# DISPATCH Daily

*"For God & Country"*

SALT LAKE CITY NATIONAL CONVENTION — THURSDAY, SEPT. 5, 1996


# Perot blasts election year 'free candy'

No longer a complete newcomer to political campaigning, a slicker, more personable Ross Perot addressed delegates to The American Legion 78th National Convention yesterday morning.

That's not to say there weren't some tough words in a speech that blamed both Republicans and Democrats for our country's financial problems.

After outlining the economic difficulties of the United States in typical Perot fashion, complete with graphs and charts, the Reform Party candidate asked Legionnaires, "Why did we allow these financial problems to occur? Who is responsible for this mess? Neither party accepts responsibility; each political party blames the other. But the facts are that they both did it!"

Perot said the United States remains the last superpower, but to maintain this position it must be economically strong, with a powerful manufacturing base. "Today we have more people in government than in manufacturing. Our deficit has risen from $100 billion a year in 1960 to $1.5 trillion a year today, with a total debt of $5 trillion. We don't have $5 trillion of currency in print!" he exclaimed. A strong manufacturing base, he claims, will keep us from having to go begging to foreign nations, which would make the United States vulnerable from the outside.

After graphically depicting Legionnaires the effects of "reckless spending" on the convention hall's view screens, Perot ridiculed the concept of tax cuts before the budget is balanced and the national debt retired, calling the concept "free candy to get your vote."

While many of Perot's economic ideas are commonly known, as they form the heart of his candidacy, less publicized are his thoughts on the military. His vice presidential running mate in 1992, retired admiral James Stockdale, handled those duties the last time around. With no veep yet named, Perot handles questions about the armed forces himself in 1996.

## Quote of the Day:

**"... My right to wave a fist in protest ends where your nose begins."**

*— Rep. James Longley Jr., R-Maine, telling Legion convention delegates how he feels about flag burners, Wednesday, Sept. 4*

See **PEROT,** page 4

# Brown vows action on 'lost' files

Veterans who participated in ionizing radiation tests decades ago are being sought—and the Department of Veterans' Affairs is turning to The American Legion to help find them.

The Department of Defense recently admitted to finding the records of 7,000 former service members who were exposed to radiation tests. VA Secretary Jesse Brown asked Legion delegates Wednesday morning to assist his department to locate the veterans.

"Many of the veterans may be suffering from problems of the nasal passage and may be eligible for disability compensation for their maladies," said Brown.

**BROWN**

Much of Brown's remarks to delegates centered around changes that have been made in the VA medical system during the Clinton administration. "Putting veterans first is more than just a slogan. It's a mission we have followed and as a result, the VA is more responsive to the needs of veterans than what it was four years ago."

Brown, a combat disabled Marine veteran of the Vietnam War, counted several accomplishments his department has made, including improvements in services for aging and women veterans, reorganizing the hospital system and the eligibility system, and giving assistance to disabled Agent Orange veterans and their children who suffer from birth defects.

"We've traveled far but we cannot let our guard down because the threat to veterans' benefits will always be there," said Brown.

One of the changes the VA is looking at is having federal programs such as Medicare reimburse the department for care given to eligible veterans. A pilot

See **BROWN,** page 4

# *Hiring veterans is a job well done*

**■ Legionnaires praise firms' employment practices.**

Finding employment opportunities for veterans is a full-time job, one some do better than others. On Wednesday, National Commander Daniel A. Ludwig used the National Convention forum to honor employers who have excelled in hiring veterans. Ludwig also presented several other awards from the stage Wednesday.

The Employer of the Year awards consist of three categories, and are administered by the National Economic Commission. For businesses employing under 51 workers, the national winner was Audit Security Bags, Inc., West Lebanon, N.H., with David C. Williams, president, accepting the award. Veterans comprise 32 percent of the firm's workforce, and in 1994 alone, three-quarters of the new hires were veterans. New Hampshire had a pretty good year, since the winner in the medium-sized category (51 to 200 employees) also hails from the state. Tom Norris, the Legion's employment chairman for New Hampshire, was congratulated for his work by Economic Commission Chairman Ray Smith.

Ludwig presented the award to Carl E. Shoemaker, president of The Green Mountain Rifle Barrel Co., Conway, N.H. The company, which boasts a veterans employment rate of 33 percent, was nominated by John Neylon, a Local Veterans Employment Representative (LVER) from Littleton, N.H.

In the large employer division (more than 200) the award went to Goodyear Tire and Rubber Co., Topeka, Kan., with Donald E. Lilya, former president of the corporation's board of directors, accepting the award. Some 58 percent of all hires in 1994 were veterans, with the Topeka operation boasting an overall veteran employment rate of 34 percent.

The company was nominated by Peggy Black, a Disabled Veteran Outreach Program (DVOP) specialist from the Topeka Job Service Office. As an added bonus, Lilya announced proudly he had just become one the newest members of The American Legion, with Utah Convention Corporation President William E. Christoffersen doing the honors.

National Commander Daniel A. Ludwig presented two other major awards during Wednesday's session. Following the report of the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission, Ludwig announced the Department of Ohio was the winner of the William F. Lenker National Service Trophy, awarded to the Department judged doing the best job of promoting the welfare of veterans and their families.

The Department of Ohio made a good showing Wednesday, also earning the Garland Murphy Award. ❑

# Women's memorial on schedule, budget

Legionnaires have had a big hand in raising funds for the Women in Military Service for America Memorial, so retired Air Force Gen. Wilma L. Vaught gave National Convention delegates another one Wednesday.

"The American Legion has been with us from the beginning in 1987," Vaught told Legionnaires, applauding their efforts on behalf of the national women's memorial. She noted 1,300 American Legion Posts have donated a total to date of $170,000 to help fund the $18 million memorial.

Construction on the women's memorial, located at Arlington National Cemetery's main gate, began in March and is on schedule and on budget. Vaught invited all Legionnaires, Auxiliary and SAL members to dedication ceremonies set for Oct. 18, 1997. Vaught, a member of Post 477, Chrisman, Ill., praised National Commander Daniel A. Ludwig for his special attention to the fund-raising effort during his term in office.

She also applauded his move in appointing a Legionnaire in every Department to register female members with the memorial's data bank. The data bank will offer visitors to the memorial with a permanent, computerized record of women veterans from every era. She said she repaid Ludwig's favor by becoming a Paid-Up-For-Life Legionnaire before taking the stage.

Also on Wednesday, delegates heard an update about the national World War II memorial planned for a 7.4-acre rectangular-shaped site between the Lincoln Memorial and the Washington Monument on the mall in Washington, D.C.

Retired Maj. Gen. John P. Herrling, secretary of the Presidential WWII Memorial Advisory Board, updated delegates about the memorial, expected to carry a final price tag of $100 million before dedication ceremonies tentatively scheduled for Veterans Day 2000. The board has raised $4.7 million from sale of a WWII commemorative coin, while a major fund-raising effort is set to begin this fall.

"The memorial will be financed almost exclusively by private donations," said Herrling. Earlier this year, 400 entrants submitted designs for the memorial, which an advisory panel winnowed to six finalists. The winning design will be revealed in November, said Herrling. ❑

## W.C. Bradwell funeral services set Thursday

The Southern Caucus of The American Legion Wednesday donated $1,100 to the National Child Welfare Foundation in the memory of one of their own, W. Calvitt Bradwell, distinguished member of the National Finance Commission. Mr. Bradwell died Sunday morning at a Salt Lake City hospital after suffering a heart attack.

The World War II veteran and 48-year Legionnaire from Moncks Corner, S.C., served in many capacities during his life. At one time or another he served in various offices for the National Child Welfare Foundation, Public Relations Commission, Membership & Post Activities Committee and the Foreign Relations Council. He was South Carolina Department commander, 1975-76.

Funeral services are scheduled Thursday. Mr. Bradwell's Legion friends can send cards of condolence to the family at the home: P.O. Box 456, Moncks Corner, SC 29461-0456.

# Auxiliary joins Bachman bandwagon

While most people think the election season is just kicking into high gear, with final results coming in November, the American Legion Auxiliary might disagree.

For them, an important election took place yesterday morning. That's when delegates elected Phyllis Bachman to the Auxiliary's top position, national president. She had served the past year as national vice president, a position now filled by Barbara Kranig.

Bachman, LaFargeville, N.Y., has served 30 years in the Auxiliary, accumulating extensive leadership experience at all levels. She has worked on 10 national committees, including Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation, Children and Youth, Education and National Security.

"Promoting America" will be the Auxiliary's message in the coming year. Bachman selected that theme because "the issue of respect is fundamental to the preservation of America's priceless heritage. And no one else can better inspire a renewed interest in the welfare of our country and the quality of life throughout this nation than the American Legion Auxiliary."

Aside from her impressive credentials, Bachman brings to her new role a commitment to the ideals The American Legion and American Legion Auxiliary have exemplified for nearly 80 years. In her acceptance speech, Bachman said the 1 million-member strong Auxiliary will be making a big push to make patriotism and community spirit top priorities.

"We must take the lead and cultivate patriotism and community spirit. We must teach, encourage and reward," Bachman said. To make this work, the Auxiliary plans to encourage more involvement by giving a national award to the junior who engineers the most effective letter-writing campaign in support of the Citizens Flag Alliance.

The organization also seeks to be more visible in communities by recognizing both a senior and a junior community volunteer of the year. And junior members will be invited to compete for national awards in several service programs, and introduced to a new "Promoting America" independent activity program, Bachman said.

"As you return to your communities 'Promoting America' and carrying the message of The American Legion Auxiliary, remember that only you will enjoy the feeling of satisfaction who can witness the report of the year's achievements and be able to say, 'I helped.'" ❑

# *RxAmerica saves members' money*

Just one year ago The American Legion Discount Prescription Program expanded to cover all members of the Legion, Sons of The American Legion and their families.

In spite of high savings readily available, however, most members haven't taken advantage of this membership benefit, according to John Dyer, RxAmerica president and chief executive officer.

Dyer and members of his staff spoke to National Convention delegates yesterday on how they can make this program work.

"Many of you are still unaware of the program, or believe you need to enroll to participate," Dyer said. "But you and your family members are already enrolled as long as you have a current American Legion or S.A.L. membership card!" he emphasized.

Those who have participated saved nearly $3 million in the past year, or roughly 17 percent over retail prices. That savings can be spent by a Legionnaire in any way he or she sees fit — perhaps even using the money to pay dues.

"This is a great way to service existing members and recruit new ones," Dyer said. "If Legionnaires, Sons and their families pass the word along, it will help the Legion grow."

A convenient mail service is also available, which is of particular use to individuals taking medication for chronic ailments like diabetes or Graves' Disease. Members may have up to a 90-day supply sent directly to their homes.

RxAmerica, the Salt Lake City-based company overseeing the program, recently announced even more eligible participants — widows and widowers of American Legion or SAL members. Forms for enrolling in this new way are available from local Posts.

"Only 4 percent of the eligible participants currently use the program, resulting in 533,854 prescriptions purchased to date. The rest are missing out on substantial savings," Dyer said. ❑

## Ludwig prepares to relinquish his red cap

When he took office at the 1995 American Legion National Convention in Indianapolis, National Commander Daniel A. Ludwig said his marching orders were clear and direct: "My job—and yours, too—is to continue with the tradition we have always followed. We're still serving America."

*Still Serving America* became Ludwig's theme during his year in office as the Legion's chief spokesman. It has been a year marked by innovation and success. The Red Wing, Minn., native became the second national commander to visit Vietnam since the U.S. withdrawal, seeing firsthand how investigators are trying to piece together the answers about MIAs who did not return from the war.

Earlier this summer, Ludwig toured war-ravaged Bosnia to see how U.S. troops are faring in their difficult peacekeeping mission. It was there he discovered that many troops were taking advantage of a new membership program designed to attract the latest generation of service members into the Legion.

Ludwig, a Navy Vietnam veteran who was in the submarine service, also helped lead the charge as the Legion continues to seek a constitutional amendment to protect the flag. He also has spearheaded the organization's revolutionary plan to restructure the VA medical system under the Legion-proposed GI Bill of Health.

Today at noon, Ludwig's tour of duty will come to an end.

"It's been a rewarding year and it's hard to believe that we have traveled this far," said Ludwig, reflecting on his term. "I am confident that our members are committed to The American Legion pledge of service to others. We are still serving America." ❑

# • Perot

continued from page 1

On future wars, Perot says the Commander in Chief must ask himself if he would go into combat to fight and die for this cause, and if he would send his son and daughter into combat. If he decides he would, the task is to first commit the nation, and then commit the troops.

"I feel very strongly that anytime we have troops in combat everybody in this country should make sacrifices. The only sacrifice I can think of is that every American (civilian) should pay a war tax. That will get their attention," Perot said. And if they weren't willing to pay the war tax, "then they can join the armed forces. They won't be paying the tax because they'll be fighting the war," he added.

Unlike Bob Dole, Perot did not implicitly support President Clinton's decision to launch missile attacks on Saddam Hussein's forces. Instead, he took the opportunity to advocate the need to always finish a war completely and honor those who served.

"We must learn from our past mistakes," Perot said. In particular, he said the U.S. needs to completely investigate Gulf War Syndrome, treat those who currently suffer and ensure that never again will this country sell biological or chemical weapons to a nation that may use them against American troops.

In other military and veterans related issues, Perot promised that, as president, U.S. troops would fight only under U.S. commanders, that prisoners of war would never be left behind, that wounded troops would receive first-rate care, and that VA hospitals would become the model for patient care.

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**— John Doane**

"I will conduct a nationwide audit of each hospital, asking every patient to evaluate the services provided. And once a month I will personally review these evaluations—and take action," Perot said.

Eager to reach more than the 6,000 delegates in the hall, Perot didn't fail to publicize two upcoming info-mercials he will air on NBC and ABC later this week. Two people who won't be watching are Martha Hegberg and John Doane, both members of the Missouri delegation.

"He's a heck of a speaker," Doane said, "but he scares the life out of me. Still, he's dead serious about what he's trying to do, and he does have character. And I firmly believe character matters. Bob Dole has character," he added.

Hegberg simply doesn't believe Perot could possibly accomplish all he says, and would be too much of a micro-manager. "There's no way he could do everything. Nobody could. But he kept saying 'I, personally.' That's just not going to happen," Hegberg said.

Whatever else he may do or say, Perot did have one message that resounded with the entire audience: Vote your conscience. "Study the issues, know the facts and cast an informed vote in November. Don't be manipulated by propaganda. You can pass on a better, stronger country to those we love the most — our children and grandchildren — by casting an informed vote," Perot said. ❑

# • Brown

continued from page 1

program currently is under way at select hospitals.

The pilot program mirrors a proposal the Legion has backed for years. The Legion strongly supports having the VA reimbursed by programs such as Medicare, Medicaid, CHAMPUS, TriCare and third-party insurers. On the surface, Brown seemed philosophically aligned to that belief based on his remarks to convention delegates.

Brown also lashed out at plans that would tax veterans' disability compensation and pensions, pledging to convention delegates he will fight any such attempt.

"It must be made clear that veterans' benefits are separate and apart from welfare benefits," Brown said. "There are some (in Congress) who need to understand the difference." ❑

# Longley wants curbs on use of U.S. troops

America's sons and daughters should never again go into harm's way serving under a foreign flag or commanders. And that is the basis of legislation being introduced by a member of the House National Security Committee.

Rep. James Longley, R-Maine, unveiled to convention delegates Tuesday his proposed Armed Forces Protection Act, which, in addition to restricting U.S. troop deployments in multinational operations, would also protect the health care benefits of active duty service members.

"Our bill ensures that they (U.S. forces) will never wear a foreign nation patch or insignia," said Longley, adding the measure guarantees that troops would take orders only from U.S. commanders in joint operations.

Longley, a Legion member of Post 178, Lewiston, Maine, and a Marine Corps Reserve officer, drew applause from delegates when he cited why veterans must remain vigilant in protecting their benefits. He said that 14 of the 87 new members who entered the House are veterans.

Longley introduced in the House the Legion-proposed GI Bill of Health (**HR 3950**) last July. He reminded delegates of the plan's two key features: First, the GI Bill of Health will create new revenue sources by retaining money collected from Medicare and other federal program reimbursements. Second, it will open up the VA medical system to all veterans and their families.

The Maine lawmaker also lauded the Legion for its commitment to the flag-protection amendment, which Longley cosponsored in the House. "When some claim that flag burning is an act of free speech, I say they are nuts. There's a saying in the Marine Corps that seems to make sense (in response to flag burning) — 'My right to wave a fist in protest ends where your nose begins.' "

Legionnaires also heard from Rep. Steve Buyer, R-Ind., a member of the House Veterans' Affairs and National Security committees. Buyer was critical of much of what VA Secretary Jesse Brown had to say about the administration's progress on behalf of veterans *(see page 1)*.