THE AMERICAN LEGION

"For God & Country"

Dispatch Daily

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Sen. Orrin Hatch

Vice President Al Gore

Gore, Hatch address Legion Convention

Candidates discuss VA budget, defense

Speeches by Vice President Al Gore and Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-Utah) before the Convention Wednesday illustrated some of the differences in positions between Democrat and Republican presidential candidates.

Gore, a member of Tennessee's Post 57, called the Convention a homecoming for him. "My dad was a member of The American Legion," said Gore. "My uncle Whit LaFon, has been active in The American Legion all his life. He is a past National Executive Committeeman and past Tennessee Department Commander. And he's here."

With introductions out of the way, Gore brought up his experience in Vietnam. The vice president says he knows firsthand how important it is to take care of troops who are sent into harm's way. "Veterans' issues are not just policy to me," Gore said. "It is a personal and moral standard."

Tailoring his speech for the veteran audience, Gore hit three major points near veterans' hearts: a strong national defense, quality of life and tending to veterans' needs.

> ***'Let's never ask our servicemen and women to do what they have not been equipped to do.'***
>
> ***- VP Al Gore***

Gore cited his advocacy toward military forces, demonstrated by his vote in favor of the Gulf War in 1991. He went as far as offering an "iron-clad commitment" in maintaining a strong force for peace and freedom if he's elected president.

"We must honor this simple principle, 'Let's never ask our servicemen and women to do what they have not been

equipped to do,' " said Gore. "Let us match their courage with armor. Let us always equip them to do what we ask."

Gore's plan to improve quality of life for soldiers, sailors and airmen is to upgrade and replace aging equipment,

barracks and family housing. He also talked of the proposed military pay raise -

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Soldier brings new face to Legion

Ruth Berganza

It's hard not to notice Ruth Berganza The face of the 19-year-old stands out among the sea of more mature faces that fill the Convention Center during the 81st National American Legion Convention. But according to the young Army Reserve soldier, it doesn't have to be that way.

As a matter of fact she credits her membership in the veterans' group to a couple of individuals who just bothered to ask her to join. And since that day almost two years ago, the member of Los Angeles Post 8 has been asking others to sign up - including 47 of her fellow 349th General Hospital servicemembers she recruited in one day.

Berganza, who was elected Third Vice Commander for Women, may hold the title of youngest officer in the Legion.

That fact doesn't stop her from being one of the Post's best examples of what can be accomplished when the motivation and enthusiasm is there.

"One of the Post members, Jesse Morales, came down to talk to my Commander to tell him about my participating in The American Legion.

It was during this meeting that I asked the commanding general to join," she explained. "Before I was finished I had gotten my colonel, sergeant major and first sergeant to sign up as well. In the end, every member of my section became a member."

The Los Angeles native cited college benefits as the primary reason for her enlistment at the age of 17, but she claims she's reaping more than just the money that has paid for her attending a local travel school.

"I love feeling like I belong to something. I feel like I'm part of a team and I take a lot of pride in serving my country. My mother is even more proud!"

She has found the same satisfaction as a Legionnaire. One of her favorite Legion activities is visiting the veterans home in Barstow, Calif., where she enjoys visiting with the residents.

Berganza hopes that others her age will find out that becoming a member of The American Legion is more than "discounts on rental cars and hotel rooms."

"A lot of people don't know what the Legion is all about," she said. "But we have to get the word out. "The Legion will not last forever unless people like me get involved."

Legion recognizes veteran-friendly employers

Large, medium and small businesses hire vets

The American Legion recognized three businesses for their success in hiring veterans during an award presentation at the Convention Wednesday afternoon.

Georgia Pacific Plywood of Crosset, Ark., was named Large Employer of the Year by The American Legion. Medium Employer of the Year honors went to Computer Sciences Corporation of Clearfield, Utah, while Jacobs Construction of Lemont, Pa., won the Small Employer of the Year award.

Georgia Pacific hired 112 employees last year, including 41 military veterans. Of the 872 employees of the company, 19.3 percent are veterans. The written employment policy of the plywood manufacturer states "There shall be no discrimination because of a person's race, color, religion, national origin, handicap, sex or age. Our policy also includes special efforts to provide employment opportunities to disabled veterans and veterans of the Vietnam Era."

Computer Science Corporation has 156 employees, 74 of whom are veterans. Human Resources Director Joanne Stone has been recruiting veterans for the company by participating in the Transition

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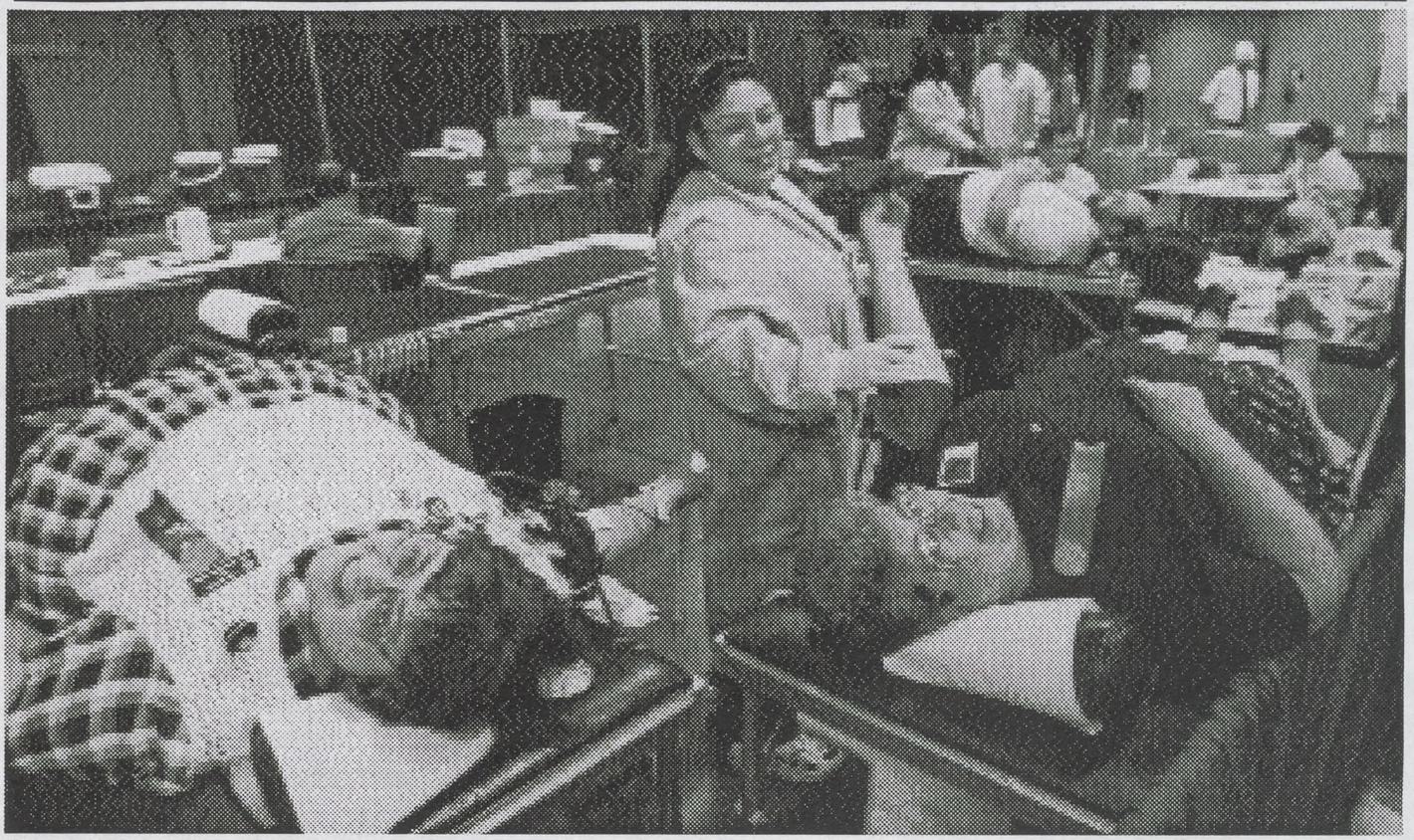

Blood sisters - *American Red Cross medical assistant Christine Alvarado, center, checks on donors Lynn Masters, left, and Martha Yancey , right, who add their portion to the more than 100 pints collected from The American Legion family over a two day period at the Convention. Masters is from the Department of Idaho, while Yancey hails from the Department of Missouri. They are Auxiliary members. Alvarado said that one pint of blood can help up to 3 people as the blood can be separated into plasma, platelets and red blood cells. She also stressed that with the holiday seasoncoming up soon, giving blood becomes even more important.* *Photo by Tom Strattman*

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Assistance Program at nearby Hill Air Force Base.

Jacobs Construction Company has 16 employees, including eight veterans. The company's 50-percent veteran ratio can be attributed to the military service of Jim Jacobs, who owns the small business.

"I was in the Navy and when I got out of the service, I was looking for a good job," said Jacobs. "Hiring veterans is good for us, it's good for them. Our veterans sometimes use the employment we provide as stepping stones to go to Penn. State for advanced degrees."

Placing veterans is a business for Hire Quality, an agency dedicated to finding employment for honorably discharged servicemembers. All fees are paid by the employers, thus allowing veterans to use their service at no charge.

Legionnaire and Hire Quality CEO Matthew Caulfield said that he is proud of the partnership that his company has formed with The American Legion.

"Nothing makes me more proud than to be referred to as a Marine," said Caulfield, a retired major general. "Right next to that, it is to be referred to as a member of The American Legion. Especially after what I have seen the Legion do in the last two years to solve a very difficult problem...Some may look at veterans and say 'how could they have a problem getting a job?' But you know better. You can't network from Bosnia. You can't network from Okinawa. You can't network aboard a ship, even if you're going to get discharged two weeks later.

> 'You can't network aboard a ship, even if you're going to get discharged two weeks later."
> - *Matthew Caulfield*

"A difference between today's armed forces and previous generations is that 65 percent are married, and the overwhelming number of the married men and women have children. They need a job and they need a job now," Caulfield said.

"They are the finest young men and women we have in America. They have honorable discharges. They have earned the right to be considered for some of the best jobs we have in America," he continued."Because they can't network, when it comes to the best jobs, they are some of the most discriminated-against people in America.

"We have had 122,000 people call us this year. And the first words they hear when they call us, whether from aboard a ship or from Okinawa, is 'Welcome to Hire Quality. We're sponsored by The American Legion. Can we help you?' And we do help them. Absolutely free."

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possibly the largest since 1982. Gore pledged to uphold veterans' rights. "Let's face it, we don't give our veterans anything. You've earned it - with sweat, courage, blood and sacrifice."

A final resting place was another quality of life issue Gore touched on. New veterans' cemeteries are being opened in Dallas, Cleveland and Saratoga, N.Y. According to Gore, this is the largest expansion of the national cemetery system since World War II.

Discussing benefits afforded an easy transition to cover Social Security. "I'll be damned if I'm going to allow it to be cut or weakened or taken away," said Gore.

In his estimation, the budget surplus should be used to save Social Security, strengthen Medicare and pay off our national debt.

Hatch followed Gore and immediately touched on the issue of bipartisanship. He commended the Legion on the ability to bring together soldiers, sailors and airmen for the common good of veterans.

"If the Legion can do that, then Republicans and Democrats should be able to come together in Washington," said Hatch.

The Senate, Hatch said, has set aside $2.9 trillion surplus aside to save Medicare and Social Security and to pay off our national debt.

The senator continued by praising The American Legion as "working to uphold the very fundamental values which I have tried to make the centerpiece of my Senate career."

Hatch addressed military readiness, citing that nearly eight years of neglect has taken its toll.

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>
> ***- Sen. Orrin Hatch***

He said Army recruitment is coming up 8,000 short this year; the Air Force needs 1,000 more pilots; the Navy can't deploy ships due to critical skill shortages; and one-third of pilots are turning down aviation continuation pay - a bonus as high as $100,000 - and moving into the private sector.

"Military personnel don't seek wealth, but they do seek pay for service and risks," noted Hatch.

"Military pay comparability with civilian equivalency has not been achieved since 1982. A record number of military families are on food stamps, and that is deplorable."

According to Hatch, Ronald Reagan was able to build military spending to 6.2 percent of GDP. This year, military spending will be down to 3.2 percent with a projection of this to fall to 2.9 percent.

"It took us years to convince the Clinton/Gore administration that the threat was not 15 years away, but was actually much closer," said Hatch.

Legionnaires know Hatch as an ardent supporter of the flag-protection amendment. He has sponsored the measure in the Senate and will continue to support it.

"We are so close to passage," noted Hatch. "Each time we have been beaten back, but only by the smallest minority. Like our forebears, we will press on until we are victorious."

Hatch closed with a look into the future. When The American Legion gathers in Milwaukee for the 82nd Convention, "I hope to report that we have passed the constitutional amendment, lowered taxes and have bolstered defense spending.

"These will be my priorities for the coming year."

Foreign & Outlying Dept. & Posts Legion officers installed

Jimmie Foster of Alaska named president

New National Foreign & Outlying Departments & Posts of The American Legion (FODPAL) officers were installed by PNC Erle Cocke, Jr. during a breakfast held at the Anaheim Hilton on Mon. Sept. 6.

They include the following:

President - Jimmie Foster (Alaska)
1st Vice President - Fred Platt (China Post #1)
2nd Vice President - Orlando Taylor (Hawaii)
3rd Vice President - Tom Hogan (Mexico)
Judge Advocate - Mike Beavers (France)
Historian - Ignacio Palad (Philippines)
Asst. Judge Advocate - Carlos Orria (Puerto Rico)
Asst. Judge Advocate - J.C. Bond (China -#1)
Asst. Judge Advocate - Miguel Gonzales (Philippines)
Asst. Historian - Richard I. Snyder (Alaska)
Asst. Historian - Faustino Espinosa (Puerto Rico)
Asst. Historian - Leroy Pulawa (Hawaii)
Chaplain - Sally Bennett (Mexico)
Sergeant at Arms - Edwin Vega (Puerto Rico)
Asst. Sergeant at Arms - Gene Franks (Alaska)
Asst. Sergeant at Arms - Dick Schabnell (China Post #1)
Asst. Sergeant at Arms - Bernard Lee (Hawaii)
Asst. Chaplain - Michael Quiles (Puerto Rico)
Secretary - Douglas Haggan (France)
Treasurer - Arnie Matanky (France)
Asst. Treasurer - Bob Conrad (Hawaii)