KEY MESSAGE POINTS

OF

THE AMERICAN LEGION

2010-2011

VETERANS AFFAIRS &

REHABILITATION

2010 – 2011

MESSAGE POINTS

Issue: Concurrent Receipt

Message Points:

- Veterans receiving compensation for service connected disabilities from VA are required to forfeit a proportional amount of their military retirement pay as an offset

- PL 108-136 is intended to provide some relief for veterans rated as 50-100% disabled over a ten year “Phase in” period

- Eliminate to “Phase in” of veterans rated between 50% and 100% provided by PL 108-136 to accelerate protecting these veterans from a “disability tax”

- Work to ensure the right of all veterans receiving disability to receive their full military retirement pay

Issue: Medicare Reimbursement

Message Points:

- Enrollment in VHA could be limited by the availability of existing annual federal discretionary appropriations to meet the health care needs of enrolled veterans

- This can require VHA to develop alternate streams of funding

- Indian Health Services has successfully demonstrated successful billing and collection of Medicare payments

- The American Legion seeks to amend Title 18 of the Social Security Act, to allow Medicare Reimbursement for VA on a fee-for-service basis for the treatment of non service-connected medical conditions of enrolled, Medicare-eligible veterans

- Enrolled, Medicare-eligible veterans should be authorized to participate in the Medicare Advantage option by choosing VA as their primary health care provider

Issue: Women and Homeless Veterans

Message Points:

- The number of women veterans enrolled in the VA system is expected to expand by 33 percent in the next three years

- In the past 10 years, the number of homeless women veterans has tripled

- VA&R is pressing for health care that adequately addresses the needs of women veterans beyond simply reproductive issues, and for VA to address issues such as mental health concerns, MST and single parent care giver consideration, as many women veterans are the primary care givers for children and face difficulties with medical care and educational opportunities where there is not available child care

- Currently there are over 100,000 homeless veterans in America, and it is estimated that between 20-25% of all homeless in the US are veteran

- Support Secretary Shinseki's goal to end veteran homelessness in 5 years

Issue: Arlington National Cemetery

Message Points

- The American Legion is dismayed and disheartened by the failures and disgraceful conduct documented by the US Army Inspector General (IG) Agency's Report of Investigation identified as SAIG-IN ROI 10-004 which was released on June 10, 2010

- Arlington National Cemetery must be seen as the Gold Standard by which all of America's Veterans' Cemeteries are measured

- The National Cemetery Administration has achieved the highest rating in customer satisfaction ever awarded to a federal agency or private organization with a score of 95 out of a possible 100 according to the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) survey which is conducted by the University of Michigan Business School

- The American Legion recommends transferring the operations of Arlington National Cemetery to the National Cemetery Administration, with ceremonial and honor duties to be retained by the 3rd US Infantry Regiment, traditionally known as the "Old Guard"

Issue: The Department of Veterans Affairs Budget: Fiscal Year (FY) 2011

VA Discretionary Programs	PL 111-117 FY 2010 VA Funding	S 3615 FY 2011 VA Appropriations#	HR 5822 FY 2011 VA Appropriations	American Legion's FY 2012 VA Budget Request
Medical Services	$347 billion	$371 billion	$371 billion	$381 billion
Medical Support & Compliance	$49 billion	$53 billion	$53 billion	$53 billion
Medical Facilities	$48 billion	$57 billion	$57 billion	$62 billion
Total Medical Care	***$44 billion***	***$481 billion***	***$481 billion***	***$496 billion***
Medical Care Collections Funds	[$29 billion]	[$34 billion]	[$34 billion]	----------
Medical/Prosthetic Research	$581 million	$590 million	$590 million	$600 million
National Cemetery Administration	$250 million	$251 million	$259 million	$260 million
General Operating	$21	$26	$26	$26

Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation
October 2010

Expenses	billion	billion	billion	billion
Information Technology	$33 billion	$31 billion	$32 billion	$35 billion
Major Construction	$12 billion	$12 billion	$12 billion	$12 billion
Minor Construction	$703 million	$486 million	$508 million	$800 million
State Veterans' Homes Construction Grants	$100 million	$85 million	$85 million	$100 million
State Veterans' Cemeteries Construction Grants	$46 million	$46 million	$46 million	$60 million

with minor exceptions, both Senate and House proposals agree with the administration's VA budget proposal

Issue: The Department of Veterans Affairs Budget: Fiscal Year (FY) 2011

VA Discretionary Programs	PL 111-117 FY 2010 VA Funding	S 3615 FY 2011 VA Appropriations#	HR 5822 FY 2011 VA Appropriations	American Legion's FY 2012 VA Budget Request
Medical Services	$347 billion	$371 billion	$371 billion	$381 billion
Medical Support & Compliance	$49 billion	$53 billion	$53 billion	$53 billion
Medical Facilities	$48 billion	$57 billion	$57 billion	$62 billion
Total Medical Care	***$44 billion***	***$481 billion***	***$481 billion***	***$496 billion***
Medical Care Collections Funds	[$29 billion]	[$34 billion]	[$34 billion]	----------
Medical/Prosthetic Research	$581 million	$590 million	$590 million	$600 million
National Cemetery Administration	$250 million	$251 million	$259 million	$260 million
General Operating Expenses	$21 billion	$26 billion	$26 billion	$26 billion
Information Technology	$33 billio	$31 billio	$32 billi	$35 billio

	n	n	on	n
Major Construction	$12 bil lio n	$12 billio n	$12 billi on	$12 billio n
Minor Construction	$703 mi lli on	$486 milli on	$508 milli on	$800 milli on
State Veterans' Homes Construction Grants	$100 mi lli on	$85 milli on	$85 milli on	$100 milli on
State Veterans' Cemeteries Construction Grants	$46 mi lli on	$46 milli on	$46 milli on	$60 milli on

with minor exceptions, both Senate and House proposals agree with the administration's VA budget proposal

NATIONAL SECURITY

2010 – 2011

MESSAGE POINTS

Issue: National Security Principles of The American Legion

Message Points:

Since its inception in 1919 The American Legion has supported a strong national defense which is reflected in its own Preamble to the Constitution, namely, "To uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States of America," and "to inculcate a sense of individual obligation to the community, state and nation".

The United States is faced with a myriad of short and long-term challenges to include terrorism, rogue nation-states, and nuclear weapons proliferation. As such, The American Legion urges the Department of Defense conduct a global posture review.

The American Legion upholds the following national security principles as fundamental to the best interests of the United States:

- The National Security Strategy needs to be reassessed so that missions and resources are more closely aligned. This requires thorough and efficient quarterly Defense and Diplomacy reviews which are currently in progress.

- The credibility of the United States in an unstable world needs to be maintained by retaining the requisite military capabilities to deal with actual and potential threats. The American Legion continues to urge Congress to fully fund our Armed Forces and to resist any peace dividend proposal to divert essential funds from defense programs.

- The National Guard and Reserves must be realistically manned, structured, equipped, trained, fully deployable and maintained at high readiness levels and not over-utilized in order to accomplish their increasing and indispensable missions and roles in our national defense.

- Peacetime Selective Service registration should be retained so as to maintain our capability to rapidly reconstitute forces in the event of emergencies or war.

- Force modernization for the Services needs to be realistically funded, and not further delayed, or American lives may be unnecessarily placed in harms' way in the years ahead. Production of airlift and sealift assets need to be expedited.

- The American people expect that whenever U.S. forces are committed, that they will be committed only when America's vital national interests are threatened and only as a last resort after all reasonable alternatives have been exhausted.

- Full support of peacekeeping, peace enforcement, peace-making and humanitarian operations as they are becoming more frequent and necessary in waging the sustained war on terror.

- The honorable nature of military service should be upheld as it not only represents fulfillment of American patriotic obligation but is also a privilege and responsibility that embodies the highest form of service to the nation.

- The United States Government must honor its obligations to all service members, veterans, military retirees and their families. Lasting compensations and incentives should be equitable.

- Major incentives for military service should continue to include an enhanced GI Bill for education and training, improved quality of life features, and a reduced operational tempo in order to recruit and retain a quality and fully-manned force which is professionally-led.

- The United States Government must retain the necessary deployed forces worldwide to accomplish both, short term as well as long term, commitments and contingencies and to protect the nation's vital interest worldwide.

Issue: Resolution No. 115, Support for the War on Terrorism

Message Points:

The United States of America was suddenly, and without provocation, attacked by terrorists on September 11, 2001, resulting in the deaths of thousands of innocent civilians and members of the military of the United States. This tragic event does not stand alone, but is a continuation of a long series of unprovoked terrorist attacks aimed at destroying American lives, and the very basic core values of freedom, democracy and respect for human life. In response to this despicable act of cowardice, a united Congress in a bipartisan manner authorized the use of armed force against the global armies of terrorism no matter where they reside.

Recognizing that the global war on terrorism is as deadly as any war in which the United States has been previously engaged, the President and Congress did authorize military actions in both Afghanistan and Iraq. The global war on terrorism is a just war, aimed at protecting the very foundations of freedom and freedom-loving people everywhere. The 2010 American Legion Convention adopted this resolution which states:

- The American Legion fully supports the men, women and leadership of our armed forces as they are engaged in the global war on terrorism; and, be it further

- The American Legion urges all Americans and freedom-loving peoples everywhere to stand united in their support of the global war on terrorism, and united in their support of the troops who are engaged in protecting our values and way of life.

- The National Commander be, and is hereby authorized, to use whatever means at his disposal to disseminate accurate information about this war on terrorism, and to engage whatever means necessary to ensure the united support of the American people.

Issue: Quality of Life for Active Forces, Reservists and Military Retiree Veterans

Message Points:

The American Legion has always supported quality-of-life features for service members and their dependents as well as military retirees and their survivors, as people are the foundation of our nation's fighting forces. Without highly qualified, dedicated and experienced men and women warriors, even the most sophisticated weaponry will not provide the deterrent force necessary for this nation to remain at peace or to defend our vital national interests.

Military compensation is only one factor in the quality-of-life equation. Other major factors include fair treatment; career stability; regular promotions; adequate housing; accessible quality health care; commissaries; cost of living salary increases that adjust fairly to the total cost of living, not just inflation; day care; educational facilities; and

recreational facilities. Each of these quality-of-life factors help to ease the numerous hardships and personal sacrifices that are demanded of service members and their families.

The American Legion therefore supports the following with respect to military compensation:

- Military pay comparability for the armed forces by closing the gap between military and private sector pay and having pay raises become competitive with the private sector.

- Regular increases in the Basic Allowances for Quarters (BAQ) rates to keep pace with cost of living increases and regional differences in housing market costs.

- Preserving attractive retirement systems for the active and Reserve components with annual COLA's paid at the same rate, and concurrently, with other Federal retiree COLAs.

- Full funding of concurrent receipt of military retirement pay, military separation pays, and VA disability compensation as well as Special Compensation payments for disabled military retirees.

- Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) premiums paid up after payment for 30 years or until age 70, whichever comes first, and that pension payments not be offset by Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) benefit payments.

- Providing a responsive, service independent, military appeals avenue and process in which to appeal medical separation and retirement, discharge upgrade and correction of military record board decisions that impact separating and retiring service personnel and their subsequent quality-of- life.

- Providing a fair Disability Evaluation System for wounded and ill warriors as they strive to make a seamless transition back to civilian life and their communities.

Our service members and dependents deserve, and have earned, entitlement to the best quality-of-life standards and benefits that a grateful nation can offer. Without high quality-of-life standards, it will be impossible to recruit and retain the high quality personnel so necessary to protect America and our freedom and to sustain our vital interests.

The American Legion supports the following with respect to Military Health Care and TRICARE:

- The retention of Walter Reed Army Medical Center and the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology at their current location until after the end of the GWOT

- Continue to fully funding programs to provide for the needs of wounded and ill warriors, their families and their caregivers

- Continued commitment to Uniformed Services University of Health Sciences (USUHS), as a national asset, for the continued provision of uniquely educated and trained uniformed physicians, advanced practice nurses, and scientists dedicated to careers of service in the Army, Navy, Air Force, and the United States Public Health Service

- Prohibit increases in out-of-pocket costs for access to quality health care for all military beneficiaries

- For retired and survivor beneficiaries, any percentage increase in fees, deductibles, and co-payments considered in any year not allowed to exceed the percentage increase the beneficiaries experience in their compensation

- Prohibit an enrollment fee for TRICARE Standard or TRICARE For Life (TFL), since neither offers timely access to TRICARE-participating providers

- Ensure TRICARE fully maintains enough accessible and high quality medical, mental and dental health professional providers for its beneficiaries for timely, effective and responsive care in all specialties

- TRICARE providing payment for more preventive care options and more mental and behavioral health care rehabilitation programs

- Continue TRICARE Reserves Select (TRS) and resetting TRS fees to a fair level and making TRS fully responsive to the needs of National Guard, Reserves and their families

- Military retirement pay and TRICARE healthcare for members of the Reserve Components should be authorized before age 60

- No increase of TRICARE fees or establishment of new enrollment fees at all; absent that budgeting option, only increased health care costs or fees within the TRICARE system with Congress approving increases at a rate no larger than the rate of pay increases for Active, Reserve, National Guard, military and medical retirees, and military survivors

- Preventing BRAC, re-basing and relocation of forces that are planned from causing disruption in military health care network

- The American Legion urges the U.S. Government and the Department of Defense offer incentives to private medical providers who accept TRICARE beneficiaries as patients and to ensure studies and reviews of TRICARE be more inclusive of lower ranking service members, family members, and survivors in order that a truer picture of service be attained

- In an effort to save and improve TRICARE for its beneficiaries, The American Legion has formed an ad hoc committee on TRICARE (to include those who have TRICARE for LIFE)

The American Legion supports the following additional matters specific to community quality-of-life for soldiers and their families:

- Renovation and construction of quality military quarters with full funding for their timely and proper maintenance

- Increased funding for enough state of the art child day care centers

- Increased funding and fully resourcing DOD schools and Impact funding local public school education serving military families

- Adequate morale, welfare and recreational facilities; and non-privatized exchanges and commissary facilities without suffering a system of "variable pricing"

- Covering all actual relocation and moving expenses and having fair and reasonable reimbursement for losses and damages caused in the conduct of military family moves

- Continued funding of family support programs beyond times of conflict to strengthen military families who are the strength behind the military

- Commitment to continue improved quality-of-life programs and policies to support National Guard and Reserve families

- Appropriate funds for DOD to provide military honors upon request at veterans' funerals. DOD should implement equitable and expedient reimbursement procedures for members of the veterans' service organizations who participate in military funeral honors

Issue: Support For Domestic Control Of Energy Resources

Message Points:

- The American Legion urges the Administration and Congress to develop an energy policy and plan that recognizes the critical importance of ensuring domestic control of our energy resources from production through use.

- The American Legion urges the Administration and Congress aggressively pursue further development of domestic sources of energy to include:

  - Increasing domestic petroleum and natural gas exploration and production

  - Increasing the domestic electricity supply by building additional nuclear energy plants

  - Increasing domestic capacity of solar, hydroelectric, geothermal and wind energy electrical generation and renovating America's electrical grid

  - Greater utilization of alternative fuels through increased development of biomass and ethanol production

- The American Legion encourages intensive diplomatic efforts be made to develop further energy trading alliances with countries of unquestioned long-standing friendship and where security of the energy resources can be assured in order to assist in development of their energy resources.

Issue: Combating Cyberspace Threats

Message Points:

- The security of the United States is being challenged increasingly by non-traditional threats which may extend the fields of battle and terrorism to computer cyberspace and in which inexpensive nuclear, chemical and biological weapons of mass destruction, including disease as a weapon of war, may be employed. The American Legion supports the formation of a comprehensive and integrated system of federal agencies (including the Armed Forces, law enforcement, intelligence and public health) to detect, deter and defend against cyberspace threats to critical government and private infrastructures.

- The American Legion urges the Congress to appropriate the necessary funding and resources to combat the continuing cyberspace and other threats to the United States in the 21st Century and also urges the American public to be vigilant of cyberspace attacks. All efforts should be made to detect, deter and defend against the threats of cyber warfare, and to prosecute violators to the fullest extent of the law.

Issue: Homeland Security

Message Points

- The September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on American soil have made Americans painfully aware of their vulnerability to violence from international terrorism. These terrorists were able to carry out their attacks because previous emphasis by the U.S. Government on homeland security and intelligence collection, while improving over recent years, had been inadequate and incapable of preventing such attacks.

- The National Defense Authorization Act of 2003 established the new Department of Homeland Security as well as a new cabinet position designed to be the single source of authority, at the highest levels, for all homeland defense programs and policies. The American Legion supports the full funding of the Department of Homeland Security so as to harmonize the many agencies and offices with Homeland Security responsibilities into a viable and credible deterrent to those who seek to inflict violence on the United States and the American people.

- U.S. national intelligence agencies also need to be fully funded. Their efforts and data collection should be expanded and coordinated. The American Legion supports legislation that would strengthen the abilities of the United States Departments of Justice, Homeland Security, U.S. Customs, Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Internal Revenue Service to police, investigate and prosecute financial institutions or individuals within the parameters of the U.S. Constitution that use legitimate and illegitimate financial means to help support both domestic and international terrorism.

- The American Legion also reaffirms its Citizen Corps affiliation, and urges Congress to support and fully fund all components of Citizen Corps. The American Legion has published an award-winning pamphlet on Disaster Preparedness and urges all Legionnaires to take part in personal and community disaster preparedness events, particularly those affiliated with Citizen Corps programs. The American Legion urges Congress to keep Citizen Corps as a permanent part of the nation's approach to homeland security and disaster preparedness.

- A Congressionally sanctioned Commission to Assess the Threat to the U.S. from Electromagnetic Pulse (EMP) has clearly defined the vulnerabilities in America's homeland defense posture to include potential catastrophic damage to U.S. infrastructure, telecommunications, banking, energy, transportation, food, water, emergency services, space systems and government agencies. The American Legion urges the United States Government to fully fund, develop, and deploy a national ballistic missile defense system designed to intercept EMP attacks. The American Legion urges the United States Government to swiftly commission the further development and installation of electronic equipment and components resistant to EMP.

ISSUE: TRICARE At Risk

Message Points

- The American Legion has a proud history of fighting for our veterans and service members. The American Legion continues this great legacy by ensuring that our military is properly cared for and respectfully treated in the good tradition that they deserve the thanks of a grateful nation.

- The President is committed to working with Congress to pass comprehensive health reform in order to control rising health care costs, guarantee choice of doctors, and assure high-quality, affordable health care for all Americans. This effort on behalf of the President and some Congressional members concerns The American Legion. The American Legion wants assurances that DOD's Medical Health System (MHS) beneficiaries are not taxed or adversely impacted by any provision in any national health care reform legislation. To advocate for preserving TRICARE and TRICARE for Life, The American Legion passed at the NEC meeting in Louisville, Kentucky on August 24, 2009, Resolution 2: The American Legion Policy on DoD's Medical Health Care System and National Health Care Reform.

- The American Legion supports health care reform that assures all active-duty service members, members of the Reserve components, military retirees (to include Temporary Early Retirement Authority (TERA) and Chapter 61 retirees), and their families, especially those who are uninsured or underinsured, have timely access to quality health care within DOD's Medical Health System. The MHS provides health care to service members and dependents through both military medical facilities and health care that is provided through the private sector. Payment for private medical care is provided by the benefit known as TRICARE.

The Issues At Stake!

- Charging service members and retires more for their health care, or cutting back on medical services, or lowering reimbursement rates to doctors (TRICARE Providers) must not be the answer to the long term funding issue for TRICARE. Quality military health care is vital to maintaining a military which is the foundation of our national security. Costs to military TRICARE beneficiaries must remain frozen or lowered. Services need to be enhanced. Suitable access to military beneficiaries must be available. Access to TRICARE for military reservists needs to be considerably expanded.

- Military health care for service members, retirees, and their dependents is an issue that needs to be confronted head on. It is too important an issue as a national security issue to watch from the sidelines and then be too late to react. While Medicare services when received by TRICARE Beneficiaries is usually very good, access and problems with billing plus sometimes low reimbursement rates to doctors cause problems for TRICARE for Life users.

    - **ACTION:** The issues associated with TRICARE services and funding must be addressed. The American Legion is working hard to address TRICARE issues and has formed in the National Security Commission an Ad Hoc Committee on TRICARE whose mission is to: **1) PROTECT TRICARE** from National Health Care Reform and **2) IMPROVE TRICARE** for its beneficiaries.

Some Basics On Tricare Options For Beneficiaries:

- **TRICARE PRIME –** All active-duty service members must be Prime. Other beneficiaries have options. PRIME Remote is needed if a service member lives more than 50 miles from nearest military treatment facility. There is also **TRICARE Overseas Prime (TOP) and TRICARE Global Remote Overseas (TGRO) Prime.**

- **TRICARE STANDARD –** This option is available for all other beneficiaries. It also serves as the supplemental to Medicare in the TRICARE for Life option for retirees.

- **TRICARE EXTRA –** Offers additional discounts to TRICARE Standard participants when they use TRICARE Network providers.

- **Other options t**hat are really just an extensions or derivatives of TRICARE STANDARD are **- TRICARE Reserve Select** (does not include Individual ready Reserve – IRR-)**; TRICARE PLUS** (allows patients on Standard to be seen at Military Treatment facilities in the same priority as TRICARE PRIME patients.

- **Continued Health Care Benefit Program (CHCBP) CHCBP** is a premium-based health care program providing medical coverage to a select group of former military beneficiaries. CHCBP is similar to, but not part of, TRICARE. The CHCBP program extends health care coverage to the certain eligible individuals when they lose their military benefits.

- **TRICARE For Life (TFL)** is TRICARE's Medicare-wraparound coverage available to *all* military Medicare-eligible TRICARE beneficiaries, regardless of age, provided they have Medicare Parts A and B. While Medicare is one's primary insurance, TRICARE acts as one's secondary payer minimizing out-of-pocket expenses. TRICARE benefits include covering Medicare's coinsurance and deductible.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

2010 – 2011

MESSAGE POINTS

Issue: American Legion Statement of U.S. Foreign Policy Objectives

Message Points:

We believe US Foreign Policy should embody the following 12 principals as outlined in Resolution “Principals of US Foreign Policy”. These policies are:

- Recognition that the US has great and multiple responsibilities as a leader of the Free World
- Dedication to achievement of world peace with freedom, secured by a peace through strength posture
- Support for a global fight on multiple fronts to end the scourge of terrorism
- Support for democracy and human rights in other countries when such is consistent with US national interests and national power
- Participation in essential collective security alliances, provided our allies contribute their fair share
- Negotiation of equitable, verifiable arms control agreements, which improve US national security
- Opposition to the spread of nuclear, chemical or biological weapons or long-range ballistic missiles which may be used by terrorists, terrorist organizations, communists or aggressor nations
- Determined opposition to international terrorism and drug trafficking
- Support for responsible international organizations that are consistent with US sovereignty and serve US national interests
- Participation in an increasingly interdependent Free World trading system based on fair and equitable trading practices
- Recognition that the President must be the chief architect of US foreign policy as envisioned in the US Constitution, while Congress performs important functions of advice, oversight and funding
- Support for the appropriate resources to promote and protect US vital national interests world-wide

Foreign Relations
October 2010

Issue: American Legion Foreign Policy on Terrorism

Message Points:

- The American Legion supports a global fight on multiple fronts to end the scourge of terrorism

- The American Legion supports policies and legislation that will enhance funding for the US Agency for International Development (USAID) within the Department of State and seeks use of that funding towards targeted states whose failure to provide for its people could result in the expansion of international terrorism

- The American Legion believes that the US Government should support African nations that clearly demonstrate open democratic reforms, human rights protection, and cooperation in the fight against international terrorism

Issue: American Legion POW/MIA Policy

Message points:

- The POW/MIA issue is of paramount concern to The American Legion. The Legion's Mandate on this issue commits us to keep the spotlight on securing the full accounting for all POW/MIAs from the Gulf War, the war in Southeast Asia, the Cold War, the Korean War and World War II. Full accounting means the return of live POWs, the repatriation of their remains, or convincing evidence why neither of these is possible.

- With regard to Vietnam in particular, The American Legion has always believed that the Vietnamese have the knowledge and the capability to account for the fate of many more of our POW/MIAs from the War in Southeast Asia. Moreover, only Vietnam, by taking unilateral actions to repatriate remains and to provide relevant information from wartime records, documents and the oral history program, can help account for many still missing Americans.

- The American Legion continues to oppose the normalization of diplomatic relations with Vietnam. We remain unconvinced that Vietnam is cooperating in full faith on POW/MIA issues. We are also concerned about the poor state of human rights in Vietnam, especially for ethnic groups such as the Montagnards that were American allies during the war.

- The American Legion supports the continued declassification of all POW/MIA information, the strengthening of joint commissions with Russia, North Korea and China, and adequate resourcing of investigative efforts and field operations to resolve POW/MIA issues. The American Legion has also worked continuously with both Congress and the Defense Department to improve the policies and programs for the accountability of missing persons. For years The American Legion supported a National POW/MIA Recognition Day, which is now recognized annually on the third Friday in September.

- The American Legion will continue to speak out and exert maximum pressure on both the Administration and on the Congress to fully account for America's POW/MIAs.

Issue: Support for the U.S. Department of State

Message points:

- The American Legion is a strong supporter of the U.S. State Department and the various functions it performs for the American public overseas. The United States Department of State is the first line of defense of the nation in combating the myriad of security threats that face America from abroad. The State Department and its affiliated organizations are charged with an number of important missions; managing diplomatic coalitions with other countries and international institutions, promoting peace and stability in regions of vital interest, bringing nations together to address global challenges, creating jobs at home by opening markets abroad, and helping developing nations establish stable economic environments that provide investment and export opportunities.

- The State Department has historically been allocated just little more than 1% of the total federal budget to accomplish all of these tasks in contrast to the approximately 16% spent on defense. However, in recent years the State Department's responsibilities have expanded enormously to include combating threats from terrorism, international crime, and narcotics trafficking.

- The American Legion vigorously supports funding for the United States Department of State in order that it can maintain a credible initial deterrent to international threats to the United States and effectively promote American interests abroad.

Issue: Other Select Foreign Relations Policies

"Smart Power" Support

Message Points:

- The American Legion urges the President and Congress to continue to pursue this strategy concerning foreign policy and international programs for the purpose of protecting United States national interests and internationally improving its strategic posture.

- The American Legion applauds the President and the Congress for modifying foreign policy by returning to an emphasis on strengthening established alliances and cultivating new allies with the aim of improving security and defense the United States and free societies around the world.

Expand Foreign Service Officer Corps

Message Points:

- The American Legion urges the President, Congress, and the Department of State to significantly increase the number of Foreign Service Officers in its ranks.

- That The American Legion urges the President, Congress, and the Department of State to implement a veterans' preference policy with the aim of recruiting more veterans into the Foreign Officer Corps whose experience may be an essential enhancement of the nation's diplomatic mission.

ECONOMICS

2010 – 2011

MESSAGE POINTS

Issue: Veterans Home Loan Program

Resolution No. 95, 101 – 2009 National Convention, 351, 354, 355, 359 – 2008 National Convention.

Message Points:

- The American Legion supports efforts to eliminate employment barriers that impede the transfer of military job skills to the civilian labor market.

- The Armed Forces and the Department of Defense must take appropriate steps to ensure that at the time of training, service members are informed about any licensure or certification they may be required to meet when they enter the civilian workforce.

- The American Legion supports making the Montgomery GI Bill eligibility available to pay for all necessary civilian license and certification examination requirements, including necessary preparatory courses.

- The American Legion supports efforts to increase the civilian labor market's acceptance of the occupational training provided by the military.

Issue: Veterans Education Benefits

Resolutions No. 16 – 2009 Spring NEC, 111, - 2009 National Convention, 44, 352, 358, – 2008 National Convention

Message Points:

- The American Legion supports that Congress should move Montgomery GI Bill-Selected Reserve (MGIB-SR) from Title 10, the United States Code (USC) to Title 38 USC.
- The American Legion supports that Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has administrative authority for both the MGIB and the MGIB-SR.
- The American Legion supports that the annual appropriations for the MGIB and the MGIB-SR become one annual appropriation within the VA.
- The American Legion supports eliminating the ten-year delimiting period for veterans to use Montgomery GI Bill educational benefits.
- The American Legion supports legislation that would allow all Reservists and National Guard members to use their Selected Reserve Montgomery GI Bill benefits for up to ten years after separation.
- The American Legion supports that VA creates an MGIB-SR participant reimbursement rate adjusted for time spent on Federalization activation, State activation, and normal service for a period not to exceed 36 months.
- The American Legion supports that the dollar amount of the entitlement should be indexed to the average cost of college education including tuition, fees, textbooks and other supplies for a commuter student at an accredited university, college or trade school for which they qualify.
- The American Legion supports that the educational cost index should be reviewed and adjusted annually.
- The American Legion supports that if a veteran enrolled in the MGIB acquired educational loans prior to enlisting in the Armed Forces, MGIB benefits may be used to repay existing educational loans.
- The American Legion supports that a monthly tax-free subsistence allowance indexed for inflation must be part of the educational assistance package.
- The American Legion supports support the transfer of Montgomery GI Bill benefits from a veteran to their immediate family members if the veteran elects to do so.
- The American Legion supports that enrollment in the MGIB shall be automatic upon enlistment, however, benefits will not be awarded unless eligibility criteria have been met.

- The American Legion supports that if a veteran enrolled in the MGIB becomes eligible for training and rehabilitation under Chapter 31 of Title 38, United States Code, the veteran shall not receive less educational benefits than otherwise eligible to receive under MGIB.

- The American Legion supports that the current military payroll deduction ($1200) required for enrollment in MGIB must be terminated.

- The American Legion supports that a veteran may request an accelerated payment of all monthly educational benefits upon meeting the criteria for eligibility for MGIB financial payments, with the payment provided directly to the educational institution.

- The American Legion supports efforts to convince state and federal lawmakers that activated veterans should not be charged interest and penalties for students loans while serving in an activated capacity.

- The American Legion supports that the Department of Education must abide by the Service Members Relief Act to include that penalties and interest do not accrue while the veteran is activated or when the veteran has returned to US and is now a disabled veteran.

- The American Legion supports that separating service members and veterans seeking a license or credential must be able to use MGIB educational benefits to pay for the cost of taking any written or practical test or other measuring device.

- The American Legion supports making the Montgomery GI Bill eligibility available to pay for all necessary civilian license and certification examination requirements, including necessary preparatory courses.

- The American Legion supports that any veteran with six years of service will be qualified to transfer education entitlements upon re-enlistment for four years.

- The American Legion supports an effort to amend Title 38 to restore the reimbursement rate for correspondence and distance learning training to 90% of tuition.

- The American Legion supports that the Department of Defense be authorized to continue its practice to offer Recruitment and Retention incentives, such as college funds, enlistment bonuses, re-enlistment bonuses, and loan repayments.

- The American Legion supports legislation to amend Title 38, United States Code, Section 3017, to provide for payment of the $1200 death benefit during the 10 year eligibility period in the event of a catastrophic disability or death, not the result of the veteran's willful misconduct.

- The American Legion supports all efforts to convince state and federal lawmakers that service-connected disabled veterans not be charged interest and penalties by the Department of Education or its designee.

- The American Legion supports amending the Federal Student Financial Aid 'means test' to make exempt a recently discharged veteran's prior year income towards receiving federal financial aid.

Issue: Support for Homeless Veterans Programs

Resolution No. 14 – 2009 Spring NEC, 26- 2009 National Convention, 357, 360, 362– 2008 National Convention

Message Points:

- The American Legion will seek and support any legislative or administrative proposal that will provide medical, rehabilitative and employment assistance to homeless veterans and their families.

- The American Legion will urge Congress to provide adequate resources to ensure the future of the Health Care for Homeless Veterans Program, the Homeless Domiciliary Program and the Compensated Work Therapy Rehabilitation Program.

- The American Legion supports funding for vouchers for the HUD-VASH program be set aside and transferred to the VA Secretary from amounts made available for rental assistance under the Housing Choice Voucher program.

- The American Legion supports the creation of a program by Congress for returning combat veterans similar to Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH), for housing upon return from mobilization for 180 days.

- The American Legion Supports a grant program to provide assistance to veterans at risk of becoming homeless.

Issue: Support Small Business Services for America's Veteran Entrepreneurs

Resolution No. 15 – 2009 Spring NEC, 67, 69, 72 - 2009 National Convention, 220, 221,222, 223, 353 ,361, 363, – 2008 National Convention.

Message Points:

- The American Legion supports the efforts of the Small Business Administration's Office of Veterans' Business Development in its initiatives to provide enhanced outreach to veterans.
- The American Legion will seek legislation that would permit the Office of Veterans' Business Development to enter into contracts, grants, and cooperative agreements to further its goals.
- The American Legion supports the Small Business Administration's efforts to provide entrepreneurial information to all service members who are separating from the military.
- The American Legion believes that any veteran business development assistance should include funding to assist Federal agencies in reaching their 5% veteran procurement goals.
- The American Legion seeks to develop a user-friendly veteran procurement database for use by all Federal government agencies.
- The American Legion supports that the Federal government and the Department of Defense utilize its available technology to create, fund and support a veteran procurement-spending database within the Department of Defense that would finally bring veteran-owned and service-disabled veteran-owned businesses on equal footing with all other small business special interest groups when it comes to federal procurement opportunities.
- The American Legion encourages the Congress of the United States to require a reasonable set-aside of federal procurements and contracts for businesses owned and operated by veterans and for those veteran businesses affected by base closings and reduction in our military forces.
- The American Legion supports that the Small Business Administration and Congress make funding available to reinstate the Veteran's Entrepreneur Training Program grants to help those who are in need to return to productive civilian professions.
- The American Legion supports direct Loan Program for SBA.

Issue: Support Transitioning Service Members and Department of Labor Veterans and Employment Training Service

Resolution No. 6, 7, 13, 72, 73 - 2009 National Convention 331, 264, 276, 348, 349– 2008 National Convention

Message Points:

- The American Legion supports full funding and staffing for the Veterans' Employment and Training Service and its effective programs.

- The American Legion supports legislation that will restore language to Chapter 41, Title 38 that require that half time DVOP/LVER positions be assigned only after approval of the DVET, and that the Secretary of Labor be required to monitor all career centers that have veteran staff assigned.

- The American Legion supports legislation that restores the duties and responsibilities of the Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialist and Local Veterans Employment Representative to include case management, outreach to veterans and job development.

- The American Legion opposes the utilization of DVOP/LVER to work with, or process public assistance programs.

- The American Legion supports that the Congress reinforce the mandate of the program to assist veterans with their employment and training needs and whenever possible provide veterans benefit information as a part of their service to the veteran customers.

- The American Legion strongly supports of the Transition Assistance Program and that the Department of Defense require all separating, active-duty service members, including those from Reserve and National Guard units, participate in Transition Assistance Program training not more than 180 days prior to their separation or retirement from the armed forces.

- The American Legion seeks and supports legislation to amend Title 38, United States Code, to require Veterans Employment and Training Service Regional Administrators, State Directors and Assistant State Directors and "other professional staff" under VETS to be veterans of the Armed Services.

- The American Legion seeks and supports a revision of existing Veterans' Employment and Training Service reporting requirements for measuring performance standards and for determining compliance with requirements for providing employment services to veterans
- The American Legion supports national legislation that will require LVER and DVOP staff be veterans and serve only veterans, and that the assignment of these positions to local one stop centers be based on veteran populations.

- The American Legion supports legislation that will restore language to Chapter 41, Title 38 that will require that veteran staff serve only veterans, require that half time DVOP/LVER positions be assigned only after approval of the DVET, and that the Secretary of Labor be required to monitor all career centers that have veteran staff assigned.

- The American Legion supports that newly hired DVOP/LVER must be trained at NVTI within the first year of employment and that all untrained DVOP/LVER staff within 3 years of hiring at the time of enactment of new legislation must be trained within 1 year.

Issue: Support for Veterans Employment

Resolution No. 8, 66 – 2009 National Convention, 9, 11, 261,262, 263, 266, 267, 269, 272, 274, 275, 350,356 – 2008 National Convention

Message Points:

- The American Legion supports the strongest veterans preference laws possible at all levels of government and opposing any attempt to weaken such laws.

- The American Legion supports Congress establishing “Hire a Veteran Week” during the week of Veterans’ Day in the month of November each year

.

- The American Legion supports that the President of the United States issue an executive order declaring “Hire a Veteran Week” during the week of Veterans’ Day in the month of November each year.

- The American Legion opposes the outsourcing of all Federal Jobs held by veterans and disabled veterans without the protection of Reduction in Force policies and veterans preference.

AMERICANISM

2010 – 2011

MESSAGE POINTS

Issue - **Opposes policy of prohibiting the placement of American Flags on individual veteran's graves in national cemeteries.**

Message Points:

- The American Legion, an organization of wartime veterans, has an ongoing position to oppose attempts that would prohibit the placement of flags on individual graves. This was made clear in 1978 at the National Convention in New Orleans when delegates passed Resolution 498 titled “Oppose Any Plan to Stop the Decoration of Individual Graves in any National Cemetery” and by Resolution 214, NC 1997 at the National Convention in Orlando entitled “Oppose Policy of Prohibiting the Placement of American Flags on Individual Graves in National Cemeteries.”

- President Abraham Lincoln, in 1862, signed legislation creating the national cemeteries and through the years it has been traditional and customary to decorate the individual graves with the U.S. Flag. The flag represents the country for which they served and by displaying the National Symbol, the country expresses a degree of appreciation to that veteran; that it remembers his or her service.

- The American Legion believes it is wrong that some national cemeteries have adopted policies prohibiting the placement of the flags while, at the same time, allowing floral and other items to be placed on the gravesites.

- National Cemeteries are symbolically “American Cathedrals” where the living respect the memories and service of the veterans and family members interred therein. There is no more fitting remembrance of veterans and their service to this country than the U.S. Flag.

Issue - **English as the Official Language**

Message Points:

- The American Legion strongly urges Congress and State Legislatures to designate English as the official language of government in the United States. As of 2010, thirty states have adopted English as their official language of government.

- The American Legion believes naturalized citizens should have the ability to speak and understand the English language. It also believes bilingual programs and ballots printed in another language are counterproductive, costly and tend to discourage immigrants from entering the mainstream of American life.

- The American Legion urges Congress to encourage and fund alternative bilingual education programs to serve, as was originally intended, as a short intermediate step to achieve a proficiency in the English language. Bilingual education programs that provide primary instruction in the student's native language relegates English to secondary status.

- The American Legion believes all election ballots should be printed in the English language and that all Citizenship Naturalization Ceremonies also be conducted in the English language.

- The American Legion believes that the promotion of another language over English in the United States contributes to separatism rather than unification of purpose. It believes that legislation designating English as the official language of this country would help unify the different cultures and facilitate the learning of English by immigrants.

- The American Legion adopted its first formal resolution calling for English as the official language at a national convention in 1983. A follow-up resolution, adopted in 1994, made reference to the belief that “the English language is undergoing gradual displacement in this era of high immigration.”

- The American Legion recognizes the desire of immigrants to maintain a cultural link with their native country by speaking their native language. This is understandable and appropriate when the individual also possesses a proficiency in the English language at a level conducive to normal conversation. The American Legion encourages immigrants to achieve a proficiency in multiple languages.

- Ninety two percent of the world’s countries (178 of 193) have at least one official language. English is the sole official language in 31 nations (16 percent). An additional 20 nations recognize English as one of two or more official languages (Source: www.us-english.org).

Issue – **Illegal Immigration**

Message Points

- The American Legion, since the organization's first convention, has recognized the threat of illegal immigration to this country's security and well-being. It has continually passed resolutions calling on Congress and other governmental agencies to pass and enforce effective immigration laws that will restrict entry of illegal immigrants.

- The American Legion is unalterably opposed to illegal immigration and urges Congress, the U.S. Justice Department, the Department of Homeland Security and state governments to take the necessary action to stop the invasion of this country by illegal immigrants. The specific strategy endorsed by The American Legion includes the following steps:

  - Secure the borders and other points of entry in the United States:

    (a) Construct physical barriers, as appropriate.

    (b) Acquire and utilize latest technology to monitor border activity.

    (c) Employ and train a sufficient number of U.S. Border Patrol Agents to effectively patrol border regions with employment preference given to former members of the U.S. Armed Forces.

    (d) Utilize National Guard troops to assist in providing border security.

    (e) Insure all vessels and their cargo arriving at our seaports are thoroughly searched.

  - Eliminate the jobs magnet and social services benefits:

    (a) Mandate verification of employment eligibility.

    (b) Enforce sanctions against employers who knowingly hire illegal residents.

    (c) Make illegal residents ineligible for Social Security and other government-sponsored public services.

    (d) Eliminate governmental financial aid for illegal alien students.

  - Enforce existing laws and pass new laws to reduce U.S. illegal population:

    (a) Reject amnesty or "legalization" programs for illegal aliens.

    (b) Enforce immigration laws and promote cooperation between federal, state and local law enforcement officials, with emphasis on interior enforcement.

    (c) Establish parameters for non-criminal deportations.

    (d) Prohibit eligibility to services offered by financial institutions in the United States.

(e) Issue no drivers licenses to illegal aliens.

(f) Designate English as the official language of the U.S. government and print all documents, including election ballots, in the English language only.

(g) Work with state and local governments to discourage illegal settlement.

(h) Revise legal immigration procedures; screen and track foreign visitors legally entering the U.S.:

➢ Eliminate the Visa Lottery Program,

(a) Restrict the number of countries participating in the Visa Waiver Program.

(b) Create new visa categories or expand the H-2A and H-2B Visa Categories for temporary agricultural and temporary and seasonal workers as necessary to replace illegal workers eliminated from employment opportunities in the U.S.

(c) Create and enforce a reporting system to track the whereabouts of foreign visitors to include students at academic institutions, members of a country's diplomatic corps, aircraft and vessel crews, foreign press representatives, exchange visitors, H-1B Workers, L-1 Intracompany Transferees and those individuals categorized as humanitarian entrants.

- The American Legion calls for Congressional action to take the steps necessary to secure the borders of this country. It also requests an accountability of our elected officials on illegal immigration issues and to use all possible means to bring solution to the challenges faced by the United States because of our illegal population.

- The American Legion is not opposed to legal immigration, and has encouraged a path of moderation, embracing the concept that immigration should be regulated so that immigrants may be readily absorbed into the general population.

- Social, economic, and population issues involving illegal immigrants, such as eliminating the jobs magnet or public services benefits, are given oversight by the National Americanism Commission. Illegal immigration concerns such as hardening our borders, homeland security, and enforcing existing laws are more inherent to the mission of the National Security and Foreign Relations Commission.

Issue -- **Patriotic Holidays**

Message Points:

- The majority of Americans view Memorial Day as a time for relaxation and leisure recreation rather than as a solemn occasion and a time to reflect and pay tribute to the American servicemen and women who sacrificed their lives in defense of our Nation. This has occurred due, in part, to the changing of traditional holiday dates to create "three-day weekends."

- The American Legion believes that the time-honored traditional observances of these holidays have eroded because of the changes in dates and commercialization of the holidays. The American Legion believes that the importance of these holidays warrants their observance on the traditional dates.

- The American Legion encourages Congress to restore the official observance of Lincoln's Birthday to February 12, Washington's Birthday to February 22, Memorial Day to May 30 and Columbus Day to October 12 each year.

- The American Legion urges the passage of federal legislation that would result in an annual Presidential proclamation calling on all American institutions, public and private, to toll their bells for one minute, beginning at 11 a.m. on May 30, in remembrance of the servicemen and women who died defending our Nation and our freedom.

- **"National Moment of Remembrance"**: The American Legion supports a "National Moment of Remembrance" and encourages all Americans to pause for a moment of silence at 3 PM (local time) on the federally observed date of Memorial Day to remember those who died in service to their country.

- **Armed Forces Day**: The American Legion supports the annual observance of "Armed Forces Day" in support of the role of this country's armed forces and to acknowledge the service of those who serve in them.

- **VJ Day**: The American Legion urges our government to not be influenced by the Japanese or intimidated by them to delete the term "VJ Day" from our vocabulary.

- **Veterans Day**: The American Legion encourages the nation's schools to conduct Veterans Day observances on or near November 11 each year. The American Legion has pledged to assist in this activity by providing speakers for such observances. It also opposes any and all efforts that would designate Veterans Day on any day other than the traditional November 11th date.

Issue - **School Prayer**

Message Points:

- The American Legion believes Congress should take steps to correct problems resulting from court rulings that have prohibited “prescribed” prayer in schools. A Constitutional Amendment to permit voluntary school prayer is an alternative warranting consideration.

- The American Legion believes in a person's right to use the Holy Scriptures in public places, over the air waves and while traveling in space.

- The American Legion also believes it should be the right of every human being to publicly express his faith in God and the Holy Scriptures without fear of reprisal from the government or any other power.

- U.S. Supreme Court decisions in the early 1960's have severely restricted the practice of public prayer even though those decisions simply addressed prescribed or compulsory prayer and not prayer of a ”voluntary” nature.

- The U.S. Supreme Court in 1985 rendered a decision that cited an Alabama law which authorized one minute of silence in public schools for “meditation or voluntary prayer” as being unconstitutional. In 1992, in **Lee vs Weisman**, the Supreme Court affirmed, 5-4, a clear separation between church and state by ruling that it is unconstitutional to allow prayers as part of a public school graduation ceremony.

- Through the years since the Supreme Court rulings, numerous measures have been introduced in the Congress that were intended to express the sense of Congress for a period of silence in public schools; or which seek a Constitutional Amendment to allow voluntary school prayer.

- The American Legion has always placed one's belief in a Supreme Being as paramount to a healthy nation. It is reflected in the first clause of the Preamble to The American Legion's Constitution that reads "For God and Country....”

Issue -- **The Star Spangled Banner**

Message Points:

- **The Star Spangled Banner** became our National Anthem on March 3, 1931, when President Herbert Hoover signed Public Law 823.

- The American Legion believes that many millions of Americans cherish and respect the currently accepted version, both words and music, of **The Star Spangled Banner**, our National Anthem. This traditional version was first used in 1918 as the "Service Version" by the War Department for use in Army and Navy song books.

- Many Americans have been offended by disrespectful and unconventional playing and singing of the National Anthem at sporting events. The American Legion encourages the playing of the National Anthem in its original customary and traditional rendition.

- Some celebrities and public figures have voiced their opinions that **The Star Spangled Banner** should be replaced with **America, the Beautiful** or another song. The American Legion opposes any changes in the words and music of the National Anthem as adopted under Public Law 823 of the 71st Congress.

- The American Legion urges radio and television networks and stations to desist from pre-empting with commercial advertisements the singing and playing of our National Anthem and the raising and/or lowering of our Flag.

- The American Legion believes **The Star Spangled Banner** should be performed in the English Language. (Res. 5, NEC May 2006, "Oppose Changes to the National Anthem.")

Issue -- **The United States Constitution**

Message Points:

- The American Legion's members pledge their unwavering support for the United States Constitution when they recite the Preamble to the Legion's Constitution prior to organization meetings and gatherings. The American Legion was formed as an organization to uphold and defend the U.S. Constitution in a manner not unlike those who defended the Constitution by paying the supreme sacrifice, with their lives.

- The American Legion is particularly vigilant in opposing attempts to dilute the rights outlined in the First Amendment. The following is the official position of The American Legion in regards to free speech in the United States:

  (a) The right of free speech is essential to keep a people free. A people cannot long remain free if they cannot fairly object to the conduct of those they have themselves placed in authority. This guarantees freedom not only to the ones who agree with us, but also to the ones who disagree with us. Such is the proud constitutional heritage of America.

  (b) But, like all other rights, the right of free speech must be exercised in a civilized community with due regard to the rest of the community. A right granted by the people for their own protection creates no right to destroy the people. Hence, free speech must not incite to violence and crime or to corrupt the public morale. Reasonable limitations to this end are lawful as protection to freedom of speech.

  (c) The American Legion remedy to end violations of the right of free speech is not the use of lawful force, but the use of lawful methods. Complaint should be made to the duly constituted authorities; and if one is lawfully deputized, such authorities may be directly aided.

  (d) The American Legion remedy to overcome the preaching of unwise doctrine, though in a lawful manner, is not unlawful suppression of the preaching, but education in wise doctrine. Wisdom in the end will always overcome folly, and meanwhile an orderly society will be preserved.

- The American Legion believes that the weakening of any one individual right guaranteed by the Bill of Rights weakens all rights guaranteed by the document and when individual rights are gone, then all rights reside with the government.

Issue -- **Pledge of Allegiance**

Message Points:

- The American Legion supports the Pledge of Allegiance in its current form and is adamantly opposed to any and all attempts to revise it beyond the version that was approved by the Congress of the United States in 1954.

- The American Legion is opposed to the ruling by certain liberal federal judges who have declared the reciting of the Pledge of Allegiance in our nation's schools to be unconstitutional because of its references to God.

- The American Legion, in 1983, spearheaded a national effort to teach and encourage all U.S. citizens to recite the Pledge of Allegiance correctly. The campaign also called on Legionnaires to introduce the necessary information into the public schools and to other youth groups to ensure that future generations of Americans are able to recite the Pledge of Allegiance correctly.

- Both Houses of Congress begin their sessions by reciting the Pledge of Allegiance. It is customary in the opening of public meetings to also recite the pledge, particularly on Flag Day, June 14, as part of a national show of respect to Old Glory.

- The American Legion is recognized as one of the foremost authorities on proper display, care and respect for the United States Flag. The American Legion, along with more that 140 other organizations, are involved in a campaign led by the Citizens Flag Alliance, Inc. to give Congress the authority to protect the flag from acts of physical desecration.

Issue – **Supports the placement of United States Flags in school classrooms**

Message Points:

- The American Legion, an organization of wartime veterans, has an ongoing position to encourage the placement of United States Flags in school classrooms. Resolution 23 (October 2003) titled “Display Of The Flag Of The United States in School Classrooms” encourages The American Legion, at all levels, to support efforts to display the Flag of the United States in the nation’s school classrooms.

- The American Legion believes that at an early age, children should begin to develop an appreciation for the Nation and for what the Flag of the United States represents. Respect for the Flag of the United States is a foundation upon which to build an understanding of the sacrifices made by the Nation’s forefathers and veterans.

- Many classrooms in the United States do not display the Flag of the United States and do not participate in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

- Many state governments have legislation mandating the display of the Flag of the United States in school classrooms.

- The American Legion has produced "For Which It Stands,” a DVD which includes an animated feature explaining the meaning behind the Pledge of Allegiance, information about the history of the flag of the United States, the significance and meaning of our flag, and respecting and caring for our flag.

Issue – **America's Religious History and Heritage Threatened**

Message Points:

- Our Flag, our Pledge of Allegiance, our Boy Scouts, our veterans' memorials, our religious history and heritage, our American values – all are under attack by activists. The courts are awarding the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) millions of dollars in taxpayer-paid "attorney fee awards" authorized under the Civil Rights Act, 42 U.S. Code Section 1988.

- The American public generally does not know the ACLU is profiting in such cases as follows:

  (a) A Federal Court in Riverside, California allowed the ACLU to pursue a precedent-setting lawsuit to remove a solitary cross from the Mojave Desert Veterans Memorial. ACLU attorneys were awarded $63,000 for this case.

  (b) The ACLU reaped some $940,000 in settlement from the City of San Diego when it surrendered in ACLU's litigation to kick the Boy Scouts out of Balboa Park. The Boy Scouts are appealing. The American Legion has filed a friend-of-the-court brief supporting the Scouts.

  (c) The ACLU received some $500,000 to drive the Ten Commandments out of the courthouse of Alabama's Judge Roy Moore, notwithstanding the fact that the same Ten Commandments are on the massive doors and the wall of the U.S. Supreme Court itself.

  (d) Portland Public Schools were ordered to pay the ACLU $108,000 in a case brought for an atheist who objected to the Boys Scouts being allowed to recruit during non-class time. In addition, the school district spent $232,000 defending this suit. At the time of this writing, Portland is considering a complete ban.

  (e) The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors surrendered on a 3-2 vote to the ACLU's demands that it change the county seal because of a tiny cross in one small panel representing the mission period of its history. The ACLU, exposing its hypocrisy as well as fanaticism, did not demand removal of the central religious figure dominating the seal – "Pomona," the Italo-Roman goddess of *poma*, i.e. fruits. A citizens' initiative petition is ongoing to place the issue on the ballot and overturn the surrender to the ACLU.

  (f) The city council of Redlands, California reluctantly surrendered to the ACLU's demand that it change its city seal to remove a cross, for fear of court-ordered attorney fees to the ACLU.

- While the law was written with good intentions – to ensure legitimate victims of civil-rights violations could obtain representation – it has been exploited by the ACLU in First Amendment "establishment of religion clause" cases. In these cases, there are, in fact, no attorney fees incurred by the ACLU or its plaintiffs, who appear to be "mascot plaintiffs" with *de minimis* claims. ACLU profits from these cases at taxpayer expense.

- Elected and appointed officials at the local, state and federal levels have literally backed away from standing up to the ACLU in fear of enormous attorney fees being imposed by unelected judges not answerable to the American taxpayer.

Issue -- **The American Legion Legacy Scholarship**

Message Points

- The American Legion established the American Legion Legacy Scholarship in honor of those service men and women who died in the September 11 terrorist attacks on America. The scholarship will benefit the children of military personnel who die on active duty on or after September 11, 2001.

- The American Legion has established a trust to fund the scholarship. Legion family members, corporations and individuals are encouraged to donate to the fund. Annual interest from the trust will determine the dollar amount of the scholarships. The larger the trust fund the greater the scholarship aid.

- America's "total force" military is comprised of active duty military, Guard and Reserve Units from across the Nation. According to Department of Defense statistics, over fifty percent of service men and women are married and many have children.

- Department of Defense figures reveal that, on average, since 2001 over 1,500 members of our active duty Armed Forces died each year. Just as sure as military service is a high-risk profession, there will be families who can benefit from our efforts to provide educational opportunities for these children.

- The American Legion Legacy Trust Fund is a 501 (c) 3 public charity as defined by IRS code.

- Tax-deductible donations may be sent to: The American Legion Legacy Scholarship Fund, The American Legion, P.O. Box 1055, Indianapolis, Indiana, 46206.

- The Marine Gunnery Sergeant John David Fry Memorial Scholarship was added as a part of the Post 9/11 GI Bill in August, 2009. It provides expanded benefits to children of an active duty member of the Armed Forces who have died in the line of duty on or after September 11, 2001, for tuition, room and board, books, fees, and supplies. Unfortunately, the limits it sets on money available for books, fees, and supplies leaves a critical gap. The American Legion Legacy Scholarship helps fill this gap, and keep the dream of a college education alive for these deserving young people.

PROVIDING FOR THE CHILDREN LEFT BEHIND

The terrorist attacks on the United States were unspeakable acts that left families torn apart. As an unfortunate consequence of Sept. 11 and the subsequent war against terrorism, many children of America's active duty military personnel are now members of single-parent families. In most cases, this also means their opportunity to attend college has been

Children of active duty military killed at war are entitled to receive fe
federal money towards a college education. But it's not enough.
American Legion has fought long and hard to see that our active du
military personnel and their families are looked after. But despite
efforts, there are significant shortfalls in dollars that have been allot
by our government in recent years. The educational benefit provid
to surviving children is one of these shortfalls.

> ***There are 1.2 million dependent children of the U.S. military; of those nearly 70% are age 11 or younger.***
>
> *(Source:* Department of Defense Quadrennial Defense Review—FY2008)

Help us bridge the gap

The facts are indisputable. The money provided by law has not kept up with what a higher education costs today, let alone what college will cost in years to come. Remember, these children are the direct descendants of people who died while actively protecting our country. Their parents sacrificed their lives. The least we can do is make sure that their children are provided for.

The American Legion Legacy Scholarship

We are raising funds to fill the gap. Providing for the children that were left behind is our civic duty. Helping to provide for their education is a powerful way to show our thanks. These parents died protecting our country. We owe it to them to see that their children get the opportunity a college education can provide. That is why we have established the American Legion Legacy Scholarship.

Critical Education Gap

4-year, State College	**$ 60,852**
4-year, Out-of-State College	**$106,964**
4-year, Private College	**$142,544**
(*Source: The College Board 2009-2010)*	
Total Military College Benefit	**$ 41,175**
(*Source: Department of Veterans Affairs)*	

As this table illustrates, the total benefit for these survivors is just a little more than $36,000 to be used for a college education. In today's dollars, this benefit will pay little more than half of what a college education costs in the most affordable category. This gap grows even greater when the cost of a college education in the future is estimated. The most conservative estimates predict that these costs will increase by 5 percent per year, meaning that in 16 years, the most affordable college education will be more than $119,187. Military compensation will not keep up with these dramatic increases. It is clear these children will need our help.

Please join us in our effort

We need the support of many to make The American Legion Legacy Scholarship a reality. Too many men and women in uniform have died in the fight to preserve our nation's freedoms. Together, we can make sure their children have the opportunity these parents were unable to provide. We encourage you to give generously to **The American Legion Legacy Scholarship Fund**. Help us to bridge the gap and restore the faith of these special children.

Send your tax-deductible contributions to:
The American Legion Legacy Scholarship Fund, P.O. Box 1055, Indianapolis, Indiana, 46206.

Americanism (317) 630-1207
October 2010

Blue Star Service Banners Fact Sheet

- The Blue Star Service Banner was designed, and patented in 1917 by World War I Army Capt. Robert L. Queissner of the 5th Ohio Infantry who had two sons serving on the front line. It quickly became the unofficial symbol of a child in the service.

- On Sept. 24, 1917, an Ohio congressman read the following into the Congressional Record: "…The mayor of Cleveland, the Chamber of Commerce and the governor of Ohio have adopted this service flag. The world should know of those who give so much for liberty. The dearest thing in all the world to a father and mother - their children."

- During World War II, the Department of War issued specifications on the manufacture of the flag, as well as guidelines indicating when and by whom the Service flag could be flown or the Service Lapel button could be worn. The Department of Defense updated the guidelines on December 1, 1967 with DoD Directive 1348.1, which implemented an Act of Congress authorizing a service flag and a service lapel button (U.S.C. 179-182).

- The Blue Star Service Banner typically displayed in windows is an 8.5 by 14-inch white field with a blue star(s) sewn onto a red banner. The size may vary but should be in proportion to the size of the U.S. Flag.

- Today Blue Star Service Banners are displayed by families who have a loved one serving in the armed forces, including the National Guard and Reserves of all military departments http://www.tioh.hqda.pentagon.mil/FAQ/ServiceFlagFactSheet.htm . The banner displayed in the front window of a home shows a family's pride in their loved one serving in the military and reminds others that preserving America's freedom demands much.

- The blue star represents one family member serving in the armed forces. A banner can have up to five stars, signifying that five members of that family are currently in military uniform on active duty.

- If the individual symbolized is killed or dies while serving, the star representing that individual will have superimposed on it a gold star of smaller size so that the blue forms a border. On flags displaying multiple stars, including gold stars, when the flags are suspended as against a wall, the gold star(s) will be to the right of, or above the blue star(s), a place of honor nearest the staff.

- Blue Star Mothers and Gold Star Mothers organizations were established during World War I and remain active today.

- Blue Star Service Banners, while widely used across America during World Wars I and II, were not embraced during the Korean or Vietnam wars with nearly the same enthusiasm.

- The American Legion is rekindling the spirit of pride in our military men and women following the horrific terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. The American Legion is providing.

banners to families in communities across the nation. Free color downloads are available at www.legion.org of the banners and static cling versions for home and automobile, as well as lapel pins, are available from The American Legion Emblem Sales.

- The American Legion also has a special Blue Star Banner Corporate Flag for government and corporate America to show their support for employees called to active duty in the war against terrorism.

Issue -- **American Legion Baseball World Series**

Message Points

- Res. 3, NEC May 2010, designated Shelby, North Carolina as the permanent site for The American Legion World Series beginning with the 2011 season

- Dates for The American Legion World Series are:
  August 12-16, 2011
  August 17-21, 2012
  August 16-20, 2013
  August 15-20, 2014

- Since 1925, American Legion Baseball has taught hundreds of thousands of young Americans the importance of sportsmanship, good health and active citizenship

- Approximately 90,000 players, ages 15 to 19, participate annually in American Legion baseball with over 4,400 teams registering

- On average 55 percent of Major League Baseball players played American Legion Baseball

- Nearly 72 percent of all college players played American Legion Baseball

- Over 50 American Legion Baseball graduates have been inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, New York. Hall of Famers include Bob Feller, Ted Williams, Don Drysdale, Joe Morgan, Yogi Berra, and Reggie Jackson. Current stars like Chipper Jones, Albert Pujols and Darin Erstad played American Legion Baseball

CHILDREN & YOUTH

2010 – 2011

MESSAGE POINTS

Issue – National Family Week

Message points

- One of the guiding principles of The American Legion Children & Youth program is to maintain the integrity of the family home. As the most basic unit in our society, the family must be strengthened against the negative pressures pushing against it every day.

- In order to have the means to survive, two-income families are the norm rather than the exception in today's economy.

- The numbers of divorced families, step or blended families, and single parent families have reached all time highs and more teenagers than ever now hold part time jobs.

- Children are now being placed in day care centers at a much earlier age and young children are home alone after school (latch key) until a parent returns home.

- Our family week program suggests ways for better family interaction and requests that Congress designate a permanent annual observance of National Family Week during the traditional Thanksgiving holiday week.

Issue – Juvenile Delinquency

Message Points

- The American Legion continues to be concerned about violent crimes committed by juveniles

- Juveniles account for approximately twenty-four per cent of our population and account for fifteen percent of violent crimes (murder, rape, robbery and aggravated assault) as reported by the 2009 FBI Uniform Crime Reports.

- Numerous government-supported institutions nationwide, specifically schools and housing, are still experiencing serious, violent acts of crime and criminal damage.

- Any instance of crime or violence in a school not only affects the individuals involved, but may also disrupt the educational process and affect bystanders, the school itself, and the surrounding community.

- Every child has the right to attend a school that is safe and secure, conducive to learning, and free of fear.

- The American Legion recommends that school boards and national and state education agencies, in conjunction with parents and community members, develop and implement programs that create violence prevention strategies, to include consistent, fair and responsible “zero tolerance” polices.

- Local law enforcement is urged to implement programs designed to reduce juvenile delinquency in coordination with the Department of Education, community citizenry and other agencies within the criminal justice system.

- Posts continue to urge and assist those in the educational community and criminal justice system to work closely together with communities and families to reduce juvenile delinquency in schools and our communities.

Issue – Immunization

Message points

- The American Legion has recognized the need for immunizations being available for all children for many years.

- Medical advances in vaccines have eliminated many serious diseases over the past several years. As a result, many parents neglect to immunize their children because of a false belief that there is no longer a danger present, or they cannot afford the cost of the shots.

- Most school systems now make it mandatory for children to be immunized before enrolling in school as many diseases are reappearing in larger numbers because of this apathy toward necessary inoculations.

- The American Legion supports the continued funding of federal programs available to provide free immunizations to those families which are not able to pay so all children can be protected from disease.

Issue – Youth Suicide Prevention

Message Points

- Youth suicide is a serious problem across the United States and The American Legion was one of the first organizations to bring the problem to the attention of communities through our Posts and volunteers.

- Suicide is the second leading cause of death among 10 – 25 year olds and the third leading cause of death for those ages 15 – 24.

- Eleven people between ages 15 and 24 kill themselves every day, accounting for over 4,000 deaths per year.

- The American Legion provides the brochure “Warning Signs” that can be used to educate children and adults on what to look for and what can be done to prevent this senseless tragedy.

Issue – Child Maltreatment

Message Points

- The American Legion has been concerned about child maltreatment from the very beginning of our organization. Our major emphasis has always been the education of adults who come in contact with children to recognize the signs of physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, and neglect.

- Teachers, coaches, administrators, and others responsible for children while they are away from their parents should familiarize themselves with the warning signs of all forms of child maltreatment and, when necessary, report any suspected maltreatment to the proper authorities, and ensure that these children are referred to the appropriate child protective service in their community.

- All laws and penalties relating to child abuse and neglect should be reviewed to determine if they are adequate, based on current model programs as determined by their state.

- The American Legion continues, at all levels, to educate the public of their obligations and duties with respect to reporting suspected cases of child maltreatment.

- Departments and Posts should cooperate in all ways possible with organizations and agencies that advocate for child maltreatment prevention, and promote and increase the public's awareness of child maltreatment and its detrimental effects on the children and youth of our society.

Issue – Drugs and Narcotics

Message Points

- Illegal trafficking of drugs into the United States is one of the greatest threats to the welfare and safety of our citizens, particularly our youth.

- Illegal drugs have an enormous negative impact on the youth of our society in more ways than just physical health. Once "hooked", the individual often commits crimes to obtain money to pay for their addiction.

- According to current studies, alcohol abuse by teenagers is the number one drug problem in America with increased use of marijuana and other drugs right behind it.

- We oppose any legislation that lowers the drinking age or would legalize the use or sale of marijuana or other hallucinatory drugs.

- The American Legion has been involved with the issue of drug abuse, to include alcohol abuse, since the early 1960's. Our materials are prevention-oriented. We are assisting Posts in developing drug education programs in their communities, which encourages children to achieve their highest potential by living a drug free lifestyle.

Issue – Child Pornography & Other Obscene Literature

Message Points

- Since the early 1960's The American Legion has taken a stand against the production, sale or distribution of pornographic materials that involve the children.

- Pornography has invaded our neighborhoods at increasing rates and methods to combat the trafficking of this obscenity should be explored by government agencies to include the Post Office, FBI, and the U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

- Investigation is necessary by all concerned to ensure that adequate legislation is in place in each state to prohibit the production, sale or distribution of this obscenity and to also insure that tough penalties exist and are enforced on those that violate these laws.

- The American Legion opposes any legislation that eases present laws against pornographic material in their production, sale or distribution or reduces any existing penalties that would be enforced.

Issue – Child Adbuction/Missing Children

Message Points

- Each day in the United States, an average of 2,185 children, 17 years and younger, are reported missing or disappear by abduction, run away or are lost to some unknown cause.

- The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) was created in 1984 as a central resource and data clearinghouse for law enforcement, victims and their families, fighting for safe recovery of missing children and the protection of all children from sexual exploitation.

- Due to the tireless work of NCMEC and law enforcement, today more children come home safely that at any time in our nation's history, law enforcement is better prepared, and families are more alert and aware than ever before.

- Although NCMEC has made a significant impact in tackling this daunting problem, there is much that remains to be done, for too many children still do not make it home, and too many are still victims of sexual predators.

- The American Legion urges the President and Congress to provide adequate annual funding for the continued operation and expansion of the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, America's best resource to combat the national crisis of child victimization.

- Departments and Posts seek to increase the public's awareness of child victimization and its detrimental effects on the children and youth of our society and cooperate with credible organizations and agencies that seek to locate missing children in their state and communities.

- The American Legion supports the America's Missing: Broadcast Emergency Response (AMBER) and the national AMBER Alert Network Act of 2003 to help missing children to be returned to their homes.

Issue – Catastrophic Illness Among Children

Message points

- A catastrophic illness is any illness or condition, acute or chronic, for which expenses are incurred that are not fully covered by a private insurer, federal or state health care assistance, or other financial source.

- Many children are not receiving needed medical treatment because their families have been unable to afford the cost of catastrophic illness to one of their children. While many of these families have hospitalization insurance, even major medical, they cannot meet the cost of a major illness.

- Several states have enacted legislation to establish Catastrophic Illness in Children Relief Funds to help families bear the excessive financial burdens associated with the care of children with special health needs and disabilities.

- These funds have proven effective and are designed to act as a safety net for families from all walks of life who have excessive expenses related to a child's medical needs.

- The American Legion urges the federal government to enact legislation to financially assist families faced by the catastrophic illness of one of their children, thus preserving the family's financial integrity and their ability to cope with the responsibilities that accompany significant health problems in children.

- The American Legion, through Department and Post leadership, urges state governments to enact legislation including, but not limited to, state specific Catastrophic Illness in Children Relief Funds, to assist financially those individual families faced by catastrophic illness of one of their children in order to maintain the integrity of the family.

Issue – Protecting Children From The Unrestricted Media

- Computer usage statistic shows that 90% of children in the United States have access to a computer in their home and 93% with access also have Internet access.

- Children, especially teens, are more likely to encounter sexual conversations and materials on the Internet, according to a congressional study. One in five youths online face invitations to engage in cybersex or receive other risqué solicitations.

- The study also found that one in four children encounter pornographic pictures while researching homework topics or checking their e-mail.

- The producers of our nation's movies, TV shows and TV news and the Internet have become very explicit in describing and depicting various types of violence.

- The American Legion supports appropriate state and federal legislation to restrict the excessive use of violence, vulgarity and other forms of moral depravation in movies, TV programs, TV news and the Internet.

- Departments and Posts of The American Legion conduct awareness campaigns to educate their members, their families and the general public about the potential dangers the Internet and other forms of electronic media pose to children and teenagers.

Issue – Policy Statement On Family and The Institution of Marriage

Message points

- A guiding principle of The American Legion's Children & Youth Program is to strengthen and maintain the integrity of the family, defined by the World Congress of Families II as the fundamental unit, inscribed in human nature and centered on the voluntary union of a man and woman in a lifelong covenant of marriage.

- A child's biological connection to a married father and mother increases the likelihood that they will identify with the child, be willing to sacrifice for the child, and thereby reduce the likelihood that either parent would abuse the child.

- Children are dependent on a mother and father for their physical, emotional and spiritual needs. The existence of a marital bond between a mother and father is vital for the child's overall well being.

- The American Legion recognizes that marriage is a fundamental institution that predates the law and the Constitution of the United States and opposes all efforts to undermine, alter or otherwise corrupt the institution of marriage, which is the cornerstone of a healthy family.

- The American Legion urges the President of the United States and the Congress to ensure that the institution of marriage is preserved and protected, either through appropriate federal legislation or through an amendment to the Constitution of the United States.

Issue – Sexual Exploitation of Children

Message points

- The sexual victimization of children is overwhelming in magnitude, yet largely unrecognized and underreported.

- Statistics show that one in five girls and one in ten boys are sexually exploited before they reach adulthood, yet less than 35 percent of those child sexual assaults are reported to authorities.

- According to *Highlights of the Youth Internet Safety Survey* conducted by the U.S. Department of Justice "one in five children (10 to 17 years old) receives unwanted sexual solicitations online."

- By far the most prevalent exploitive act reported is the production and distribution of pornographic images of children.

- The impact of these terrible acts can devastate families and put children at risk of depression, disassociation and post-traumatic stress – symptoms that can last well into adulthood.

- The American Legion supports appropriate state and federal legislation aimed at the prevention, investigation and prosecution of child sexual exploitation.

- Departments and Posts seek to raise community awareness about the prevalence of sexual exploitation of children and cooperate with law enforcement agencies, government entities and public/private organizations that seek to empower the public to take immediate and direct action to enforce a zero tolerance policy regarding child sexual exploitation.

Issue – Child Care Services

Message points

- The American Legion is deeply concerned about the quality of life issues surrounding our children and youth.

- According to the National Center for Education Statistics there are approximately 21 million infants, toddlers and preschool children under the age of six in the United States, with more than 12.9 million of these children in childcare.

- The Carnegie Report finds that quality childcare enables a young child to become emotionally secure, socially competent and intellectually capable.

- Consistent studies have found that childcare at most centers in the United States are poor to mediocre and childcare licensing standards, designed to assure minimal standards for health and safety, vary widely from state to state.

- Departments and Posts seek to cooperate with the state and community public or private agencies with day care responsibilities to the end that licensed childcare facilities will be available to all children in our nation.

- Departments and Posts seek to encourage the adoption and implementation of safe and consistent licensing standards for childcare in facilities throughout this nation.

- Departments and Posts are assisting in raising the level of understanding among the general public about the needs of adequate childcare and seeking to encourage the public to commit more resources to achieve a level of quality that is necessary for children to grow in a healthy and safe environment.

Issue – Child Safety

Message points

- According to the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, unintentional injury remains the leading cause of death and disability among children ages 14 and under in the United States.

- Every day, more than 39,000 children are injured seriously enough to require medical treatment, totaling more than 14 million children each year.

- The top cause of unintentional injury-related deaths and disabilities among children and adolescents are: automobile accidents, drowning, fire, falls and poisoning.

- Based on the specific needs of individual communities, a combination of factors – education, environmental improvements, engineering modifications, enactment and enforcement of legislation and regulations, economic incentives, community empowerment and program evaluation – have been proven effective in reducing the incidence and severity of unintentional death and disability.

- The American Legion supports appropriate federal and state legislation aimed at preventing or reducing unintentional injury among children and adolescents.

- Departments and Posts seek to provide leadership on organized safety commissions and actively promote child safety at the state and local levels

Issue – Fireworks Safety

Message points

- Hospital emergency rooms in the United States treat nearly 10,000 fireworks-related injuries each year, with 45 percent of these injuries occurring among children under the age of 15.

- Fireworks can result in severe burns, fractures, lifetime disfigurement or death.

- Every type of legally available consumer “safe and sane” fireworks has been associated with serious injury or death.

- Fireworks typically cause more fires in the United States on the Fourth of July than all other causes of fire combined on that day resulting in direct property damage in excess of $25 million annually.

- Departments and Posts are assisting to alert, inform and educate parents, children, community leaders and others, about the dangers of fireworks.

- Departments and Posts encourage children and their families to enjoy fireworks at public fireworks displays conducted by professionals, rather than purchase fireworks for home or private use.

INTERNAL AFFAIRS – MEMBERSHIP

2010 – 2011

MESSAGE POINTS

- Membership
- National Emergency Fund
- Sons of the American Legion
- Legion Racing Car

Issue: Value of Membership

Message Points:

- The American Legion is comprised of 55 state-level "departments" in each of the 50 states as well as the District of Columbia, France, Mexico, Philippines and Puerto Rico. There are approximately 14,000 local "posts" throughout the state level.

- Facts about membership in The American Legion, the nation's largest veterans organization.

- The 2010 current national membership tally — roughly 2.4 million — is consistent with the year-end totals for 1954 through 1986.

- The American Legion extended its service in communities across the country through the development of 77 new, revitalized posts in 2009.

- One of the newest and fastest growing activities in The American Legion, Legion Riders, raised over $600,000 by the 2010 Legacy Run to Milwaukee in support of The American Legion Legacy Fund—a fund which provide scholarships to the children of active duty troops who died in the war on terrorism since September 11, 2001

- The American Legion attracts younger veterans. Active-duty members are eligible to join - and they are joining. In fact, The American Legion has over 500,000 members who joined under the War on Terrorism, Persian Gulf, Lebanon/Grenada and Panama War periods of eligibility. Today's active duty service members continue to join.

- The American Legion created a task force especially designated to assist Persian Gulf veterans and their families. The task force has helped individuals receive direct compensation and needed support through the service provided by The American Legion.

- The American Legion is "Still Serving America." This is only a part of what The American Legion did "for God and Country" in program year 2009-2010.

- Donated 4 million hours of service to communities.

- Post Service Officers handled more than 142,000 cases of veterans seeking benefits and just compensation from the Department of Veterans Affairs.

- Devoted almost 2.3 million hours of volunteer service to Department of Veterans Affairs hospitals.

- Donated more than 84,000 pints of blood to collection centers nationwide, making The American Legion the nation's single largest blood donor.

- Annually spends nearly $33 million on programs benefiting children and youth.

    1. Awarded more than 9,000 medals to Junior ROTC Students.
    2. Sponsored almost 16,000 American Legion Boys State delegates.
    3. Sponsored more than 2,000 Scouting units serving 58,000 youngsters.
    4. Sponsored more than 2,300 American Legion Baseball teams and an additional 1,600 youth baseball squads.
    5. Awarded more than $4 million in college scholarships to deserving students.

Issue: National Emergency Fund

Message Points:

- Total grants given to American Legion family members in 2010 totaled just under $49,800 as of late September 2010, with total donations exceeding $240,000.
- Fund is designed to assist our members who have been displaced or evacuated from their homes due to damages sustained by a declared natural disaster.
- Each and every dollar donated to the fund is used for the express purpose of rendering financial assistance to American Legion, Sons of The American Legion members American Legion Auxiliary members with three or less years membership and posts.
- The total amount of grant monies awarded since the NEF was reinstated in 1989 is more than $6.7 million.
- We currently have more than $2.3 million available in the fund.
- We continue to receive checks and electronic transfers on a daily basis from our Departments, Districts, Posts, Squadrons and individuals.
- What makes the NEF program so unique is that our members know they can turn to The American Legion for immediate financial assistance without the red tape or repayment requirements normally associated with other federal and state agencies.
- Our true story of “Mutual Helpfulness” is at work in the time of need.

Issue: Sons of The American Legion (SAL)

Message Points:

- The Sons of The American Legion was established as a non-political, non-sectarian civilian organization at the 14th National Convention of The American Legion in Portland, Oregon, September 12-15, 1932

- The Sons of The American Legion is a program of The American Legion with over 5,794 Sons of The American Legion Squadrons located throughout the United States, France, and the Philippines with a total membership of over 335,000 plus members

- The major goal of the Sons of The American Legion is support to our nation's veterans and their families as well as support to The American Legion

- The Sons of The American Legion has adopted by resolution to support The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation and since 1987, the year of adoption, the Sons have made donations well over $4 million dollars

- The Sons of The American Legion annually contributes over a million dollars in cash and goods to our nation's veterans in VA facilities with over 250,000 volunteer hours each year

- The Sons of The American Legion program is a key component to the Legion family in support of The American Legion and all veterans

Issue: American Legion Racing

Message Points

- Per the resolution that established our relationship with Team Johnson Motorsports, no budgeted financial assistance has been provided to the race team

- Main funding for this program in 2010 was provided by the David Law Firm who helps veterans with asbestos cancers and other associate sponsorships that the race team can generate as a result of their relationship with The American Legion and its membership. The car was in 13 of 19 races in the ARCA series for 2010

- Every American Legion member and Post can make money by supporting the # 76 Freedom Car. Ideas are:

    - Hold a post fundraiser

    - Purchase and raffle American Legion Racing merchandise

    - Assist in signing up an Associate Sponsor of the # 76 Freedom Car and qualify for a 10% finders fee

- Now is the time to stand up and let our great nation know who The American Legion is and to salute our service men and women around the world by cheering on The American Legion #76 Freedom Car. At the 2010 National Convention, Team Johnson Motorsports previewed their new POW-MIA wrapped car they will be racing

- In the 2010 ARCA Championship Series, the Freedom Car is in 18th place ranked and Jerick Johnson, our driver, is in second place for the Hard Charger Award

CITIZENS FLAG ALLIANCE

(CFA)

2010 – 2011

MESSAGE POINTS

Issue: Flag Protection Amendment

Full language of the amendment: ***"The Congress shall have power to prohibit the physical desecration of the flag of the United States."***

Message Points:

- By judicial decree in 1989, the U.S. Supreme Court amended the United States Constitution by "inserting" flag burning into the Bill of Rights. That decision took from the American people a fundamental right that had been exercised from our beginnings as a Nation – the right to protect our flag

- The American flag is a national treasure. It's our one unifying symbol of national unity. Traditionally and legally it had been protected from desecration, and most Americans think that protection should be restored. In fact, all fifty states have asked Congress to pass the amendment and send it to the states to be ratified

- Protection of our flag from physical desecration impairs no one's free speech. It does not prevent a single idea from being expressed. It involves no censorship of an idea. The amendment would prohibit conduct with respect to one unique object, the Flag of the United States

- The frequency of flag burning has nothing to do with the evil of flag burning. Laws in this nation are based on right and wrong, not on the frequency of occurrence. Flag burning has never been widespread in our society, but when it did occur it was generally punishable. And that's the position of most Americans: if you desecrate the flag, you shouldn't go unpunished

- A flag amendment has passed the US House of Representatives six times since 1995, and fallen one vote short of passing in the US Senate. All that stands between the people and protecting their flag is a few United States Congressmen

- Opponents often ask, "What's a flag?" Congress, for the purpose of a law, agreed in 1989 that the term "flag of the United States" means any flag of the US, or any part of one, of any substance, of any size in a form commonly displayed. That should make it clear that we aren't talking about ties, or bikinis, or birthday cakes with representations of the flag on them. No one would place a tie, or bikini or birthday cake on the coffin of a veteran.

- Desecration of the flag desecrates our values as a nation. Burning the flag is wrong, but what it teaches children is worse. It teaches that outrageous conduct of a minority is more important than the will of the majority. It teaches that our laws need not reflect our values, and it teaches disrespect for the values embedded in a Constitution that is embodied by the flag

- The Constitution is too important to be left to the Courts and so is the flag. They both belong to the people and it is time to let the people decide, through the process of ratification, if their flag is worthy of protection

The Citizens Flag Alliance, Inc (317) 630-1384
Email: CFA@cfa-inc.org
Website: www.cfa-inc.org
October, 2010

BACKGROUND NOTES

2010 – 2011

- The American Legion