a salesman,'" said Segalla, who spent 10 years on active duty and another 10 in the Air Force reserves before retiring in 2008. "But Edward Jones looked at me and said, 'With your military background, we know the ethics you have. We know the standards you have.' That's why I'm here. You can teach someone to be a salesman. But when you hire a veteran, you know you are getting a certain set of values, ethics and standards, which can help you become an entrepreneur."

Launched in March 2011, Hiring Our Heroes has conducted nearly 120 career fairs in 45 states over the past year, helping put more than 8,500 veterans and spouses in jobs. The Chamber has partnered with NBC News to spread the word. "TODAY" did a segment on the program March 28, broadcasting from USS *Intrepid* in New York and reporting from Chicago and Fort Hood, Texas.

"When we announced our partnership with the "TODAY" show and NBC, and we brought on the Legion, the VFW, the (Illinois) Comptroller's Office, it seemed like a perfect storm of partnerships to make it as successful as it is today," said Marady Leary, director of events for Hiring Our Heroes. "(The relationship with NBC) is very critical because there's only so much marketing we can do through the local partnerships. To get to the masses, we need an outlet like NBC."

But organizations like the Legion are critical to Hiring Our Heroes' success, Leary said. "We're really trying to partner with the Legion posts across the nation to help them host hiring fairs in their hometowns. There are a lot of businesses that are looking to go into rural communities that we might not have saturated yet. Over the next year, 200 of the 400 (Hiring Our Heroes) events are going to be Legion events."

The Legion was one of the partners in the Chicago event. Department of Illinois Legionnaires manned two booths at the fair, handing out literature on Legion programs and answering benefits questions.

"Job fairs are wonderful events for returning veterans coming home to no jobs," said Department of Illinois Vice Commander Wayne Wagner. "We're here to help in any way that we can ... and get the employers and unemployed veterans together, and provide those employers with very well-qualified and very well-trained employees through the job fair.

"We're here to inform the veterans of their benefits available, and that there's a wide variety. If they're disabled, we have service officers to help them with their claims. We're also explaining any programs The American Legion has for their dependents if they need help in any way."

Working the job fair meant a busy day for Department of Illinois VA&R Director Wayne Macejak, who spoke with several veterans who had no idea that they were eligible for VA benefits, or that their benefits could increase as their conditions worsened. "That's the reason I'm doing this," he said.

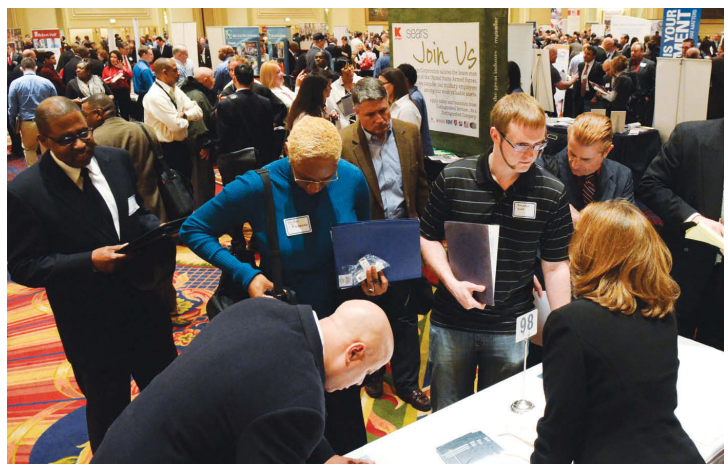
An impressive lineup of employers manned booths at the Hilton – Walmart, Chase, Farmers Insurance, Allstate, NBC and Northrop Grumman, among others. Many of the employers spoke of the value of hiring veterans and the skills they bring to civilian workplaces.

"This isn't us doing something for the veteran," said Eric Chibnik, senior vice president of GE Capital, Americas in Chicago. "This pool of talent, they have the characteristics and the traits and the skills that we need in all of our divisions – whether it's our industrial side or our capital side. These folks, they're disciplined, they've faced unbelievably difficult conditions, they've learned to work great in a team environment, and all those basic skills and character traits are vital to finding great employees. It's really an ideal talent pool for us."

Job-seeking advice was also available. Navistar and local volunteers worked together to provide résumé-writing tips and interview coaching. "We also have what we call veterans mentors," said Jan Barbour, who volunteers in the Veterans Community Relations office in Naperville, Ill. "These are handpicked veterans from Iraq, Afghanistan, Vietnam, Korea, who are here to talk to veterans. These are people who have been successful in their private lives who can talk to the veterans, nod and say, 'I've been there.'"

For Army veteran Martin McGrenera, the fair was an excellent opportunity to test the employment waters with a wide variety of employers. The 31-year-old McGrenera, who served in the Army from 2000 to 2008, is currently majoring in computer science at Northeastern Illinois University while working part time. "It was very encouraging," he said. "There can't be enough job fairs. There's so many people every day getting out of the military facing the same thing we're all facing."

www.uschamber.com/hiringourheroes



Above: Résumé-review services were provided by Navistar and volunteers. Right: More than 900 veterans attended the job fair in Chicago. *Sarah Tilotta*

CAREERS

Guard summit shows value of hiring veterans

Around 130 representatives from companies convened on Lambeau Field in Green Bay, Wis., to hear about the benefits of employing veterans.

By Andy Romey

The confines of Lambeau Field have seen greats like Vince Lombardi, Bart Starr and Brett Favre, but the country's real heroes were the focus at the legendary stadium during the Wisconsin National Guard Business Summit on March 30. Corporate employment experts, state Guard officers and government representatives all convened in the home of the Packers in Green Bay, Wis., to convey one message: that a veteran brings unique value to a company. The American Legion Department of Wisconsin helped sponsor portions of the event, and staff members from Legion National Headquarters were in attendance.

The inaugural summit welcomed around 130 business representatives from companies like Walmart, Oshkosh and Alliant Energy to hear about how veterans make ideal employees, with their service-learned skills, discipline and federal insurance benefits that can help an employer's bottom line.

"They come with great attitudes, great aptitudes, are very assertive, have leadership, judgment and are safety-oriented," said Mike Hinz, vice president of driver recruiting at Schneider National. "These are all things any employer would want in a great employee, and they manifest themselves in our military men and women."

Wisconsin National Guard Adj. Gen. Donald Dunbar echoed similar sentiments about the benefits of hiring veterans. Dunbar noted that the unemployment rate for post-9/11 veterans is currently at 12.3 percent, and "soft numbers" indicate that the unemployment rate for Guardsmen and reservists might be above 20 percent. To him, the solution is showing companies the practical and economic benefits of hiring a veteran who often comes with specialized training and state-provided insurance.

"I think when a business man or woman sees the quality that can come from hiring a veteran, they are going to run and try to hire them," Dunbar said. "It's just a matter of spreading the word, and we are doing that now."

Department of Wisconsin Commander Denise Rohan and other department Legionnaires were integral in arranging the summit and providing sponsorship. The department is proactive in finding veterans employment and hosts job fairs around the state. "The very first resolution to come to the National Convention in 1919 was about employment of our veterans and making sure that our disabled World War I veterans have jobs," Rohan said. "It just seems natural that The American Legion continues through the years to make sure that are heroes are hired when they come home."

Dunbar sees efforts like the Legion's as evidence of a changing culture and public perception of the military.

"I really credit the Legion and the veterans who served in the Vietnam era who maybe had a different experience with the public than the one we're having today," he said. "I think they've made a decision that things are going to be different, and they've really laid a foundation to help this generation with its connection to the American public."

DATELINE: CAPITOL HILL

Senate passes veteran certification language

The Senate passed a measure which The American Legion considers a "good first step" in paving the way for qualified military veterans to more easily obtain commercial driver's licenses (CDLs).

On March 14, by a vote of 74-22, senators approved the surface transportation authorization bill (**S.1813**), known as the "Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century" bill. In it is an amendment that requires the Secretary of Transportation to convene a study assessing the barriers faced by qualified servicemembers and veterans wishing to obtain a CDL. As it stands, in some states, well-trained and experienced license seekers – such as current and former military-truck drivers – must undergo further training and testing that advocates consider unnecessary, expensive and time-consuming. The amendment was introduced by Sen. Olympia Snowe, R-Maine, and had the support of several other senators from both parties.

In mid-February, American Legion National Commander Fang A. Wong wrote a letter to Snowe in support of her bill that would have pressed for expeditious recognition of training that servicemembers receive toward a CDL.

Her proposed legislation, **S. 2084**, directs, "Not later than 1 year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Transportation, in consultation with the Secretary of Defense and in cooperation with the States, shall establish accelerated licensing procedures to assist veterans to acquire commercial driver's licenses." That bill remains in Senate committee hands.

To their credit, a number of state departments of motor vehicles – including those in Georgia, Michigan, Missouri, New York, North Carolina, Oregon, Pennsylvania and Utah – have established procedures for the quick issuance of CDLs to current and recently discharged military-vehicle operators. Several other states are considering similar measures.

S. 1813 now awaits action in the House of Representatives. The Legion is hopeful for final passage of this legislation.

Kenneth F. Governor
Chairman, National Legislative Commission

Legion attends committee hearing on homeless veterans

On March 14, The Legion attended a Senate Veterans Affairs Committee hearing on homeless-veteran programs and the challenges facing communities and VA to end veteran homelessness by 2015.

Although the trend on the number of veterans who are homeless continues to decline, witnesses expressed skepticism of the accuracy of those counts – which currently include more than 67,000 veterans – and of the ability of VA to leverage existing data against programs to end homelessness.

Two of the most poignant witnesses were two homeless female veterans who had used the VA system. While their initial engagement with VA highlighted a need for better case management, their ultimate success in nonprofit transitional-housing programs became one of the highlights of the hearing.

As Ranking Member Sen. Richard Burr, R-N.C., noted, cooperation and coordination between VA, HUD and nonprofits are essential to success. "VA is focused on the crisis *du jour* while these [nonprofit and community-based organizations] are focusing on meeting the needs of homeless veterans," he said.

Perhaps the most striking data revealed that despite a $200 million increase in funding during the past year, the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) has no standards for security, grant monitoring or program oversight once the grants are offered. Of the funds distributed in 2010, all lacked guidance on security measures for veteran participants, including female veterans in homeless housing. One-third failed to address the unique issues of women veterans in their grant applications. Of the facilities surveyed, 27 percent did not have adequate control of the medicines provided to the residents. Nearly half of the VA regional offices failed to do specific outreach programs.

When asked how these security implications weighed upon her choice to stay at a homeless transitional facility, one female veteran testified, "I'd rather stay in my car with my kids than stay in an unsafe homeless facility."

Ultimately, although the trend is decreasing, troubling anecdotal stories and evaluation of VA's efforts towards ending homelessness are a cause for concern. As the VA Office of Inspector General testified, "The VA does not have the data necessary to end homelessness." As more and more money is allocated toward ending veteran homelessness, this finding – absent a plan to obtain the data – remains troubling to the Legion.

Other witnesses and testimony encouraged VA and Congress to look toward improvement of the per diem and grant program. Items considered include:

- Adding a cost-of-living increase in the per diem allocation to keep pace with existing costs associated with veteran care.
- Encouraging capital funding grants, to be matched by the nonprofits, to facilitate construction of new homeless transitional facilities, especially those for women and veterans with families.
- Minimizing or eliminating coed veteran housing to maximize the safety of residents.
- Providing additional funding for innovative treatment and care of homeless veterans suffering from PTS, TBI and other maladies.

In her opening statement, Chairman Patty Murray, D-Wash., bluntly stated her concerns about homeless women veterans: "We cannot violate their trust and safety when we place them in homeless-veteran housing," she said.

Senate hearing addresses possible BRAC activities

On March 21, the Legion attended a hearing on military construction, environmental and base closure programs, conducted by the Senate Armed Services Subcommittee on Readiness and Management Support. The hearing's purpose was to review these programs as presented by President Obama for the Defense Authorization Act for fiscal 2013.

The witnesses included Dorothy Robyn, deputy undersecretary of Defense for installations and environment; Katherine Hammack, assistant secretary of the Army (installations, energy and environment); Jackalyne Pfannenstiel, assistant secretary of the Navy (energy, installations and environment); and Terry Yonkers, assistant secretary of the Air Force (installations, environment and logistics).

The main point of contention at this hearing was the president's request for new Base Realignment and Closure Commission (BRAC) authority in fiscal 2013 and 2015. In answer to the president's request, both Subcommittee Chairman Claire McCaskill, D-Mo., and Ranking Member Kelly Ayotte, R-N.H., announced that they will block any efforts to create a new base closing commission. Consequently, it appears that this authority will not pass for fiscal 2013.

This does not mean that base realignments and closures will not happen overseas, as the president does not need congressional authority for those actions. In addition, this is a policy decision, and thus no budget money was allocated in the budget request; policy denial by Congress does not affect the budget debate at all.

The main concerns the senators raised for not supporting this authority were the upfront costs it would take to go through this process, and the ability to build bases up again if necessary. The witnesses all said that the authority was necessary, due to upcoming force reductions and the need to be rid of excess infrastructure.

Further witness testimony indicated the following items of interest to the Legion:

- The reduction in construction funding for family housing occurred because the Department of Defense only builds such housing overseas now, as family housing in the United States has been privatized;
- Requests for other construction funds are fewer for fiscal 2013 because DoD plans to begin realignment actions based on troop reduction beginning in fiscal 2014; DoD wants to defer construction for this fiscal year in order to study the ramifications of the troop reduction and how it will affect bases; and
- There will be increases in funding for the energy-reduction and water-conservation programs.

House subcommittee examines veterans employment, training programs

On March 21, the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies held a hearing devoted to veteran employment and training programs. The hearing was to help ascertain the status of veteran-jobs programs being implemented through the Department of Labor, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and a Connecticut nonprofit organization called The Work-Place. The WorkPlace acts as the Workforce Investment Board for southwestern Connecticut, and operates three "One-Stop Career Centers."

Witnesses at the hearing included Ishmael Ortiz, deputy assistant secretary for veterans' employment and training at the Department of Labor; Kevin Schmiegel, vice president at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and executive director of the Hiring Our Heroes initiative; and Joseph Carbone, president and CEO of The WorkPlace.

Ortiz began by providing an overview of the veteran-specific programs run through DoL – specifically, Jobs for Veterans State Grants (JVSG), Transition Assistance Program (TAP) employment workshops, the Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program (HVRP), the Veterans Workforce Investment Program (VWIP), the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA), and veterans preference in federal employment. Each of these programs works directly with veterans to assist in the development of their job skills through training opportunities, as well as matching veterans with job opportunities in their area.

The JVSG program utilizes Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) specialists and Local Veterans' Employment Representatives (LVERs) at One-Stop centers throughout the country, working with veterans to facilitate their matching with employment and training opportunities. TAP provides separating active-duty servicemembers and demobilizing National Guard and reserve members with training designed to equip them with vital skills for acquiring employment. HVRP is aimed at providing employment and training specifically to homeless veterans. VWIP provides competitive grants for training,

See SENATE on Page 7

SENATE from Page 6

retraining and employment for recently separated veterans, veterans with service-connected disabilities, veterans with significant barriers to employment, or combat veterans. USERRA and veterans-preference programs provide protection for the jobs of reservists who are called up to active duty, and allow veterans to gain preference in the hiring practices of federal agencies.

Ortiz highlighted several initiatives being piloted by DoL:

- The National Resource Directory and its Veterans Job Bank, which are Web-based resources aimed at linking veterans with services that support rehabilitation, reintegration and employment;
- The Gold Card initiative, which provides unemployed post-9/11 veterans with services they need to succeed in today's job market;
- The Veterans Transportation and Community Living Initiative grant program, which provides disabled servicemembers and their families access to employment-related transportation; and
- The United Services Military Apprenticeship and Guard Apprenticeship programs, which provide active-duty servicemembers and Guardsmen an opportunity to improve their job skills and obtain certification for a variety of jobs.

Schmiegel discussed the Hiring Our Heroes initiative being implemented by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. Hiring Our Heroes is an integrated program, utilizing the public and private sectors on national, state and local levels in order to successfully reduce veteran unemployment and provide veterans with meaningful employment. In the first year, he said, the program has exceeded its goal of 100 job fairs in 45 states. In the second year, the goal is to increase that number to 400 and to increase existing programs to better serve veterans.

Carbone expounded upon several programs being implemented in Connecticut. The Incarcerated Veterans Transition Program provides incarcerated veterans at risk for homelessness with options for stable housing, as well as employment services, beginning prior to release. And the Sector-Based Veterans Program offers classroom and on-the-job training to recently separated veterans that provides credentials in the green and renewable-energy sector.

Reevaluating the transition from servicemember to veteran

The House Veterans Affairs Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs conducted a hearing March 28 to discuss the ongoing problems faced by transitioning veterans. The primary focus of the hearing was the implementation by the departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs of the new Integrated Disability Evaluation System (IDES).

While improvement has been made, problems remain with the implementation of IDES, and it has yet to be fully implemented. It has failed to meet deadlines this year for full implementation despite being in active use at 139 VA and DoD locations. According to testimony from Kenneth Fisher of the Fisher House Foundation, the pilot programs were able to drop the process time from 500 days on average to just under 300 days; however, that average has been creeping back up toward the 500-day figure since being rolled out into a fuller implementation.

Further problems exist with confusion between VA and DoD examiners performing compensation and pension exams, as well as with concerns that servicemembers navigating the evaluation process are not able to be adequately served by outside counsel (such as the Legion) to ensure they receive a fair shake at the process.

Other members of Congress vented frustration at DoD officials over the evaluation of mental-health conditions. Specifically, they raised widely publicized concerns noted at Madigan Army Medical Center in Washington state, as well as at other locations, where servicemembers have been improperly diagnosed with personality disorders instead of post-traumatic stress. Rep. Tim Walz, DFL-Minn., was particularly fiery in his grilling, asking, "How can we have soldiers, serving for eight years through multiple deployments with honor, suddenly find out they had a pre-existing 'personality disorder' that disqualifies them from service? How can you explain to me that that soldier was good enough for all those deployments but isn't good enough now that it's not convenient?"

The tenor of the hearing suggested that improvements had been made, but that there is still a long road to travel to ensure that our transitioning veterans are getting the justice and treatment they are entitled to through their dedicated service.

CAREERS

Legion provides virtual hub for job seekers

Legion.org page gives veterans valuable employment tips.

Since World War I, The American Legion has been dedicated to ensuring that those who serve their country have employment opportunities waiting for them when they return home. Even in an age of electronic résumés, social-media-based networking and massive job-search engines, the Legion's focus on employment hasn't changed.

Finding a post-military career often requires as much technical savvy as it does old-fashioned interviewing skills and marketability. The Legion recognizes this and provides veterans and transitioning servicemembers with a valuable job resource – its Advice for Job Seekers page, which features advice from employment experts on résumé-writing, job-searching and managing your online identity in a way that attracts prospective employers.

Renowned career expert Wendy Enelow pens the bimonthly column, which appears in *The American Legion Magazine* and on **legion.org**. Check in each month.

Another way to easily keep abreast of the Legion's efforts in veterans employment is through the American Legion Career Center e-newsletter. Subscribers receive regular updates on the Legion's involvement in career fairs and veterans hiring programs.

www.legion.org/jobfront
www.legion.org/careers/enewsletter

LEGISLATIVE

Maintain advocacy by keeping updated with Legion legislative e-list

Legislative advocacy is one of The American Legion's most powerful weapons in its fight to protect and enhance benefits for veterans and military families.

If you're a member of the Legion family, you can add your voice to the Legion's ongoing advocacy efforts among members of Congress by signing up for the Legion's Legislative Action E-List. Registration is simple and can be found online.

Now is an especially important time to become part of the Legion's legislative action team, because Congress will soon consider the White House's proposed budget for fiscal 2013. The proposal includes TRICARE increases that would triple the fees for working-age retirees over the next few years, and establish a new enrollment fee for Medicare retirees. The budget plan would also triple pharmacy co-pays over the next five years.

As proposed, the TRICARE changes would phase in significant fee hikes for nearly every segment of the military population: drilling National Guard and reserve members, those serving on active duty, and military retirees of all ages. The ability to express to Congress your opposition to any TRICARE increases is easy and can be done online through the Legislative Alerts and Updates section of **legion.org**.

"The power of The American Legion family is multiplied when our members can speak in a unified voice," says Tim Tetz, the Legion's Legislative Division director. "All told, we have some 4 million members. Through our Legislative Action Center, they can engage Congress with one voice and one message. Getting on our Legislative Action E-List makes any voice in the Legion family more powerful.

"And it is our voice being heard on Capitol Hill that helps to pass bills we support, stop the bills we oppose, and influence Congress on the priorities it sets on issues that affect veterans and military families."

Help the Legion multiply its voice. Sign up for the Legislative Action E-List today.

capwiz.com/legion/home/

NATIONAL SECURITY

Stop loss deadline extended

The deadline for eligible servicemembers, veterans and their beneficiaries to apply for Retroactive Stop Loss Special Pay (RSLSP) has been extended to Oct. 21.

RSLSP was established to compensate for the hardships military members encountered when their service was involuntarily extended under Stop Loss authority between Sept. 11, 2001, and Sept. 30, 2009. Eligible members or their beneficiaries may submit a claim to their respective military service in order to receive the benefit of $500 for each full or partial month served in a Stop Loss status.

When RSLSP began on Oct. 21, 2009, the services estimated that 145,000 servicemembers, veterans and beneficiaries were eligible for this benefit. Because the majority of those eligible had already separated from the military, the services have engaged in extensive and persistent outreach efforts, including multiple direct mailings, PSAs, and continuous engagements with military and veterans service organizations, social networks and media outlets.

To apply for the pay, or for more information on RSLSP, go online.

www.defense.gov/home/features/2010/0710_stoploss/

MEMBERSHIP INCENTIVE

Post visits to be rewarded

The District Commander Post Visitation Award is an incentive for personal visits to posts by district commanders and vice commanders. The desired result is a personal visit to each post in a given district by either the district commander or, in bigger districts, one of the district vice commanders. Personal contact at this level sets the example for post membership workers to make the personal contacts necessary for a successful membership program.

CRITERIA. To qualify for the award, the district commander and/or vice commanders must visit each post in the district during their year. For districts with more than 30 posts, the district vice commanders can assist in making visits, but the district commander must visit at least 30 of the posts personally.

CERTIFICATION. A list of posts in each district can be obtained with the assistance of department headquarters. The list will be mailed in spreadsheet format to each district commander. At the completion of the 100-percent visit requirement, the district commander will send the completed spreadsheet to the department, which will forward it to National Headquarters by Aug. 1, 2012.

AWARDS. Each district commander who achieves the 100-percent visit requirement will receive a certificate recognizing the achievement. There are five categories of recognition, and five additional prizes awarded based on a drawing of the eligible district commanders in each category. The categories are: districts with up to 20 posts, districts with 21 to 35 posts, districts with 36 to 50 posts, districts with 51 to 65 posts, and districts with 65 or more posts. The commander drawn from the group of 100-percent commanders in each category will receive a gift certificate from Emblem Sales. The amount of the certificate recognizes the increased difficulty in achieving the award in larger districts.

- Category 1 (up to 20 posts) – $100
- Category 2 (21 to 35 posts) – $200
- Category 3 (36 to 50 posts) – $300
- Category 4 (51 to 65 posts) – $400
- Category 5 (65 or more posts) – $500

www.legion.org/commander/districtpost

MEMBERSHIP INCENTIVE

Post Excellence Award continues

National Commander Fang Wong has continued the Post Excellence Award program, which honors posts that show excellence in membership participation, youth activities, community service, and support to veterans and U.S. troops.

The award promotes membership growth, demonstrates Legion values to youth, and increases the Legion family's visibility through community-service projects. Many posts may already qualify for a Post Excellence Award because of their programs and activities.

www.legion.org/commander/postexcellence

CRITERIA. Standards to be achieved in each area include:

Membership – Post membership must be at least one member greater than the previous year. Post officer must attend district meetings.

Youth Activities – The post must sponsor and actively participate in at least one primary youth program: Boys State, Legion Baseball, the Oratorical Contest, Boy Scouts of America or Junior Shooting Sports.

Community Service – The post must organize a community-service project that involves Legion-family members. Potential projects abound; for example, a post could focus on a Children & Youth service, or fulfill a strictly local need. A monetary donation may only be one part of a project.

Service to Troops or Veterans – The post must organize a project supporting troops or veterans, involving Legion-family members outside the post. Projects could include Legion programs such as the Family Support Network or Heroes to Hometowns. Or they could simply help a local veteran with needed improvements to a home. A monetary donation may only be one part of a project.

CERTIFICATION. District commanders must certify posts as having fulfilled the four specified criteria. District commanders will submit a list of posts meeting the criteria to department headquarters. The list should include post name, post number, address and commander's name. Ideally, the last two criteria will be accompanied with copies of press releases, submitted to local media, that raise awareness for the projects. This ensures that the projects were not only accomplished but that an attempt was made to enhance the Legion's public image. The copies submitted should include a date-time stamp, showing receipt by the media outlet. The department adjutant will transmit information as posts qualify.

Each qualifying post receives a certificate of recognition, mailed to the department and awarded to the post. District commanders whose districts have at least 50 percent of posts reach certification will receive framed certificates recognizing their achievements. District commanders whose districts achieve the highest percentage of recognized posts will receive additional awards. In the event of a tie within a department, all district commanders with the same percentage will receive recognition.

TAPS

Cedric H. Barnett

Waukesha, Wis.

Cedric H. Barnett of Post 1 (Department of Wisconsin) passed away March 10 at age 81. He was a Korean War Air Force veteran.

Mr. Barnett served as department commander from 1979 to 1980 and department adjutant from 1981 to 1997.

He was a member of the National Convention Commission Advisory Board from 1988 to 1989, the National Public Relations Commission Advisory Board from 1992 to 1997, and the National Legislative Council from 1985 to 1988 and 2005 to 2009.

Larry C. Decker

Pueblo, Colo.

Larry C. Decker of Post 207 (Department of Colorado) passed away April 5 at age 70. He was a Vietnam War Navy veteran.

Mr. Decker served as National Distinguished Guests Committee vice chairman from 2008 to 2011 and National Foreign Relations Council vice chairman from 2011 to 2012.

Harry L. Estes

Worland, Wyo.

Harry L. Estes of Post 29 (Department of Wyoming) passed away March 1 at age 100. He was a World War II Army veteran.

Mr. Estes served as department commander from 1965 to 1966. He was a member of the National Membership & Post Activities Committee from 1964 to 1965.

Thomas P. Malloy

Vienna, W.Va.

Thomas P. Malloy of Post 15 (Department of West Virginia) passed away March 21 at age 85. He was a World War II Navy veteran.

Mr. Malloy served as department commander from 1969 to 1970, Alternate National Executive Committeeman from 1974 to 1975, National Americanism Commission consultant from 1970 to 1971 and National Counter-Subversive Activities Committee consultant from 1975 to 1979.

He was a member of the National Constitution and By-Laws Committee from 1971 to 1974 and the National Membership & Post Activities Committee from 1971 to 1972.

Robert H. Poore

Smyrna, Del.

Robert H. Poore of Post 25 (Department of Delaware) passed away March 6 at age 83. He was a Korean War Army veteran.

Mr. Poore served as department commander from 1996 to 1997, National Executive Committeeman from 1998 to 2000, Alternate National Executive Committeeman from 2000 to 2002, National Americanism Council vice chairman from 2000 to 2002, and National & Homeland Security Council vice chairman from 1997 to 1998.

He was a member of the National Legislative Commission Liaison Committee from 1998 to 1999, the National Public Relations Commission Liaison Committee from 1999 to 2000 and a general member of the National Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Region 2.

Charles R. Singleton

Lyman, Neb.

Charles R. Singleton of Post 292 (Department of Nebraska) passed away March 24 at age 81. He was a Korean War Army veteran.

Mr. Singleton served as department commander from 1974 to 1975 and National Legislative Council vice chairman from 1975 to 1978.

MEMBERSHIP INCENTIVE

Recruiters to be honored with 'I Serve with PRIDE' pin

During the 2011-2012 membership year, National Commander Fang Wong is awarding his National Commander "I Serve with PRIDE!" pin to any Legion-family member who signs up eight members. These can be any combination of new members, members who transfer from their department headquarters post, or current members who renew.

A new member is defined as any eligible person joining for the 2012 membership year who was not a member of the Legion during the 2011 membership year.

The national commander's goal is to recognize those in the Legion family who actively recruit new members into the nation's largest veterans service organization for the 2012 membership year. To maintain the integrity of the national commander's pin-incentive program, only one will be awarded per individual.

The certification form for this program may be submitted now. Upon receipt, national Membership staff will confirm the names and mail the pin directly to the person who earned it. The "I Serve with PRIDE!" pin-incentive program will end on June 30, 2012.

www.legion.org/commander/supereightincentive