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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Romney to Legion: First priority is to keep America safe

INDIANAPOLIS (Aug. 29, 2012) -- Stressing that a strong national defense and fiscal responsibility can co-exist, Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney pledged to The American Legion that, if elected, he'll make sure both veterans and the military are taken care of under his watch.

Romney took a break from the Republican National Convention in Tampa, Fla., to address delegates at the organization's 94th National Convention in Indianapolis. He received a standing ovation after finishing his 20-minute address.

"The first job of government is to keep the American people safe – and as president, that will be my commitment to the American people," Romney told the packed hall in the Indianapolis Convention Center. "But our security and prosperity are connected. Our military strength depends on our economic strength. The well-being of our veterans depends on our ability to make sure they can find good jobs when they come home. And our ability to field the strongest fighting force in the world depends on leaders in Washington who know how to set priorities, write real budgets, and protect our soldiers and their families from devastating cuts.

"(Vice presidential candidate) Paul Ryan and I have a plan to keep America strong and secure, prosperous and free. Where the president has failed to lead, we will protect our national defense from cuts that jeopardize critical missions. Where he has let our veterans down, we will welcome them home to a booming economy and the jobs they need. Where he has dodged the tough choices, we will confront them head-on, and deliver a better future for Americans of this generation and the next."

Romney pledged to nurture friendly alliances while standing up for U.S. values on the international level. He cautioned that "the world continues to be a dangerous place," pointing to the situations in Iran, Pakistan, Syria and North Korea. And in touching on domestic issues, he said his travels have pointed to one major area of worry.

"I've had the privilege of visiting with many veterans and heard their concerns," he said. "Overwhelmingly the No. 1 concern I hear from young vets can be summed up in one word: jobs. They have served their country, and they want to get back to work. They need and deserve good jobs. And this president's greatest failure is that he has not delivered those jobs. As president, I will get America back to work again.

"To make it easier for veterans to find employment in skilled trades, I will work with the states to create a common credentialing and licensing standard, and encourage organizations to recognize and grant credit for military training."

Romney vowed to increase Department of Veterans Affairs mental health staffing and said that if a veteran cannot receive timely care through VA, he or she will be allowed to see a TRICARE provider at VA's expense. But the majority of Romney's speech focused on the budget and how it will impact the military and America's veterans.

"I have said before that this must be an American century," he said. "And to accomplish that, we must have the strongest military and the strongest economy in the world. Regrettably, President Obama has failed on both counts. I will keep faith with our troops and our veterans – and my administration will do better by them."

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