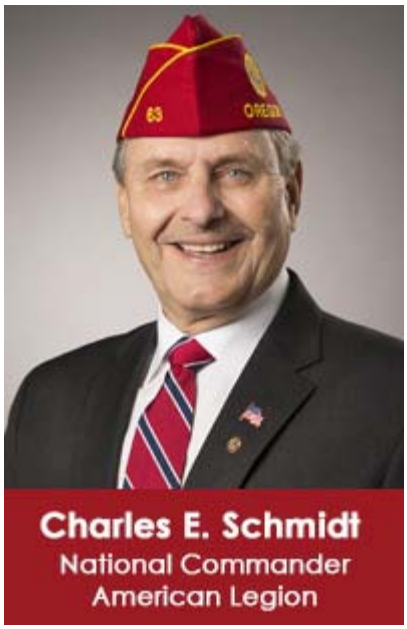
THE AMERICAN LEGION

Dear Legion Family Members and Friends,



Hurricane Hermine is just the latest reminder that natural disasters can strike at any time and in any place. As wildfires burned throughout large swaths of California and floods devastated Louisiana, Hermine wreaked havoc on our eastern seaboard.

Fortunately, The American Legion has always advocated a preparedness and response strategy. During our first half century, we worked closely with the Red Cross by assisting victims with housing, food, supplies and clean-up after catastrophic events. After Hurricane Camille struck the Gulf Coast in 1969, the National Executive Committee created the National Emergency Fund as a one-time project to award grants to eligible Legion Family members and posts. The program was resurrected and made permanent after Hurricane Hugo roared into the Carolinas in 1989. Grants of up to $3,000 are now awarded to eligible individuals and $10,000 to Legion posts. More than $8 million of assistance has been delivered by the NEF since the program's creation. **Click here to contribute to the NEF**.

In addition to the devastating impact natural disasters have on lives and homes, communications often collapse when cellular towers are destroyed and satellites fail. The American Legion Amateur (Ham) Radio Club (TALARC) was established in 2011 with such emergencies in mind. Membership is free to the more than 2,900 Legion, Auxiliary and Sons of the American Legion federally licensed members, some of who work closely with the Department of Homeland Security and other emergency management agencies in support of civil defense. A number of American Legion posts from California to Georgia and many states in-between have established their own stations or clubs on post premises. Chances are there is a station near your community. **A partial list can be found here**.

Former House Speaker Thomas P. "Tip" O'Neill famously said, "All politics is local." While this is certainly true for disaster response, Americans historically pull together in times of need. The American Legion realizes that its three-million-member family organization has significant resources that can benefit our members and the communities overall.

From emergency shelters to ambulance services, the heroic responses of our American Legion posts and departments during times of crises are too numerous to name here. But one of the great characteristics of The American Legion is that we have global reach – with 55 departments in the United States and overseas.

If you are affected by a declared natural disaster, call 800-433-3318 or visit **www.legion.org/NEF** to request assistance. **Donations are always needed** and 100 percent of donated funds go to the grants. You can learn more about our ham radio club by visiting **www.legion.org/hamradio** or by emailing **k9TAL@legion.org**.

There are many reasons to be a proud member of The American Legion Family. Our "devotion to mutual helpfulness" – especially when it comes to helping out disaster victims from Hurricane Hermine and others – has to be near the top of the list.

Carry the legacy forward.

Charles E. Schmidt
National Commander

Share this e-mail:

National Commander Update

'We must leave our footprints'

TFA: A life-changing Legion program

About National Commander Charles E. Schmidt

September 06, 2016 • Issue No. 387

From: The American Legion
To: Library Division
Subject: Thunderclap for Veterans
Date: Tuesday, September 6, 2016 1:28:18 PM

View as a Web page

Dear Legion Member or Veteran Supporter,

It's an honor and a pleasure to serve as your new American Legion National Commander. As an organization, we have many priorities, but today I am writing to enlist your support for the highest priority for our future: **MEMBERSHIP.**

As veterans, we all share a desire to serve. We do community service projects. We help at our churches. We might lead Scout groups or help coach youth sports. For many of our nation's military veterans, however, it's a challenge to find a place that provides the same opportunity to fulfill missions and achieve goals as we had while wearing the uniform. That place can be The American Legion.

Today, I am asking you to take a pledge and recruit one new member. If each of us does this we could double the size of The American Legion. By Sept. 16, 2016 – the date The American Legion received its federal charter nearly a century ago – signify your pledge by becoming a part of my Thunderclap.

What's Thunderclap?
Thunderclap is a tool that allows thousands of people to share the same message at exactly the same time. People sign up on the Thunderclap website and give permission to share a single message on Facebook and Twitter at a specified time. Ours is located here:

#JointheForce Thunderclap Website

If you and enough others support our Thunderclap, we will reach thousands of people and let everyone know that a 'Legion' of veterans working together is a force to be reckoned with!

Our voice is strong, but it can be stronger. We are making an impact, but we can always do more. The only way we can make major

differences for individuals, communities, our states and nation is to work together.

Please #JointheForce to make our American Legion bigger, stronger and better able to achieve our mission!

Sincerely,
Charlie Schmidt
National Commander

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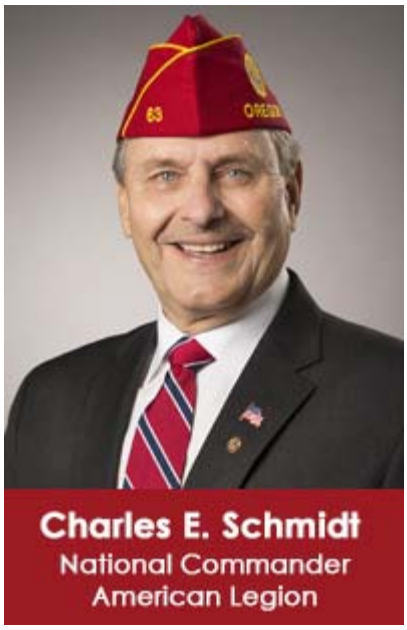
This email was sent to: **library@legion.org**

This email was sent by: **The American Legion National Headquarters**
700 North Pennsylvania Street
Indianapolis, IN 46204

Dear Legion Family Members and Friends,



Last month, Past National Commander Dale Barnett issued a call for action to improve the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) appeals process. I wholeheartedly believe modernizing VA's archaic appeals process is of the utmost priority. Appeals modernization is not a request; quite frankly, it is a demand.

For veterans electing to appeal VA decisions, their wait is not measured in days or even months; it is measured in years. A veteran appealing a decision to the Board of Veterans' Appeals waits longer to receive a decision than a standard four-year enlistment. Imagine honorably serving your nation for four years and having VA take longer than those four years to grant benefits earned through defending this nation.

Take action: Click here to contact your members of Congress

The American Legion represents nearly 800,000 veterans seeking VA benefits. Nearly 10 percent of those veterans are currently caught in the quagmire that is VA's appellate process. Despite the best efforts of The American Legion's 3,000-strong army of well-trained accredited representatives, veterans nationwide are suffering due to VA's bureaucratic appellate maze.

Over the past year, The American Legion has engaged in discussions with VA leadership, veterans service organizations and private attorneys to improve the appellate structure. It proved to be a daunting task to restructure a system that has existed since pre-World War II; together, we created a structure that will expedite decisions while providing greater ownership and alternatives to veterans electing to appeal their claims while maintaining the original effective date.

The American Legion represents 80,000 veterans awaiting decisions on their appeals. And this doesn't include the 450,000 veterans not represented by The American Legion who are also awaiting their decisions, a number that is roughly the equivalent of the population of Fort Worth, Texas. It is imperative that we take action to have these veterans receive their decisions in a timely manner.

People often associate the granting of disability benefits as simply compensation. It is much more than compensation. For a veteran to be service connected means access to health care. It means employment priority. It means housing benefits. The American

Legion responded to the needs of veterans in 2014 through the implementation of Veterans Benefits Centers. At one of the events, a Marine veteran sought our assistance; for years, she had been seeking service connection for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) due to military sexual trauma. When one of our experienced accredited representatives noted the error in a previous adjudication; working with VA, we were able to secure her benefits. Neither her first nor her second question dealt with compensation; she simply asked if she could finally receive treatment for PTSD and where the treatment could be received.

Unfortunately, this veteran is not an isolated case. There could be upwards of nearly half a million veterans with similar stories. Until we can create an effective and efficient appellate structure, these stories will continue.

VA Appeals Modernization Act of 2016

The VA Appeals Modernization Act will create an efficient appellate process while maintaining a veteran's effective date. Through this act, veterans can maintain the original effective date of their claims, provided they submit new and relevant evidence within 12 months of the most recent decision. This represents a significant improvement to the entire VA appellate structure, allowing veterans to gain access to their benefits in a more timely fashion. For taxpayers, it is cost neutral for the next five years; beyond five years, appeals modernization saves taxpayers' money.

Fellow Legionnaires, I need your help. Please contact your U.S. senators and representatives to vote for passage of the VA Appeals Modernization Act of 2016. This act benefits veterans and taxpayers. More importantly, it is quite simply needed to meet the needs of those injured serving this great nation.

Take action: Click here to contact your members of Congress

Carry the legacy forward.

Charles E. Schmidt
National Commander

National Commander Awards for 2016-2017

Post Excellence Award

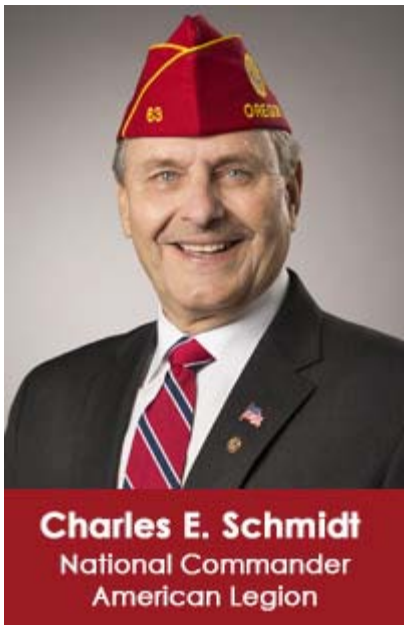
National Commander's Honor Ribbon

Department Incentive Award

National Commander's Pin Incentive Program

September 09, 2016 • Issue No. 388

Dear Legion Family Members and Friends,



Fifteen million dollars.

Can you imagine how many children have been helped with that money — more than $15.2 million actually — since The American Legion began the Temporary Financial Assistance (TFA) program in 1925?

Every year, grants **from the TFA program** go toward benefitting hundreds of families with minor children in financial distress. They receive emergency funds for shelter, utilities, food, clothing and medical expenses — expenses that you and I often take for granted.

Brent Wightman is one of the eligible veterans with minor children at home who received vital assistance from TFA. The Army veteran and father of two young children was out of work after multiple back surgeries related to a service-connected injury. Without a job, Wightman faced the reality of losing his home to foreclosure.

Thankfully, The American Legion stepped in with the necessary resources.

"We filled out a TFA application right there and my whole life changed after The American Legion got involved," said Wightman, a member of Post 176 in Waverly, Iowa. "If it hadn't been for the Legion, I would have been trying to figure out how to clothe, house and feed my kids. The American Legion gave me a mission and a purpose again. They saved my life."

We hear similar life-changing stories from service officers who assist veterans with their VA benefits claims, health-care concerns or education benefits. Our service officers work diligently to help veterans understand their rights and navigate the bureaucracy that often snarls the process. It gives me great joy upon hearing stories of service officers who have successfully worked cases to award veterans their due benefits, sometimes reaching into hundreds of thousands of dollars.

That's why I want to raise $1 million to support children and families through TFA, and another $1 million to train service officers so they can care for our comrades. Those willing to make a kind contribution to the Commander's Charity Fund **may do so at this link**. Checks or money orders may be mailed to Commander's Charity Fund, American Legion Charities, 5745 Lee Road, Indianapolis, Indiana 46216.

For more information about TFA or to apply, contact your local **American Legion post** or **department (state) headquarters**. To find a service officer near you, you can use **this online search tool**.

We were there when the Wightman family needed help. And it is crucial that we are there in the future for veterans and eligible families in similar situations. Additionally, it is vital that we are able to properly fund our service officers so they can continue to work on behalf of our nation's veterans.

Simply put, it is our job to take care of veterans and their families, especially when they encounter tough times. If The American Legion won't fulfill this obligation, then who will?

Carry the legacy forward.

Charles E. Schmidt
National Commander

Other headlines

Trail to the top

Commander Schmidt to continue awareness walks

In times of disaster, you can count on The American Legion

'We must leave our footprints'

September 21, 2016 • Issue No. 389

From: The American Legion
To: Library Division
Subject: Drew Carey to Emcee Veterans Inaugural Ball
Date: Wednesday, October 5, 2016 10:21:05 AM

View as a Web page

THE AMERICAN LEGION

Drew Carey to Emcee Veterans Inaugural Ball

Dear Legion Member or Veteran Supporter,

The American Legion and Veterans Inaugural Committee are proud to announce that Drew Carey will be the emcee for the Veterans Inaugural Ball — a Salute to Heroes. The ball will be held on January 20, 2017, at the Renaissance Hotel in Washington, D.C. This historical event was started in 1953 at the request of President Dwight Eisenhower. The former general envisioned the ball as a way for the newly sworn in commander-in-chief to pay tribute to Medal of Honor recipients.

Carey is a veteran, comedian, actor, author and current host of the popular CBS game show “The Price is Right.” He spent six years in the United States Marine Corps Reserves and is a tireless supporter of the military, veterans, servicemembers and their families.

The Veterans Inaugural Ball is hosted by The American Legion. The American Legion organizes the event with other members of the Veterans Inaugural Committee, including Disabled American Veterans, Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S., Paralyzed Veterans of America, Vietnam Veterans of America, AMVETS, The Congressional Medal of Honor Society, Reserve Officers Association, Blinded Veterans Association, Jewish War Veterans of the USA, American Ex-Prisoners of War, Marine Corps League, The Retired Enlisted Association and Non Commissioned Officers Association.

The night’s entertainment will also include performances from The American Bombshells, Janine Stange and renowned band, Free Spirit. Individuals who wish to attend can do so by purchasing tickets at

www.legion.org/veteransball. Each ticket, while supplies last, include reception, dinner, dessert, cash bar and entertainment. Information on sponsorships, premium packages and table purchases are also available by emailing info@salutetoheroesball.org.

Sincerely,
Charlie Schmidt
National Commander

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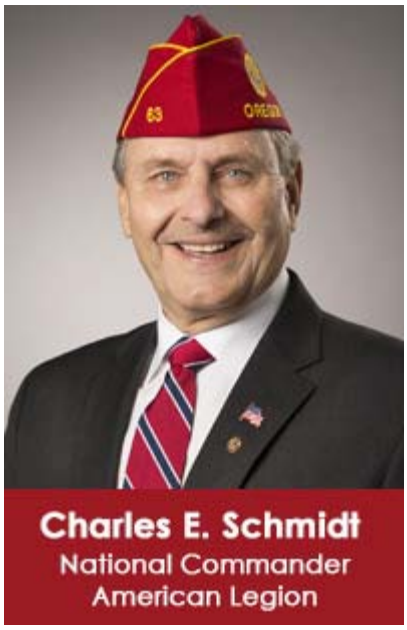
This email was sent to: **library@legion.org**

This email was sent by: **The American Legion National Headquarters**
700 North Pennsylvania Street
Indianapolis, IN 46204

Dear Legion Family Members and Friends,



We defended our nation so that others may live free. And that freedom rightfully includes the freedom to vote — which happens to be mentioned in the Constitution in five different amendments.

As U.S. citizens prepare to cast their ballots this year in the presidential, congressional and other elections, many are discontent with the choices. In fact, there has been much talk of abstaining from this democratic process.

At the same time, the presidential debates have largely ignored the issues most near and dear to veterans, military supporters and their families. Absent has been a discussion on improving VA care for veterans, appeals modernization, defense spending and other key issues.

The final debate on Wednesday night will be split into six 15-minute segments with the topics chosen by moderator Chris Wallace. The six topics will be immigration, entitlements and debt, the Supreme Court, the economy, foreign policy and each candidate's fitness to serve as president.

As you can see, it will be up to us to make veterans, military supporters and other voters aware of **the key issues in this election**. While The American Legion is a congressionally chartered nonpartisan organization, we can still provide assistance and resources to the voting public.

American Legion posts can hold forums or debates between candidates. Legion members can also assist the senior citizens, the handicapped or others who cannot drive by providing transportation for them to the polls. Legionnaires can also get involved with their local schools by participating in a mock election.

These acts do have an impact. Take, for example, what Huey O'Neal of Louisiana did during the midterm elections of 2014. **His Get Out the Vote project** helped double the state's voter turnout.

O'Neal is correct when he writes, "Our future security is going to depend on decisions made by our new commander in chief."

While we won't learn the candidates' plans for our militaries and other veterans-related topics during the televised debates, we can still provide leadership in our own

communities across this great nation.

And at a time when civility is notably absent from many political discussions, campaign offices are getting firebombed and social media is ablaze with political vitriol, America needs nonpartisan action by those who love this country. America needs The American Legion to promote what's right about democracy.

Be an active voice in your communities. Help shape the conversation in a meaningful way. And, above all else, get out the vote.

Carry the legacy forward.

Charles E. Schmidt
National Commander

Share this e-mail:

National Commander Update

Commander Schmidt: 'What about vets?'

'A great legacy that The American Legion has built'

Download the Get Out the Vote brochure

Connecticut Commander's Walk spurs membership

October 18, 2016 • Issue No. 391

THE AMERICAN LEGION

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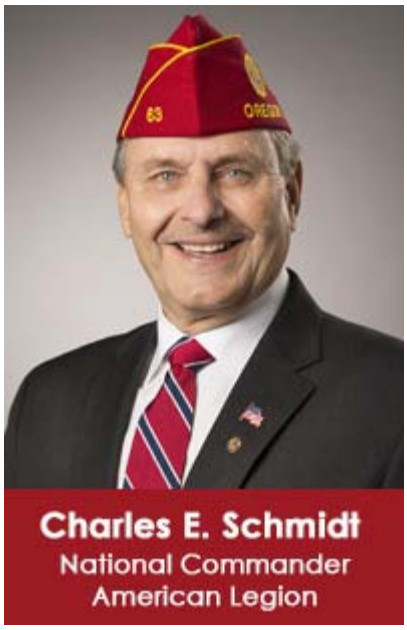
Dear Legion Family Members and Friends,



The American Legion extends its congratulations to presidential nominee Donald Trump for his victory in Tuesday's election after an historic and memorable campaign. Congratulations also go out to the newly elected members of Congress.

With the election concluded and the transition of power taking shape, it's time for us to rise above the vitriol that flooded the campaign. It's time for cooler heads to prevail and to work together for our beloved and grateful nation — the one we defended with our lives. It's time for our elected representatives to work toward the good of all Americans, regardless of their gender, age or race.

It's time for our new commander in chief to shore up our national defense, protect our northern and southern borders, and deliver a budget to Congress that ensures that our military has the resources to keep Americans and our allies safe.

It's time to defeat the Islamic State. Period.

It's time for President-elect Trump to follow through on his pledge to improve health care for all veterans, as outlined **in an interview with The American Legion**.

It's time for the new president to reveal the details of his plan to provide a spark to the economy and get more Americans — especially veterans — working again.

It's time to end sequestration.

It's time for Congress to reform and modernize the archaic VA appeals process.

It's time for the president and Congress to develop real solutions to the specific needs of today's generation of veterans coming home with PTSD, TBI and amputated limbs at the highest rates we have ever experienced.

The people have spoken. The president-elect and new Congress must set aside their differences, their political agendas and work for the common good. President-elect Trump and our democratically elected Congress must address these and other issues which are vital for the success of our nation and our veterans.

It's time.

Carry the legacy forward.

Charles E. Schmidt
National Commander

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Other headlines

National commander on the air

Commander to march in Alabama's Veterans Day parade

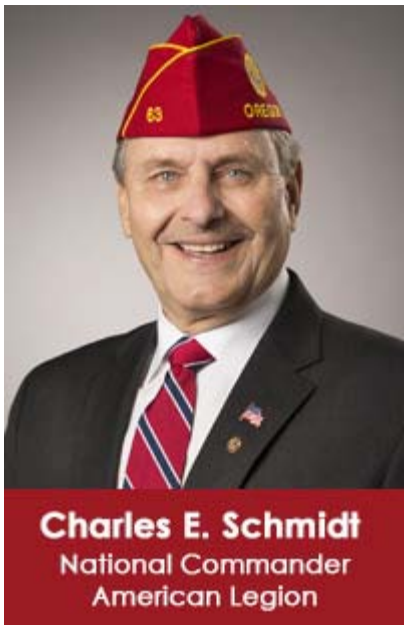
A walk back home

Legion programs help veterans, children

November 09, 2016 • Issue No. 392

THE AMERICAN LEGION

Dear Legion Family Members and Friends,



This week, Americans will pause to give thanks amid their Thanksgiving celebrations. Around the dinner table, family members, friends and guests will pause to bestow their verbal appreciations.

Many will thank God for the bounty they are about to receive. Others will give thanks to all those who helped prepare the turkey and all the delicious trimmings. Still others will give thanks for those who are absent — many of whom are protecting our nation so others may live and celebrate in peace.

Of course, those servicemen and servicewomen will be on my mind — and in my heart — on Thanksgiving Day. Who among us will ever forget being away from loved ones during a special holiday?

As I think about this special holiday, I have so many blessings. My family, my friends and fellow Legionnaires who I have gotten to know. Even though Thanksgiving is this week, I am thankful for what Legion Family members do each day throughout the year.

In New Jersey, Legion members put on Boots to Business programs to assist veterans who are looking to become entrepreneurs. As a side benefit, sometimes **attendees like Rodney Jenkins** get inspired and become productive, engaged members of the Legion.

Of course, honoring and paying tribute to those who came before us is a key part of the Legion's DNA. Across the nation, efforts are under way to identify and preserve World War I memorials to honor those from that era. Utah, for example, is working to **fix a damaged Doughboy statue**.

Legion Family members, of course, make special efforts to help others this week and during the Christmas holiday season.

Take, for example, this week's Department of Delaware **collection and distribution of food to thousands of state residents**. It's a wonderful community service project involving Legionnaires, Sons of The American Legion squadrons, Auxiliary members and the Legion Riders.

In Minnesota, Legion Family members are using a $6,500 grant from Operation Comfort Warriors (OCW) to provide clothing and hygiene items for poor veterans in St. Cloud.

These and similar efforts matter in those local communities. They matter to the individuals served. That's why the American Legion Family matters to so many today, especially during this week of sharing blessings and giving thanks.

Carry the legacy forward.

Charles E. Schmidt
National Commander

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Other headlines

'We are proud to be veterans'

Help those who help veterans

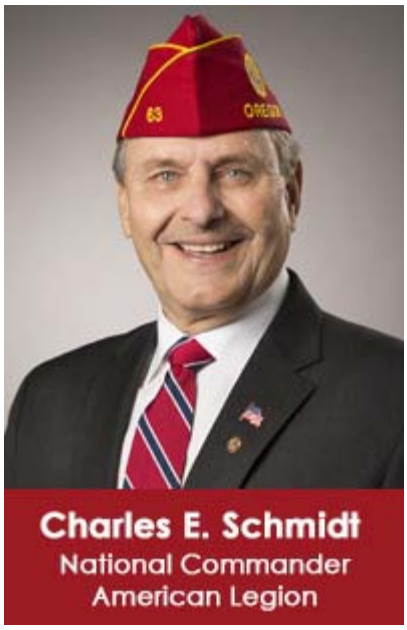
National Commander's Pin Incentive Program

Legion programs help veterans, children

State-by-state guide to veterans benefits

November 22, 2016 • Issue No. 393

Dear Legion Family Members and Friends,



Our nation's flag is under attack. Protesters set it afire in a misguided attempt to promote their causes. Athletes fall to their knees instead of raising hands to hearts during the national anthem. And, more recently, **a small college in Massachusetts has removed the flag from campus**.

While Americans have a constitutional right to express their opinions in such ways, The American Legion strongly believes the flag is a symbol of our nation's freedom, secured by the servicemen and women who sacrificed so much for all citizens.

As you may know, The American Legion has regularly encouraged Congress to pass a constitutional amendment that would give it the power to protect the Stars and Stripes from desecration.

But we are not alone in this belief. The U.S. House has routinely passed such an amendment. Every state has endorsed such a resolution. And surveys show that 80 percent of Americans agree that the flag should be protected.

Now, President-elect Donald Trump has called for penalties against those who treat the American flag with disrespect. In a tweet, Trump wrote, "Nobody should be allowed to burn the American flag - if they do, there must be consequences - perhaps loss of citizenship or year in jail!"

While The American Legion does not have a position on what the penalty should be for those who violate our sacred flag, it does stand resolute in petitioning Congress for the necessary constitutional amendment.

Our belief is not to silence those who protest perceived injustices. Americans have the right to voice their views in respectful ways.

Instead, our view is that the American flag should be held in the highest regard by all Americans. Military members and veterans — and citizens, too — offer salutes. Athletes and fans should stand respectfully when the national anthem is being played. And it should not be used as a prop in a publicity campaign by a small college or other institutions.

But most of all, the men and women of the incoming Congress should **heed President-elect Trump's message** and declare flag desecration off-limits with a

constitutional amendment.

Carry the legacy forward.

Charles E. Schmidt
National Commander

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Other headlines

'We are here to help you'

‘Miracle on the Han River’ faces severe threats

Membership is your job and mine

Legion supports Trump on flag issue

December 07, 2016 • Issue No. 394

THE AMERICAN LEGION

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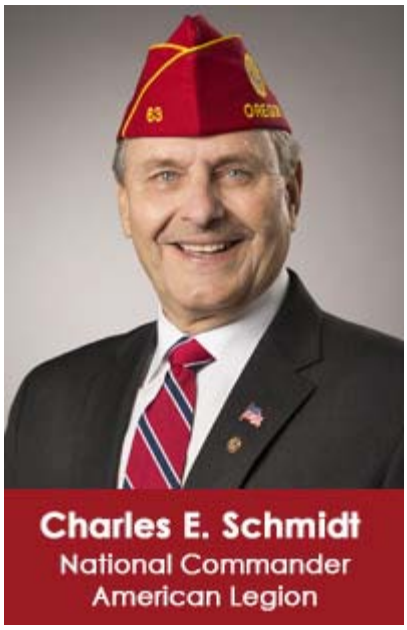
Dear Legion Family Members and Friends,



Dozens of tornadoes struck Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana and South Carolina, killing at least 19 people and destroying scores of homes. The devastation is the latest reminder that natural disasters can strike at any time and in any place.

If you have been affected by these storms or other natural disasters, call 800-433-3318 or visit **www.legion.org/NEF** to request assistance through The American Legion National Emergency Fund (NEF).

And certainly there will be more threats to come as winter turns to spring and such storms become more commonplace.

Fortunately, The American Legion has always advocated a preparedness and response strategy. During our first half century, we worked closely with the Red Cross by assisting victims with housing, food, supplies and clean-up after catastrophic events.

After Hurricane Camille struck the Gulf Coast in 1969, the National Executive Committee created the National Emergency Fund as a one-time project to award grants to eligible Legion Family members and posts. The program was resurrected and made permanent after Hurricane Hugo roared into the Carolinas in 1989. Grants of up to $3,000 are now awarded to eligible individuals and $10,000 to Legion posts. More than $8 million of assistance has been delivered by the NEF since the program's creation.

In addition to the devastating impact natural disasters have on lives and homes, communications often collapse when cellular towers are destroyed and satellites fail. The American Legion Amateur Radio Club (TALARC) was established in 2011 with such emergencies in mind. Membership is free to the more than 2,900 Legion, Auxiliary and Sons of the American Legion federally licensed members, some of who work closely with the Department of Homeland Security and other emergency management agencies in support of civil defense. A number of American Legion posts from California to Georgia and several states in between have established their own stations or clubs on post premises. Chances are there is a station near your community. You can learn more by visiting **www.legion.org/hamradio** or emailing **k9tal@legion.org**.

Americans historically pull together in time of need. When our neighbors hurt, we hurt. But with a family membership exceeding 3 million, The American Legion, the American Legion Auxiliary, the Sons of The American Legion and American Legion Riders have

significant resources that can benefit our members and the communities overall.

From emergency shelters to ambulance services, the heroic responses of our American Legion posts and departments during times of crises are too numerous to name here. But one of the great characteristics of The American Legion is that we have global reach – with 55 departments in the United States and overseas.

There are many reasons to be a proud member of The American Legion Family. Our "devotion to mutual helpfulness" has to be near the top of the list.

Carry the legacy forward.

Charles E. Schmidt
National Commander

Share this e-mail:

Other headlines

Help us account for our missing

Veterans Inaugural Ball salutes Medal of Honor recipients, veterans, servicemembers

Legion backs VA on disability claims on toxic waste exposure

'Membership is more than just a number'

January 24, 2017 • Issue No. 395

THE AMERICAN LEGION

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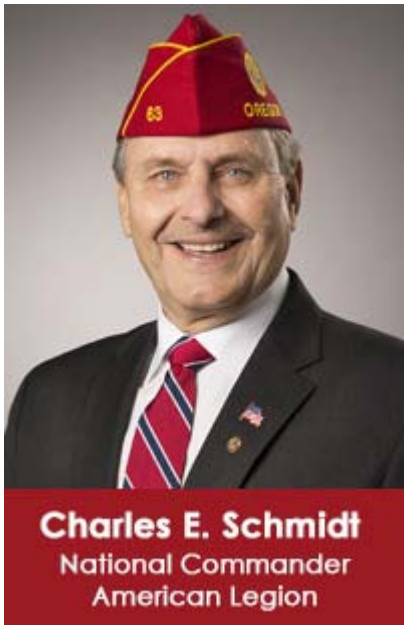
Dear Legion Family Members and Friends,



Bryan Lowman served his nation with honor and made sacrifices to help keep America safe, just like every man and woman who has worn the uniform. But our nation has failed Capt. Lowman and tens of thousands of his fellow reservists.

In 2010, Lowman was deployed to Afghanistan in a detachment with the North Carolina National Guard. During the deployment, he became severely ill with typhoid fever, lapsed into a coma and underwent multiple emergency surgeries over the course of a year in Afghanistan, Germany and at Walter Reed Medical Center in Bethesda, Md.

After his long recovery, Lowman aimed to pursue a college degree. Based upon his active-duty time on his DD214, Lowman was supposed to be entitled to 90 percent of his post 9/11 GI Bill benefits.

"I applied for the GI Bill prior to the start of the fall 2016 semester at Clemson University," Lowman said. "After an initial delay, VA downgraded my rating to 40 percent. When I called the GI Bill hotline, they told me that my active-duty time was not eligible to get the GI Bill benefits."

What changed? After Lowman fought for our country and while he was battling for his life at Walter Reed, the government turned its back. Because of a loophole, his activation status was changed to 12301(h) medical orders, which shred his benefits on the basis that he did not complete his deployment.

That's wrong and should be corrected immediately.

Unfortunately, Lowman's story is not unique. Since 2007, approximately 20,000 reservists — others who were wounded or injured in combat — have faced similar issues.

During The American Legion's congressional testimony coming up in a few weeks, I will share our organization's concern with this practice. It is abhorrent. And Congress and VA must work to reverse this policy that unfairly penalizes our reservists.

Carry the legacy forward.

Charles E. Schmidt
National Commander

Share this e-mail:

Other headlines

Schmidt calls for ‘national unity’ to honor Lincoln’s legacy

'Helping the less fortunate in a different culture'

Help Commander Schmidt support veterans, children

‘Spirit of ‘76’ dominates Texas walk

February 14, 2017 • Issue No. 396

From: The American Legion
To: Library Division
Subject: Veterans Need All of Us In The American Legion Today!
Date: Wednesday, March 8, 2017 12:23:32 PM

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THE AMERICAN LEGION

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Veterans Need All of Us In The American Legion Today!

One message came through loud and clear last week when we delivered your priorities to Washington: Congress and the Department of Veterans Affairs depend on The American Legion. Elected and appointed officials reminded us over and over that:

- We are the voice of the veteran.
- We are the conscience of a nation that honors military service and patriotic values.
- Without us, government would not know how to effectively fulfill its mission to support and honor our nation's veterans, members of the Armed Forces, families and communities across the land.

That is why it's important for you to ask your veteran friends and acquaintances to join, renew or rejoin The American Legion today. Our fellow veterans are counting on us.

If you know someone who is eligible for membership, has let a membership expire or needs a nudge to renew, please forward my message and let them know it's from you, on behalf of all of us. **Have them JOIN NOW**.

Size matters in Washington. Without you, we are smaller and less able to stand strong to advance the resolutions you have passed and the policies we need enacted. Members of Congress and VA officials made it clear, over and over in Washington last week, that they need us to guide them as we:

- Fight to protect VA health care from being outsourced to the private sector

- Require compassionate relief for caregivers of veterans
- Improve quality and availability of VA services for women veterans
- Demand modern VA benefits claims and appeals processes
- Seek out full acceptance of alternative treatments that work for PTSD and TBI
- Require adequate DoD funding to support the men and women serving our nation in harm's way right now
- Work with Congress and VA to demand higher standards of employee accountability to veterans
- Provide the federal government with trusted advice from every corner of the country, not just inside the Beltway, about issues that matter most to us, the veteran membership of The American Legion.

VETERANS - DEFENSE - YOUTH - AMERICANISM

The Four Pillars of The American Legion can't stand without a strong membership.

JOIN NOW

Thank you for helping me help veterans, our troops, families and communities across our great nation.

Carry the legacy forward.

Charles E. Schmidt
National Commander

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This email was sent by: **The American Legion National Headquarters**
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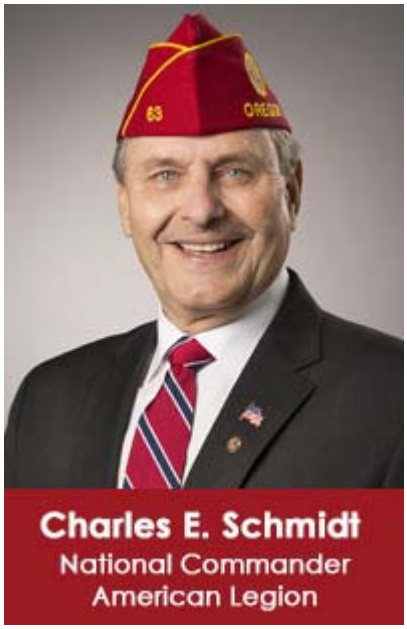
THE AMERICAN LEGION

Dear Legion Family Members and Friends,



Many of you have heard me say, "Carry the legacy forward." Or perhaps you have seen those words in my salutation. But have you stopped to think about what that means in the greater context?

Our centennial celebration, of course, is rapidly approaching. This week, however, marks another important anniversary: the entrance of the United States into World War I.

As we pause to remember the courage, sacrifice and heroism our World War I comrades exhibited, it's a poignant time to also remember their commitment to post-war service. Their commitment to their fellow veterans launched The American Legion. Today we share common bonds with them — caring and supporting our fellow veterans, advocating for a strong national defense, demonstrating patriotism, and supporting youth and communities.

It's a tribute to the World War I generation that their vision for The American Legion is still going strong. And the Legion is still vital to today's veterans and servicemembers because of the dedication of Legionnaires who followed in their footsteps.

Now, it's our watch. It's our time to carry the legacy forward.

Across the land, American Legion members and posts are honoring those who fought bravely in World War I. A small sampling includes:

• A project to cast light on American Legion inspired memorials in communities across our great nation. Legion members can add to the growing database of memorials, **www.legion.org/memorials**

• American Legion member Bill Casamassima, an Iraq War veteran and former high school history teacher, is on **a mission to learn more about WWI veterans**. He has visited dozens of cemeteries to research and resurrect their stories because he "didn't want the guys to be forgotten."

• In New Jersey, Post 91 recently held a **World War I commemoration event** featuring displays of military artifacts, presentations on the history of Wharton during the war, information on the post's namesake and how the department is celebrating the Legion's centennial.

I know there are other great examples out there of how our members, posts and others are rising to the occasion. These are excellent stories to share on our Legiontown website, **www.legiontown.org**.

Thank you for all that you do to honor those who came before us in service to nation and in service to The American Legion. It's our turn to build on their greatness for the next century of The American Legion.

Carry the legacy forward.

Charles E. Schmidt
National Commander

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Other headlines

Schmidt to speak at World War I centennial event

Department of Veterans Affairs's Disarming Policy Must Go

A generation worth celebrating

Stand up and speak out against bullying, harassment

April 04, 2017 • Issue No. 398

From: The American Legion
To: Library Division
Subject: It's Time to Expose The American Legion
Date: Tuesday, April 18, 2017 3:26:17 PM

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THE AMERICAN LEGION

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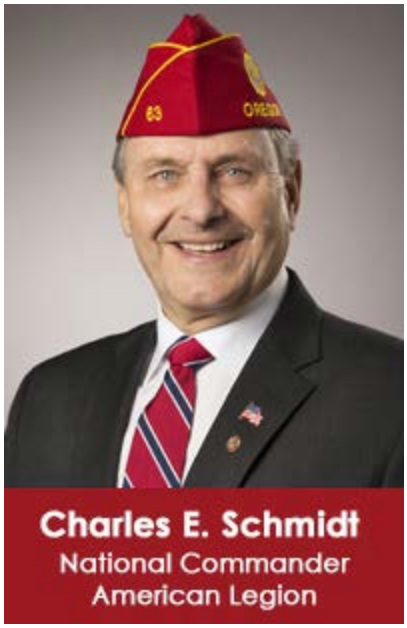

Time is of the essence. So much so that you may wish to skip ahead to the final paragraph and start saving the legacy of The American Legion.

According to our membership report of Feb. 10, 45 of our 55 departments met their 85 percent goal by the target date. Fast forward to this week, and the April 16 report shows only the Departments of France, South Carolina and Mexico meeting their 95 percent target date goal. That means 52 of 55 have not. Nationally, we are 163,753 members short of our traditional membership goal for this year.

This translates to $3,029,430.50 less in national membership revenue, just for this year alone. Twenty-five years ago, The American Legion had more than 3.1 million members. If current trends continue, we will fall below 2 million members in 2017, which would mean more than $22 million less revenue.

Think of how many veterans could be assisted with that $22 million each year. How many more young people could be mentored through our outstanding programs? How many additional schools could learn the importance of Americanism and how the men and women of the U.S. military have always answered freedom's call?

Moreover, that $22 million just represents what is lost at the national level each year. Multiply department dues by 55 and what each of our 13,000 posts receives on an annual basis and the deleterious impact on The American Legion's ability to operate is astronomical.

It is time to expose The American Legion for what we are. Let everybody in the public know that there is no program called "Boys State" but there is one that is called "The American Legion Boys State." Set up membership booths at every American Legion Baseball game. Remind military members past and present that if there were no American Legion there would be no GI Bill. In fact, there would be no Department of Veterans Affairs or previous federal agencies dedicated solely to providing care for disabled vets.

One hundred years ago, America entered a war of unprecedented destruction. The silver lining of the war was the creation of the greatest veterans organization that the world has seen. By the end of its first year of existence, The American Legion had 843,016 dues-paying members.

The returning doughboys were determined that no veteran, widow or orphan would do without the care and comfort of a grateful nation because of the sacrifice that they had made. Early Legionnaires had a missionary zeal to make sure no veteran was left behind. To make sure that no veterans lacked medical care. No veteran's widow was to go without food or shelter. And no veteran's orphan would be denied clothing and education.

The American Legion grew to become the nation's largest veterans organization during an era when there were no telephones, radios, televisions or Internet. The Interstate Highway System was not yet built and, except for military service, most veterans stayed within 100 miles of their birthplaces. With modern technology, there is no reason that we cannot penetrate a greater share of the pool of eligible veterans.

If you are not a registered user of Mylegion.org, I implore you to do so immediately. Contact **mylegion@legion.org** or call 800-433-3318. Once there, search for unpaid renewals and bring them back to the organization. This is where I often say "Carry the Legacy Forward." But if we do not recruit, renew and revitalize, who will be left to continue that legacy and ensure that The American Legion remains as great in its second century as it was in the first? I'll say it again because it's important. It's time to expose The American Legion.

Charles E. Schmidt
National Commander

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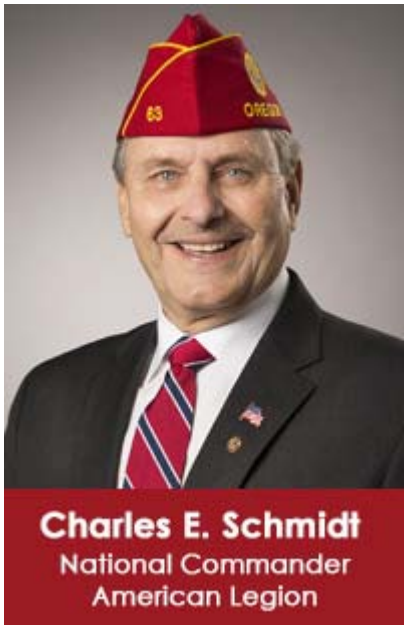
Dear Legion Family Members and Friends,



The American Legion has a golden opportunity. Well, silver and gold actually. With your help, we can encourage Congress to mark The American Legion's 2019 Centennial with limited edition, exquisitely crafted commemorative coins. Not only will these coins raise public awareness about the greatest veterans organization in the country, proceeds from their sale will raise funds for our outstanding programs.

A bipartisan group in Congress is now gathering support for The American Legion 100th Anniversary Commemorative Coin Act. Please ask your representative and senators to join Sen. Todd Young, R-Ind., Sen Joe Donnelly, D-Ind., Rep Phil Roe, R-Tenn., and Rep. Tim Walz, D-Minn., as original co-sponsors of this important legislation. Better than asking, call their offices directly. Simply enter your ZIP code **here** and the contact information for those who represent you can be obtained.

When you speak with their congressional staff, please ask them to become an original co-sponsor of The American Legion 100th Anniversary Commemorative Coin Act.

Unique among U.S. mint products, these coins will symbolize an organization that was founded by World War I veterans on the four pillars of a strong national defense, veterans affairs and rehabilitation, wholesome and patriotic youth programs, and Americanism.

Congress only authorizes the minting of two coins per year. Abraham Lincoln, the U.S. Army and the National Park Service Centennial were some of their recent subjects. As the legislation points out, there are a number of reasons why The American Legion is worthy of such an honor.

It is The American Legion that convened conferences in 1923 and 1924 which crafted the first United States Flag Code.

It is The American Legion that drafted and made the case for the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, better known as the G.I. Bill.

It is The American Legion that established the National Emergency Fund which provides cash relief to veterans impacted by natural disasters.

It is The American Legion that fought to see the Veterans Administration elevated to its current cabinet-level status.

It is The American Legion that created a scholarship fund for the children of military

members who died or were severely disabled on active-duty since 9/11.

It is The American Legion that strongly supported the comprehensive education benefits in the Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act.

Visit any military base or unit and you will see how popular collectible coins have become. Whether it's a challenge coin or a merit medallion, these mementoes serve as permanent reminders of a connection made between its owner and the benefactor who presented it. But The American Legion 100th Anniversary Commemorative Coin will be different. Because of its rarity and value, it will certainly merit a top-shelf display by even the most prolific of collectors.

One of our legendary founders was Theodore Roosevelt Jr. A son of the former president, Roosevelt was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor for his bravery at Normandy. His vision for The American Legion played a pivotal role in the contributions that the organization would make to this country throughout its first century. That gift to America endures.

"The American Legion – what it has done, what it is doing and what it will continue to do – is exactly what my grandfather and his fellow co-founders intended to achieve," said Ted Roosevelt IV, chairman of The American Legion 100th Anniversary Honorary Committee.

It is an achievement worth commemorating on a unique and special coin.

Carry the legacy forward.

Charles E. Schmidt
National Commander

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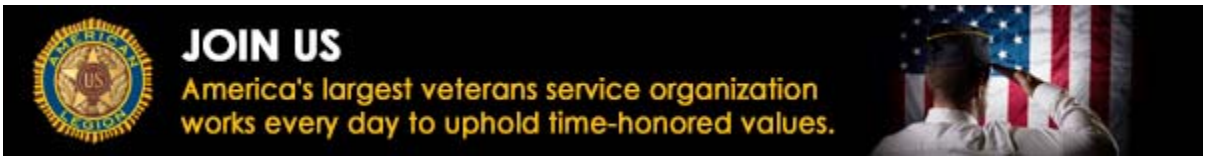
Wear poppies to honor the fallen

Legion invites veterans in Alaska to discuss VA care

Honoring, remembering World War I heroes

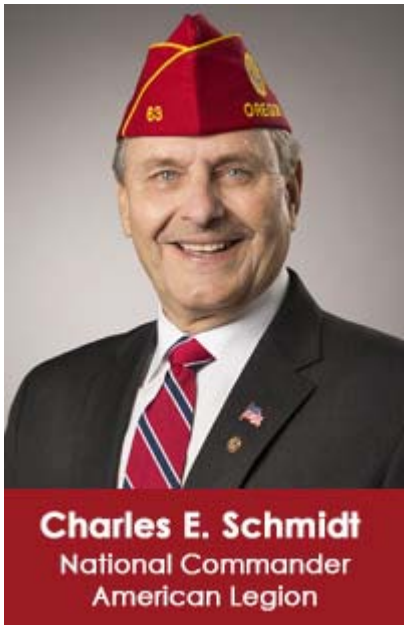
Video: Helping veterans in times of natural disasters



April 24, 2017 • Issue No. 399

THE AMERICAN LEGION

Dear Legion Family Members and Friends,



Perhaps more than any other month of the year, May represents a time to honor and remember those who made the ultimate sacrifice. Each Memorial Day, American Legion Family members honor the deceased by placing American flags on gravesites, reflecting on their heroism and demonstrating service in their communities.

This year, for the first time, we are elevating the commemorations to include National Poppy Day™.

Last fall, the Legion's National Executive Committee approved a resolution in support of declaring the Friday before Memorial Day as National Poppy Day. The American Legion has worked with the American Legion Auxiliary in support of the Poppy Program for many years. With the creation of National Poppy Day, this support can grow – but we need your support.

In an effort to bring greater attention to the symbolism of the poppy, we are working on a national effort to increase awareness and encourage community participation on May 26, 2017 – National Poppy Day.

We have created a National Poppy Day toolkit to assist the entire American Legion Family with media outreach and community engagement. We encourage everyone to use the National Poppy Day toolkit so that we are all communicating with a consistent voice and brand.

New merchandise is available at the new Emblem Sales Poppy Shop. This merchandise is in addition to the poppies that can be ordered for distribution and donation collection to support veterans, active-duty military and their families in times of need.

The entire **National Poppy Day toolkit** can be found on the new National Poppy Day website, **Legion.org/PoppyDay**. In the coming weeks, additional information and resources will be added to the web page.

Your participation is critical to ensure the success of National Poppy Day. Join me in encouraging patriotic Americans to display or wear poppies to remember the fallen and support our living heroes.

Carry the legacy forward.

Charles E. Schmidt
National Commander

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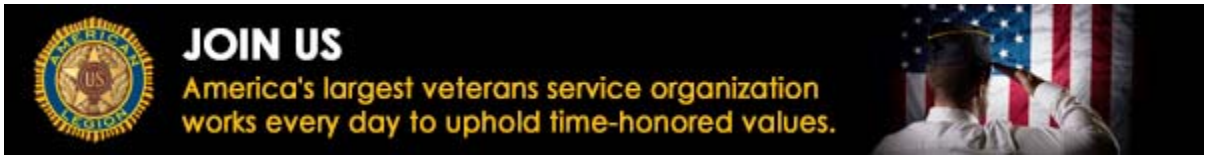
Legion invites veterans in Alaska to discuss VA care

Honoring, remembering World War I heroes

Video: Helping veterans in times of natural disasters



May 01, 2017 • Issue No. 400

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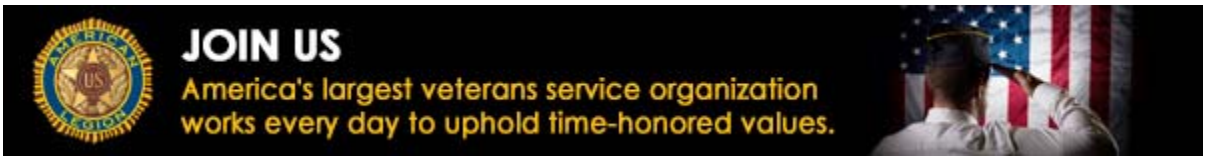
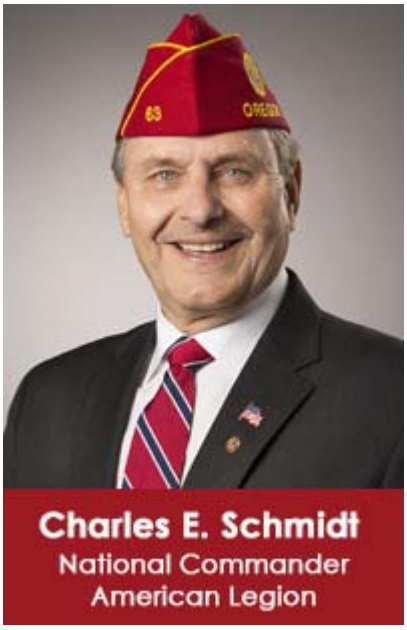


Dear Legion Family Members and Friends,



Across this great nation of ours, American Legion Family members will pause to honor our comrades on this upcoming sacred weekend.

Legionnaires and Sons of The American Legion members will place flags on veterans' gravesites. The Legion Family will **wear poppies and collect donations to support veterans** programs. American Legion posts will **lead Memorial Day commemorations** in their communities.

But what if The American Legion ceased to exist? It's not a scenario that I personally want to ever see. Who would advocate for veterans on Capitol Hill and in state legislatures? Who would instill the values of citizenship and patriotism to children and youth? Who would provide for military families in need? Who would award college scholarships to children of deceased or severely disabled post-9/11 veterans? Who would educate Americans about protecting Old Glory? Who would volunteer for nearly a million hours at VA hospitals each year? Who would train service officers to help countless veterans access their benefits at no cost? Simply put, no other nonprofit organization has the reach, dedication or influence that The American Legion does. But that won't last forever, if our membership continues to erode.

Our members make a significant difference every day in every community across America.

Take for example, Post 554 in Morley, Mich. Post members immediately leapt into action when they learned that the home where paralyzed veteran Justin Flowers was living **needed a new ramp**.

"I am just so floored by how they did this," said Flowers, who served in the Army from 1992-94. "One guy told the (local) news crew he was going to stay … until he got the deck done. For The American Legion to come out and help these people – they were doing this for me."

Or consider the **impact that American Legion Post 140 is having** in Prescott Valley, Ariz.

The post, now in its fifth year, worked with New Horizons Disability Empowerment Campus on a 16-month project to provide the community a 9,400-square-foot facility where

disabled people, including veterans, could find the services they need. "It's a win for the Legion," said Dave Seigler, New Horizons executive director. "It's a win for us. But best of all, it's a win for the clients we serve."

Those are just two of the many examples of why The American Legion matters. We'll see many more throughout Memorial Day Weekend.

As we pause this weekend to honor and remember our fallen comrades, take time to engage potential and/or expired members. Educate them on the value of being a Legionnaire. Let them know that The American Legion is a perfect way for them to continue their service. And most importantly, sign them up to join The American Legion, the nation's most influential veterans service organization.

The American Legion — and the communities we serve — succeed because of your commitment, your dedication to veterans, servicemembers and their families. It's up to us to continue what our predecessors started nearly a century ago.

Carry the legacy forward.

Charles E. Schmidt
National Commander

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Wear poppies to honor the fallen

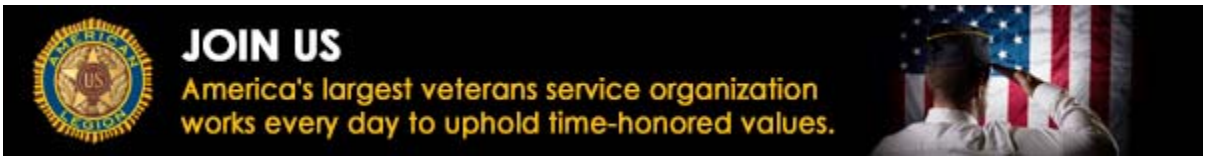
The Legion's legacy, worth coining

Commander Schmidt: 'Meet me on stage in Reno'

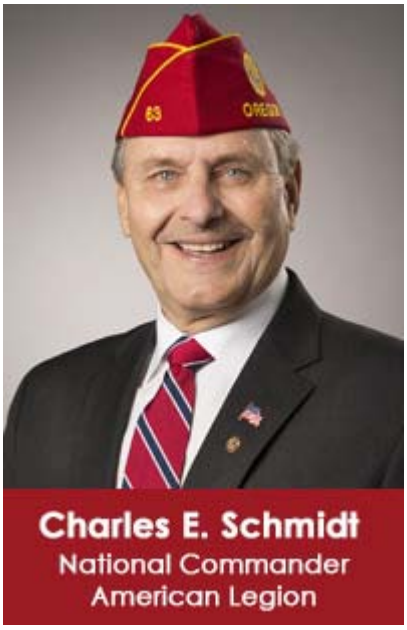
Commander's project helps needy children and service officers

May 23, 2017 • Issue No. 401

THE AMERICAN LEGION



Dear Legion Family Members and Friends,



Too often, when I tell young troops or new veterans that The American Legion wrote their GI Bill of Rights, campaigned tirelessly to get it passed and continue every day to work to improve it, they are astonished. "I had no idea The American Legion did that … I thought it was a government program," they say, almost collectively.

So, it is with great pride and purpose that I encourage you to visit the National WWII Museum in New Orleans for **"The Greatest Legislation: An American Legion Salute to the GI Bill."** The multi-media exhibit opens Tuesday, June 20, with a reception at 5 p.m., followed by a moderated panel discussion, led by American Legion 100th Anniversary Honorary Committee Chairman Ted Roosevelt IV. Among the panelists is Vietnam War veteran and former U.S. Sen. James Webb, author of the Post 9/11 GI Bill. The panel discussion will focus on the GI Bill's legacy of success and the changes it has needed to best serve 21st century veterans.

Visitors planning to attend are asked to call the museum at **1-877-813-3329, extension 412**, to reserve a place. The event, scheduled to finish about 7:30 p.m., is free. **The panel discussion will also be streamed live online at the museum's website at nationalww2museum.org**.

Through touch-screen videos and illustrated panels, the exhibit brings to life the dramatic story of the Legion's fight to get the bill passed. The WWII museum will host the exhibit until Dec. 18, 2017, at which time it will travel to a different venue.

The exhibit showcases the original Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 cover and signature pages, signed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, Speaker of the House Samuel Rayburn and Acting Senate President pro tempore Guy Gillette, on loan from the National Archives. Also displayed are the typewritten and hand-edited speech FDR gave after signing the bill and one of the pens he used to sign into law The American Legion's 10-point plan to improve opportunities for veterans, a measure that would ultimately transform U.S. culture, economy and defense.

I thank the National WWII Museum for this outstanding display space and the National Archives and the FDR Presidential Library and Museum for allowing The American Legion to borrow the original documents. The Legion is also grateful to Sen. Webb, Student

Veterans of America President and CEO Jared Lyon and VA Deputy Under Secretary for Economic Opportunity Curtis Coy for sharing with us their insights on the benefit's current state and future plan.

It is my sincere hope that, as The American Legion centennial story is told over the next two years, that new generations will understand what this organization has done, is doing and will continue to do in a second century of service.

Carry the legacy forward.

Charles E. Schmidt
National Commander

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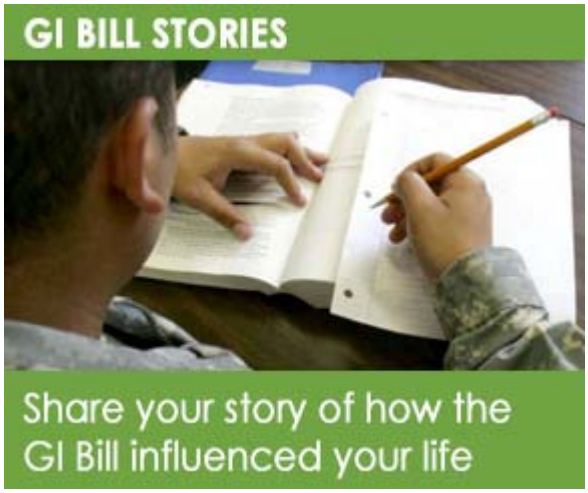

Other headlines

In SHAPE with Junior ROTC

A flag to remember D-Day

An airman returns to his roots

Commander's fundraising goal still attainable

June 13, 2017 • Issue No. 402

From: The American Legion
To: Library Division
Subject: Help us illustrate the Legion's impact
Date: Tuesday, June 20, 2017 10:45:44 AM

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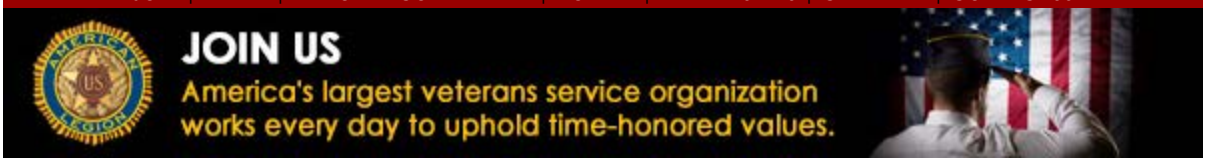

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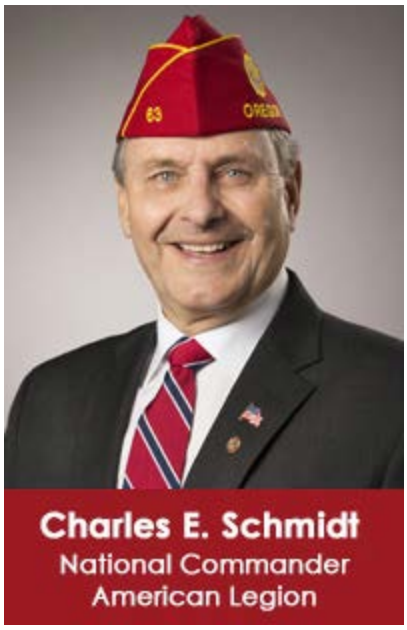

Throughout the year American Legion posts go about their community service with little fanfare. Legion Family members tidy up veterans' gravesites, raise money for worthy programs and mentor children in their communities.

The impact of all of these activities is nearly immeasurable. However, the annual Consolidated Post Report is one way to measure the impressive impact American Legion posts have in their communities and beyond. Additionally, it assists in the report to Congress as we comply with our congressional charter.

The clock is winding down toward this year's deadline for the Legion's 13,000 posts to submit their annual Consolidated Post Reports (CPR). The 2016-17 reporting period (June 1-May 31) is **over so now is the time for all posts to submit reports** of their accomplishments for the community, state and nation over the last 12 months.

Most years about 67 percent of posts comply with filing the CPRs. This year, I would like to see 100 percent — every single post — complete the CPR.

It's important for us to document all the great things that posts are doing in their communities so that we can get a better handle on our leadership nationwide. If we only receive two-thirds, it skews the reporting we do as a national organization.

For example, the most recent CPR indicates that 7,225 posts participated in Memorial Day services. I believe that every post plays a role in a Memorial Day event, making that number closer to 13,000.

The CPR deadline is July 1. All Legion posts should submit their CPRs by logging onto **myLegion.org** and completing the form. The online form allows posts to submit a short written narrative of their community activities to expand on their input or cover local programs not captured on the form.

At national convention this year, I will recognize American Legion departments with a 95 percent or better CPR reporting. My sincere hope is that we will have to allocate more time on the agenda this year than previous year's to acknowledge all 55 departments.

Carry the legacy forward.

Charles E. Schmidt
National Commander

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Legion, Auxiliary and SAL leaders broadcast to troops overseas

National commander salutes Senate bill on Flag Day

Legion leader praises reversal of planned VA benefits cuts

'Cleanup' vets still paying a price

June 13, 2017 • Issue No. 402

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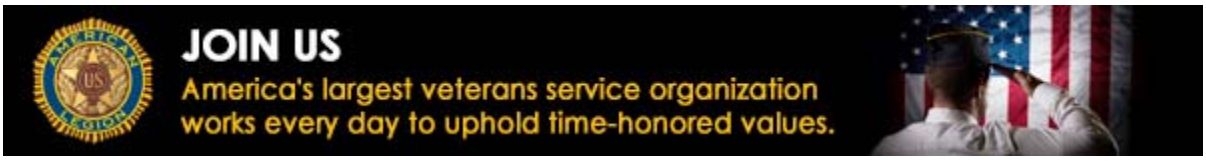

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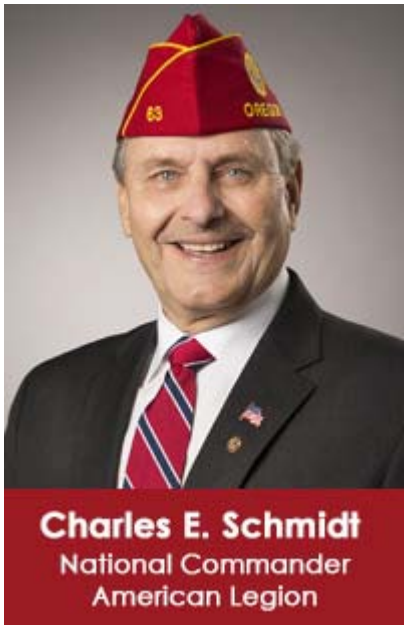

In the June issue of The American Legion Magazine, I discussed an historic opportunity for our organization. The U.S. Congress only authorizes the minting of two commemorative coins per year. We are counting on your support of legislation -- H.R. 2519 and S. 1182 – that would bestow this honor upon the greatest veterans organization the world has ever seen.

With your help, we can encourage Congress to mark The American Legion's 2019 Centennial with these limited edition, exquisitely crafted commemorative coins. Not only would these coins raise public awareness about the most influential veterans organization in the world, but proceeds from their sale would raise funds for our programs that assist veterans, servicemembers and their families.

A centennial coin would generate millions of dollars to pay for programs that fall under our four founding pillars of veterans affairs and rehabilitation, strong national defense, children and youth, and Americanism. From service officer training to Operation Comfort Warriors to American Legion Baseball, these programs enrich our communities, states and nation.

A bipartisan group in Congress is gathering support for The American Legion 100th Anniversary Commemorative Coin Act. Please ask your representative and senators to join sponsors Sen. Todd Young, R-Ind.; Sen Joe Donnelly, D-Ind.; Rep Phil Roe, R-Tenn.; and Rep. Tim Walz, D-Minn.; and co-sponsor this important legislation. You can call or write to their district offices or call the U.S. Capitol Switchboard at (202) 224-3121. The easiest way to spread this message is through our Legislative Action Center which you can reach **BY CLICKING HERE** and allow us to help you compose and draft a message.

There is already strong competition from other groups seeking their own commemorative coin. We must let Congress know that H.R. 2519 and S. 1182 are extremely important to The American Legion and anybody who supports veterans and our enriching programs.

After all, there are only two commemorative coins authorized by Congress each year. Already scheduled for 2019 is the minting of a coin to honor the 50th anniversary of the Apollo 11 moon landing.

Many of the astronauts and support personnel who made that mission possible were Legionnaires. Some were even educated through the GI Bill, made possible by The American Legion. I truly believe that most of those Apollo 11 heroes would approve of this pairing. With your help, we can make this happen. **Contact your members of Congress today**.

Carry the legacy forward.

Charles E. Schmidt
National Commander

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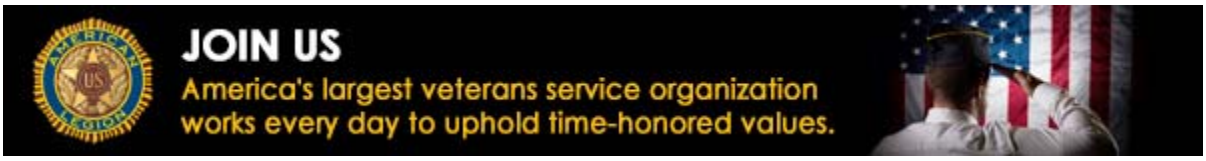
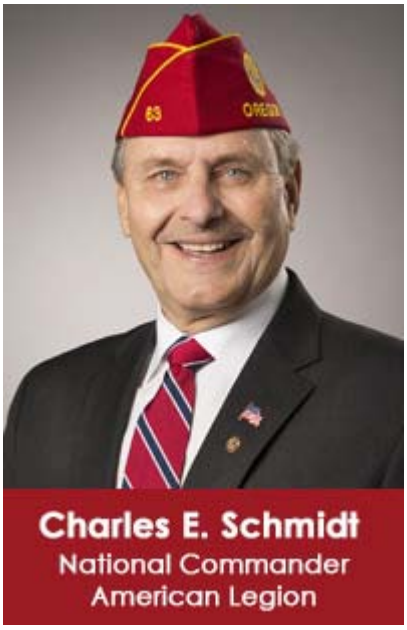


Dear Legion Family Members and Friends,



As my year as American Legion national commander draws to a close, I could not be more pleased with what I have seen in my year meeting Legion Family members, visiting posts and seeing firsthand how members are helping to carry the legacy forward.

That phrase — Carry the legacy forward — has been my theme for this year. And while more work needs to be done to improve our membership numbers, our members are engaged and truly committed to serving their communities.

This week as The American Legion Legacy Run heads from Dodge City, Kan., to Reno, Nev., the Riders are not only helping to preserve the legacy of fallen or seriously injured comrades, they are assisting their children with paying for college. The Legacy Run helps raise around $1 million each year **for the scholarship**.

And — like many Legion programs — it does make a difference.

Perri Moreno's father, Paul, wanted to help her pay for graduate school but was unable to afford it. He learned that his VA disability rating **qualified her as an eligible scholarship applicant**.

"I want to say thank you (to The American Legion) because although I didn't have to make that sacrifice (losing a parent), (my father's service) still affected my life. And it made a difference that The American Legion opened this scholarship up and allowed me a chance to continue my education," Perri said.

The American Legion's youth programs are another fine example of how members volunteer their time to help carry the legacy forward. Our Boys State and Boys Nation programs have developed youths into leaders for generations.

And this past summer, our members inspired a new, energetic group of young men during Boys Nation. The renowned program has helped young men who later went on to become leaders in government, the public sector, entertainment and elsewhere.

"It has truly been **a life-changing experience**. I have so much patriotism for our country now," summarized Jokobe Mitchell of Louisiana.

And last, but certainly not least, The American Legion's influence on Capitol Hill is evident in the passage of legislation that supports veterans. This summer Congress approved the **Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2017** — an update to the original legislation penned by the past American Legion national commander — that will enable more veterans to receive their earned college benefits.

We are still the nation's largest and most influential veterans service organization. Thank you for what you do to …

Carry the legacy forward.

Charles E. Schmidt
National Commander

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