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AD & ORG
PUBLICITY
KEY MESSAGE

The American Legion

For God and country

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KEY MESSAGE POINTS

OF

THE AMERICAN LEGION

2002 - 2003

The American Legion
Public Relations Division
October 2002

VETERANS AFFAIRS & REHABILITATION

2002-2003

MESSAGE POINTS

Issue 1 – Department of Veterans Affairs Budget for Fiscal Year (FY) 2003

Message points:

- Congress has not yet finalized the FY 2003 budget for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). The FY 2003 budget figures will be reported as soon as they become available.

Program	FY 2002	Legion's FY 2003 Request
Medical Care	$21.3 billion	$23.1 billion
Medical and Prosthetics Research	$371 million	$420 million
Construction		
• Major	$183 million	$310 million
• Minor	$211 million	$219 million
State Extended Care Facilities	$100 million	$110 million
State Veterans' Cemeteries	$25 million	$30 million
NCA	$121 million	$140 million
General Administration	$1.2 billion	$1.3 billion

Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation (202) 263-2983
October 2002

Issue 2- The American Legion GI Bill of Health
Resolution No. 141 – 2002 National Convention

Message Points:

- The American Legion developed the GI Bill of Health to better enable VA's health care system to treat veterans in the 21st century. Funding problems faced by VA continue to limit the quality and timeliness of health care and services that veterans deserve.

- The GI Bill of Health will improve access to quality health care for veterans and dependents who enroll in a VA managed care health plan. The GI Bill of health would provide new non-appropriated funding streams to help supplement the annual appropriations process.

- The following elements of the GI Bill of Health have been implemented as a result of the enactment of Public Law 104-262, the **Veterans' Health Care Eligibility Reform Act** of 1996 and Public Law 106-117, the **Veterans' Millennium Health Care and Benefits Act**:
    - Portability
    - An equitable standardized resource distribution method
    - Extension of health care access to all veterans
    - A defined benefits package
    - Long-term care for veterans rated 70 percent or higher or for service-connected conditions

- "Dependent Care" and "Medicare Reimbursement" are the final two provisions from the original GI Bill of Health that have not been enacted into law.

Issue 3 – Making VA Health Care Mandatory Funding
Resolution No. 319 – 2002 National Convention

Message Points:

- The American Legion strongly urges Congress to designate VA health care as mandatory spending.

- VA health care is the only major Federal health care program that isn't funded through a fixed formula. Medicare, Medicaid, and military and Federal employee health care are funded through mandatory appropriations.

- Designating VA health care as a mandatory account would base yearly funding to the actual number of veterans who are enrolled as of July 1 of each year.

- Mandatory funding is one component of a combination of funding mechanisms that will ensure improved funding for VA health care.

Issue 4 – Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Service to Veterans (CARES)
Resolution No. 318 – 2002 National Convention

Message Points:

- The CARES initiative was established to enhance current and future health care services to veterans by realigning its capital assets to improve the delivery of services.
- The final recommendations should result in an appropriate redistribution of VHA resources in conjunction with projected workload demographics.
- VA should maintain an adequate bed level throughout the Veterans Health Administration serve the needs of the veterans' community.
- The American Legion should be involved in CARES decision making at the local level, at the Department level within each Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) and at the national level.

Issue 5 – Presumption of Service-Connection of Hepatitis C for Veterans
Resolution No. 209 – 2002 National Convention

Message Points:

- The American Legion strongly urges the Department of Veterans Affairs to expeditiously promulgate regulations providing for presumptive service connection for hepatitis C.

- Provide for a statutory presumption of service connection for Hepatitis C under certain conditions in service.

- Provide regular notification to Congress, the veterans service organizations and veterans on new treatment modalities for Hepatitis C.

Issue 6 – Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses
Resolution No. 102 – 2002 National Convention

Message Points:

- Devote the appropriate resources to finding effective medical treatments to alleviate the unexplained physical symptoms of Gulf War veterans.

- Fund more scientific studies that exclusively investigate the health of women Gulf War veterans.

- Quickly implement any reasonable recommendations contained in the Institute of Medicine reports regarding its Gulf War veterans programs and research.

- Continue to develop the Persian Gulf Registry.

- Encourage the scientific community to focus its efforts on the most likely causes of Gulf War veterans illnesses and to refrain from supporting or encouraging investigations of risk factors that are not likely related to Gulf War veterans illnesses.

- Discourage the Department of Defense from using experimental drugs on U.S. troops without their informed consent.

Issue 7 – Licensing and Certification
Resolution No. 260 – 2002 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 8 – Montgomery GI Bill
Resolution 267 – 2002 National Convention

Message Points:

- 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 educational cost index should be reviewed and adjusted annually.

- A monthly tax-free subsistence allowance indexed for inflation must be part of the educational assistance package.

- Enrollment in the Montgomery GI Bill shall be automatic upon enlistment; however, benefits will not be awarded unless eligibility criteria have been met.

- The current military payroll deduction ($1200) requirement for enrollment in Montgomery GI Bill must be terminated.

- A veteran enrolled in the Montgomery GI Bill may use benefits to repay existing educational loans acquired before enlistment in the Armed Forces.

- A veteran enrolled in the Montgomery GI Bill who is eligible for training and rehabilitation under Vocational Rehabilitation, shall not receive less educational benefits than otherwise eligible to receive under Montgomery GI Bill.

- Accelerated payment of all monthly educational benefits under the Montgomery GI Bill shall be allowed, with the payment provided directly to the educational institution.

- Montgomery GI Bill educational benefits should be used to pay for the cost of taking any written or practical test or other measuring device.

- Eligible members of the Select Reserves, who qualify for Montgomery GI Bill educational benefits shall receive not more than half of the tuition assistance and subsistence allowance payable under the Montgomery GI Bill and have up to 5 years from their date of separation to use Montgomery GI Bill educational benefits.

Issue 9 – Support for Homeless Veterans Programs
Resolution No. 283 – 2002 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.

Issue 10 – Support Small Business Services for America's Veteran Entrepreneurs
Resolution No. 254 – 2002 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.

INTERNAL AFFAIRS
MEMBERSHIP/NEF/SAL

2002-2003

MESSAGE POINTS

ISSUE – 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 15,000 local "posts" throughout the state-level.

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

- The 2002 current national membership tally – roughly 2.8 million – is higher than the year-end totals for 1954 through 1986.

- The American Legion extended its service in communities across the country through the development of 70 new revitalized posts from January 2002 to October 2002.

- The American Legion attracts younger veterans. Active-duty members are eligible to join – and they are joining. In fact, The American Legion has about 181,000 members who joined under the Persian Gulf, Lebanon/Grenada and Panama War periods of eligibility. Today's active duty service members continue to join. The American Legion created a program known as "Reconnect" as an opportunity for its members to interact with the total force – active duty, National Guard and Reserve.

- The American Legion created a task force especially designated to assist Persian Gulf Veterans, more than 3,000 individuals and their families have received direct compensation and needed support through this 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 2002.

- Donated more than 3.3 million hours of service to communities.

Membership
October, 2002

- Post Service Officers handled more then 254,000 cases of veterans seeking benefits and just compensation from the Department of Veterans Affairs.

- Devoted more than 1.5 million hours of volunteer service to Department of Veterans Affairs hospitals.

- Donated more than 96,000 pints of blood to collection centers nationwide, making The American Legion the nations single largest instructional blood donor

- Annually spends nearly 30 million on programs benefiting children and youth.

  - Awarded nearly 14,000 medals to Junior ROTC students
  - Sponsored nearly 24,500 American Legion Boys State delegates
  - Sponsored nearly 2,400 Scouting units serving 70,000 youngsters.
  - Sponsored more than 5,200 American Legion Baseball teams and an additional 2,400 youth baseball squads.
  - Awarded more than 6 million in college scholarships to deserving students.

Membership (317) 630-1327
October, 2002

MESSAGE POINTS – NATIONAL EMERGENCY FUND

- The American Legion National Emergency Fund was born out of natural disasters to provide immediate assistance for Legionnaire and family during time of tragedy.

- A major disaster could happen to any Legionnaire in any town at anytime and make them homeless.

- Created in 1989 after Hurricane Hugo and San Francisco Earthquake.

- Provides for grants up to $1500 to members and $5000 for The American Legion post homes affected by a "declared" natural disaster.

- Fund is sustained by donations from the "grass-roots" level — Legionnaires helping fellow Legionnaires, Auxiliary members and Sons of the Legion.

- No red tape or overhead — every $1 donated to the fund returned to a Legion family member in need — "spirit of mutual helpfulness".

- Since 1989, over $3.4 million in grants has been given to over 3,600 Legion family members and 125 post homes for damages from natural disasters such as Hurricanes Andrew and Iniki; flooding in North Carolina, Gulf States, Kentucky, Ohio, Missouri, Illinois, Red River Valley in North Dakota and Minnesota; tornadoes in Oklahoma, Kansas, South Dakota, Maryland, Wisconsin, and Indiana; ice storms in the Northeast; and firestorms in the West, to name a few.

- Grants provide for our members' most immediate needs and not designed to replace insurance protection.

- Turn around time from receipt of application to check in hand — 2 to 3 days.

Internal Affairs
October, 2002

MESSAGE POINTS – SONS OF THE AMERICAN LEGION

- 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 5,280 Sons of The American Legion Squadrons located throughout the United States, France, and the Philippines with a total membership of over 264,000 plus members.

- The major goal of the Sons of The American Legion is support to our nation 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 in excess of 2 million dollars.

- The Sons of The American Legion annually contributes over 1.6 million dollars in cash and goods to our nations veterans in VA facilities with over 250,000 volunteer hours each year.

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

Internal Affairs
October, 2002

NATIONAL SECURITY

2002-2003

MESSAGE POINTS

Issue: Defense Policy and the Fiscal Year 2003 National Defense Budget

Message Points:

-- The FY 2003 defense budget, the first wartime budget in the War on Terror, represented 3.3 percent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The American Legion urges that defense budgets represent at least 3.5 percent of GDP.

-- The President's FY 2003 Department of Defense budget request proposed $369 billion, nearly $48 billion more than the FY 2002 defense budget. Similar defense budget bills were passed by the House and the Senate. If this budget becomes the FY 2003 National Defense Authorization Act, it would be the largest defense spending bill since President Reagan's budget in the mid-1980's.

-- The President's budget request contains a 4.1 percent increase in basic pay and recommends over $4 billion for family housing to eliminate most inadequate housing by 2007. This defense budget also proposes a reduction in out-of-pocket housing costs from 11.3 percent of 7.5 percent for personnel living in private housing. The American Legion supports these requests and views them as important steps in improving the lives of American service personnel and their families.

-- Defense appropriations bills would fund DoD programs and activities for Fiscal Year 2003 at $355.4 billion. The DoD cancelled the Crusader cannon program saving over $400 million for other programs. Appropriations would fund an active duty force of 1.4 million and 864,558 Selected Reserve and National Guard personnel.

-- In order to provide for homeland security the President authorized a partial mobilization of 81,000 Reservists.

-- The American Legion salutes and supports the War on Terrorism and the establishment of the Department of Homeland Security.

-- The American Legion recommends, as a minimum, that funding in the FY 2003 DoD budget request provide for implementation of the following:

- Continued quality-of-life improvements to include military pay raises, equitable increases in Basic Allowances for Housing and Subsistence, military health care, and improved benefits under the Montgomery GI Bill;

- Defense spending, as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product needs to be maintained between 3 and 4 percent annually;

- Force modernization needs to be realistically funded without further delay or American lives will be unnecessarily risked in the years ahead; and

- The National Guard and Reserves must be realistically manned, structured; equipped, and trained to be fully deployable and to sustain a high degree of readiness.

-- The American Legion believes that ending the injustice of concurrent receipt must be elevated as a top priority by the administration and the Congress. The House bill includes a provision to authorize concurrent receipt for 60 percent and higher rated disabled military retirees while the Senate version would authorize and fund full concurrent receipt for all disabled military retirees veterans. The American Legion is strongly supportive of the Senate version. A Conference Committee is in session to resolve the House and Senate versions of the FY 2003 defense budget and the concurrent receipt issue..

-- The House and Senate are scheduled to take their break in October and return in November after the Congressional elections..

-- To date, none of the defense bills have been passed nor any of the 13 appropriations bills..

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

Message Points:

-- Even after the FY 2002 payraise, military pay will continue to lag the private sector by about 8 percent. Fewer than 5,000 servicemembers and their families are receiving Women's and Infants' Compensation (WIC) in CONUS. WIC has been extended overseas.

-- Continued operational deployment tempos and the declining economy continue to affect quality of life and readiness. For the first time in years all Services made their recruiting goals.

-- The FY 2003 Defense Authorization Bill will provide at least a 4 percent pay raise and will significantly raise the Basic Allowance of Housing.

-- An improved military benefits package has passed this year in an effort to bolster recruiting and retention. However, a long-term, systemic approach to quality of life and readiness is vital to our national defense.

-- The American Legion supports authorization of the Korean Defense Service Medal and a Cold War Medal. Last year, the Congress supported both medals by a non-binding Sense of the Congress only.

Issue: The Quadrennial Defense Review

Message Points:

-- Congress in the FY 1997 National Defense Authorization Act specified a two-part National Security Review consisting of a Quadrennial (every four years) Defense Review (QDR), conducted by the Secretary of Defense, and or independent civilian National Defense Panel (NDP).

-- In the QDR, the Defense Department is charged with addressing military strength, force structure, modernization, plans and infrastructure and to assess resultant impacts on future military readiness and budgets through the year 2010.

-- The Quadrennial Defense Review will not further reduce forces and will claim a prominent role for the armed forces in homeland defense and homeland security and eliminate the requirement to fight two nearly simultaneous wars. It postpones major decisions on weapon procurement and force structure.

-- The two-war strategy is replaced with a new set of policy goals designed to give political and military leaders more flexibility in shaping force structure. The policy objectives are assuring allies and friends; dissuading future military competition; deterring threats to U.S. interests; and defeating aggression if deterrence fails. The new strategy advocates a capabilities-bases approach to defense.

-- The U.S. military, for at least the time-being, will continue to retain 10 active duty Army divisions, 12 Navy carrier battle groups and 12 active Air Force fighter wings.

-- The American Legion has continued to warn the Congress of the double mismatch in strategy: United States national security strategy is far too ambitious for the forces available, and the inadequate force structure is underfunded yet strategic requirements continue to run at high levels.

-- The American Legion urges the Congress to more adequately recognize and fund the national defense requirements of the United States over those recommended by the Quadrennial Defense Review.

Issue: Ballistic Missile Defense System

Message Points:

-- This Administration supports the continued development and deployment of a Ballistic Missle Defense System which includes both a national missile defense system and theater missile defense system.

-- The administration is repealing the 1972 ABM Treaty as it is out-dated and no longer pertinent, and the administration has been negotiating this with Russian officials.

-- Missile proliferation is on the rise, e.g. Iran, Pakistan, India, North Korea, Red China. The reported development of nuclear proliferation in Iraq is prompting the United States to pursue military action against that country. The theft of U.S. nuclear technology may have contributed to its first usage in a Red Chinese launching.

-- DoD proposed to allocate $8.3 billion in additional funding for the NMDS and TMD in the FY 2003 Defense Budget. The Senate Armed Services Commission voted to cut $1.3 billion from this amount which was restored after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks.

-- The American Legion supports revising or abrogating the 1972 ABM Treaty to permit system deployment in order to protect American citizens from potential missile threats from Russia, PRC or rogue nations.

Issue: Peacekeeping Operations

Message Points:

-- The American Legion has given Congressional testimony since 1993 on peacekeeping operations: U.S. military forces should not be placed under foreign or United Nations command except in exceptional circumstances where Congress grants specific approval.

-- The Specialist New Case, the American soldier who refused to serve on a United Nations mission to Macedonia, has highlighted the issue of U.S. troops serving under foreign/United Nations Command.

-- The President vetoed past defense budgets as they contained wording that he certify whenever U.S. troops were under foreign or United Nations control and that it would be in our national interests to do so.

-- Kosovo: During Operation Allied Force, The American Legion, in Resolution No. 44, had urged that if the following conditions were not implemented that U.S. forces should be withdrawn from Kosovo:

- Explain why Kosovo is in the U.S. national interests
- Establish operational guidelines and exit strategy
- Reasonable support of the American people and Congress
- U.S. Forces commanded by U.S. Officers

-- The American Legion also reaffirmed its unwavering admiration of, and support for, our men and women serving in uniform.

Issue: Military Funeral Honors for Veterans

Message Points:

-- The Fiscal Year 2000 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) recognized the national obligation to demonstrate the Nation's gratitude to veterans for their service. The FY 2000 NDAA also authorized the reimbursement of members of veterans service organizations, as part of the Authorized Provider Partnership Program, who participate in military funeral honors.

-- Members of veterans service organizations who wish to participate in military funeral honors with the military will receive training and certification from the military before they are reimbursed.

-- In 2001, the active and reserve components of the Armed Forces provided over 91,000 funeral honors, while The American Legion provided at least an estimated 137,000 funeral honors last year.

-- The Military Services are mandated to provide funeral honors at veterans' funerals upon request by the next of kin, with a minimum of two uniformed members, one in the service of the deceased, and including the U.S. flag folding and presentation along with the playing of Taps.

-- A number of state National Guard organizations such as in Maryland, Missouri, New York, and others have expended state funding for funeral honors without receiving federal assistance.

-- The American Legion advocates:

- That Congress appropriately fund the Department of Defense and military services, to include reimbursing the National Guard, for rendering military funeral honors.

- That American Legion Posts and Departments be encouraged to participate with the military in rendering military funeral honors.

- That the Department of Defense and the Congress adopt and implement equitable and expedient reimbursement procedures for veterans service organizations.

- That veterans of the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force and Coast Guard be authorized to receive military funeral honors from those military services.

Issue: Specialist Michael New Case

Message Points:

-- Michael New refused to appear in uniform with U.N. insignia in preparation for his unit deployment to serve under a Finnish U.N. commander in Macedonia. New refused to comply and was court-martialed and sentenced to receive a Bad Conduct Discharge. His attorneys are appealing the conviction through the military and Federal District court systems.

-- The American Legion has not adopted a resolution but has developed a position with regard to the Michael New case:

a. The American Legion adopts resolutions and mandates which address policies rather than individuals, per se.

b. Many Legionnaires have stated that, as veterans, they had to comply with military orders whether they liked them or not; Michael New should have complied with the order, received his Honorable Discharge, and then challenged the legalities of the order in the United States court system.

c. As an organization well-steeped in legal responsibility, The American Legion cannot condone any American service member for willfully refusing to obey a legal order from his commanding officer, and that was the immediate issue.

d. The American Legion will continue to oppose the policy of placing U.S. troops under foreign or United Nations command unless specifically approved by the Congress.

Issue: Homosexuals Serving in the Armed Forces

Message Points:

-- The American Legion has supported the retention and codification of the former Department of Defense ban on homosexuals entering and serving in the Armed Forces.

-- The Congress, in response to the President's stated intention of completely lifting the ban on avowed homosexuals serving in the military, included a modified ban in the FY 1994 National Defense Authorization Act which became known as the "don't ask, don't tell, don't pursue" policy.

-- The Joint Chiefs of Staff are on record as supporting the Congressionally-passed law. In fact, the number of homosexual discharges has increased since its passage in 1994.

-- The current policy of The American Legion contains the following elements:

a. The American Legion urges the Congress to continue to review and revise, as necessary, Department of Defense policies and directives on homosexuals serving in the Armed Forces so that these policies more accurately reflect the spirit and language of the public law.

b. The American Legion urges the Secretary of Defense to reinstate recruit homosexual screening, as authorized in the law, if it is determined that current policies are undermining morale, good order, readiness and unit cohesion in the Armed Forces.

c. The American Legion reaffirms its position to restore the former Department of Defense ban to include the explicit language that "homosexuality is incompatible with military service."

-- In 1999, due to the murder of a homosexual soldier and the increase in homosexual discharge rates, the Secretary of Defense directed that "sensitivity" training be instituted in training programs.

-- Military discharges for homosexuality have increased in recent years as it is believed that servicemembers who wish to be discharged are merely claiming homosexuality.

Issue: Burial Eligibility for Arlington National Cemetery

Message Points:

-- Arlington National Cemetery is one of our Nation's most sacred shrines where more than 250,000 veterans are buried.

-- Arlington is one of more than 100 National Cemeteries but, unlike the others, it is administered by Department of the Army.

-- In spite of restrictive regulations, there have been numerous waivers in recent years, falsification of military records to gain interment at Arlington and even an unprecedented Presidential requested waiver and reservation; and

-- Eligibility criteria for burials at Arlington need to be codified rather than merely regulated by the Army; in order to assure compliance and fairness and to assure that the remaining space at Arlington is judiciously used.

-- The American Legion urges the Congress to codify eligibility criteria for Arlington burials and that such burials be restricted to servicemembers who die on active duty; to our most decorated veterans to include recipients of the Purple Heart; to veterans who spent full careers in uniform, and to their spouses and eligible children; to former prisoners of war; and for the President or former Presidents as Commanders in Chief of the Armed Forces. Additionally, The American Legion believes there should be no waivers for unqualified persons except under unique and compelling circumstances which comport with codified non-partisan waiver procedures as established by the Congress. Eligibility for interment of cremated remains of honorably discharged veterans in the Columbarium at Arlington should also be codified.

-- The House has passed an Arlington eligibility bill but the Senate has not.

-- House and Senate bills addressing the expansion of Arlington National Cemetery passed the 106th Congress

FOREIGN RELATIONS

2002-2003

MESSAGE POINTS

Issue: **American Legion Support for a U.S. Foreign Policy of "Democratic Activism"**

Message Points:

The American Legion recognizes the unprecedented changes that have taken place in the international security environment since the end of the Cold War, and since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. We advocate that the United States adopt a bipartisan national security-foreign policy of "Democratic Activism". We define this as the promotion of democratic values, maintenance of adequate U.S. military power, and we encourage cooperation with allies, promote free and fair trade, and offer assistance to developing nations.

We believe U.S. foreign policy should embody 11 principles as outlined in Resolution "Principles of U.S. Foreign Policy". These principles are:

1) Recognition of U.S. responsibilities as leader of the Free World;

2) Achievement of world peace by a peace through strength posture;

3) Support for a global war on multiple fronts to eliminate terrorism;

4) Support the promotion or democracy and human rights around the world;

5) Participation in collective security alliances;

6) Negotiation and implementation of equitable, verifiable arms control agreements, which improve U.S. national security;

7) Opposition to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery means including ballistic missiles;

8) Opposition to terrorism and drug-trafficking;

9) Support for international organizations, which support U.S. interests;

10) Participation in an increasingly interdependent world trading system;

11) Recognition that the President is the chief architect of U.S. foreign policy and that Congress performs important oversight functions.

Foreign Relations - (202) 263-2993
October, 2002

Issue: **Terrorism**

Message Points:

The American Legion condemns all forms of terrorism, especially the brutal and cowardly attacks on the U.S. on September 11, 2001. For three decades The American Legion has strongly opposed terrorism in resolutions calling for the U.S. Government to not make concessions to terrorist and to use all available means to punish terrorists and terrorist groups.

We support recent U.S. Government initiatives to strengthen our defense against terrorism. We also advocate the full use of all instruments of American power to locate, isolate and punish terrorists. These include: the armed forces, intelligence, diplomacy and economic measures, among others.

The American Legion realizes that if counter-terrorism is to be successful we cannot do it alone. We support the efforts of our Government to cooperate with foreign nations to work together to hunt down and punish terrorist. We support continued cooperation with our friends and allies in order to remain vigilant for potential terrorist plans and operations.

Foreign Relations - (202) 263-2993
October, 2002

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 war time records, documents and the oral history program, can help account for many still missing Americans.

The American Legion has been and continues to be opposed to normalized 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.

In 1991, The American Legion commissioned a special POW/MIA Committee charged with thoroughly reviewing all information relating to the POW/MIAs, investigating the full accounting issue, and monitoring U.S. policy. The Committee meets several times a year to recommend actions to strengthen our POW/MIA programs. The Special Committee's initiatives have included the appointment of POW/MIA Chairpersons in each Department and at local level, periodic POW/MIA Updates at national conferences, meetings and conventions, mailings and public awareness campaigns. 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 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.

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.

Foreign Relations - (202) 263-2993
October, 2002

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 adequate 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.

Foreign Relations - (202) 263-2993
October, 2002

Issue: **American Legion Policy on the People's Republic of China**

Message Points:

The American Legion is very concerned about the activities of the Chinese government internationally and within their own country. The American Legion recognizes that China is strengthening their military with the goal of becoming the dominant power in Asia. This is not acceptable to The American Legion. We support a balance of power in Asia and encourage the U.S. to maintain a credible military presence in the region.

The U.S. House of Representatives-sponsored Cox report on Chinese espionage activities in the U.S. concluded that The People's Republic of China has "stolen design information on the United States' most advanced thermonuclear weapons" among other thefts. This breech of security cannot be tolerated. We urge the U.S. Government to establish safeguards to make sure these thefts do not occur in the future and vigorously prosecute all spies.

China continues to be a major violator of human rights. The American Legion has not observed much improvement of the Chinese government in this regard recently. These continued flagrant violations apply to ethnic minorities, religious groups, and dissidents. We encourage the Chinese government to honor basic human rights of expression without fear of reprisal.

The American Legion strongly opposes the U.S. maintaining Permanent Normal Trade Relations with communist China for the reasons stated above.

Foreign Relations - (202) 263-2993
October, 2002

Issue: **Selected other Foreign Relations issues**

The United Nations

The American Legion has remained supportive of the United Nations since it's inception. However, we feel many reforms are needed to make the UN more effective and have concerns about certain UN policies. These include: maintaining an equitable fiduciary relationship between the UN and the U.S., making sure U.S. sovereignty is not infringed upon by UN programs or policies and the ineffectiveness of recent UN peacekeeping missions.

The War on Drugs

The American Legion is extremely concerned about the destruction caused by the infusion of illegal drugs into our communities. Realizing that much can be done to reduce demand here at home, we also support robust efforts to stem the production and flow of illegal drugs from their source and transit zones in Latin America.

Taiwan (Republic of China)

The American Legion has vigorously supported Taiwan and its right to self-determination since 1949. Since that time we have also supported the sale of armaments to Taiwan so they can maintain a credible self-defense capability.

South Korea (Republic of Korea)

The American Legion has been a strong supporter of South Korea and their steadfast commitment to peace and freedom on the Korean peninsula. We support diplomatic efforts to achieve a lasting peace between the Koreas, but also strongly support the security alliance between the U.S. and South Korea.

Cuba

The American Legion has been opposed to the Communist government of Fidel Castro since the Cuban revolution of 1959. We were especially displeased with Cuba's export of leftist revolutionaries throughout Latin America and the world. We are today still concerned about Cuban espionage, Cuba's ties to rogue nations and the total lack of freedom in Cuba. However, The American Legion thinks the U.S. economic embargo of Cuba has not achieved much success and advocates lifting the embargo if the Cuban government takes positive steps toward democracy.

AMERICANISM

2002 – 2003

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, passed in 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 September 2002, 25 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."

* There are 231 languages spoken in the United States, and 6,800 languages used somewhere in the world.

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 which will restrict entry of illegal immigrants.

- The American Legion is unalterably opposed to illegal immigration and urges Congress and the states, the U.S. Justice Department and the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service to take the necessary action to stop the invasion of this country by illegal immigrants. Specific actions to achieve this goal include the following steps:

    1. Hire and train additional border patrol agents with employment preference afforded former military personnel.

    2. Urge Congress to pass legislation to empower all the nation's law enforcement personnel to apprehend, hold and incarcerate those individuals who are in this country illegally.

    3. Initiate immediate deportation proceedings at major points of embarkation for those arriving in this country without valid passport visas.

    4. Require that all legal aliens carry a counterfeit resistant registration card and that they be required to report, in a specified length of time, to local officials their location and place of employment.

    5. Petition the President of the United States and the Congress to expand and strengthen the Customs and Immigration Services and the U.S. Coast Guard, and enact such emergency measures as will prevent smuggling of illegal aliens and stop, detain and deport potential terrorists or those with ties to terrorist groups.

    6. That, as appropriate, military resources be employed to assist in stopping the flow of illegal aliens into the country, and all of the resources of the United States be utilized to enforce the security of our country's borders.

- The American Legion urges Congress to seek ways in which to ease the strain on federal, state and local forms of public assistance by reducing or eliminating demands on these services by illegal immigrants.

- The American Legion supports strict enforcement and heavy penalties for U.S. employers who knowingly hire illegal aliens.

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

- The American Legion encourages Congress to restore the official observance of 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.

- **Armed Forces Day**: The American Legion supports the annual observance of "Armed Forces Day."

- **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 Bible 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 Bible 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 which 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.

Americanism (317) 630-1207
October, 2002

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:

  1. 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.

  2. 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.

  3. 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.

  4. 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 Alliance 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 the Star Spangled Banner.

- 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 by the Citizens Flag Alliance, Inc. to give Congress the authority to protect the flag from acts of physical desecration.

CHILDREN & YOUTH

2002 – 2003

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.

-- Two income families are becoming the norm rather than the exceptions in our economy today in order to have the means to survive.

-- Divorced families, step 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 gets home from work.

-- Our family program suggests ways for better family interaction and requests that National Family Week be designated by congress as a permanent annual observance during the traditional Thanksgiving holiday week.

Issue - **Juvenile Delinquency**

Message Points:

-- The American Legion is seriously concerned about the high levels of violent crime committed by juveniles in this nation.

-- While juveniles account for approximately thirty five per cent of our population, they account for better than fifty per cent of serious crimes as reported by the FBI Uniform Crime Reports.

-- According to a recent Department of Justice report on nationwide crime, a murder occurs every 24 minutes, a rape every 6 minutes, a robbery every 55 seconds and an aggravated assault every 33 seconds.

-- Programs are offered by the Office of Juvenile Justice to assist in this issue and The American Legion supports the approval of the necessary funding by congress to keep this office functioning.

-- Posts and communities are urged to investigate treatment facilities that are available for rehabilitation of juvenile offenders where they exist and make every effort to initiate necessary recommendations for the establishment of these facilities when they are needed but not available.

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 presented, or they can not 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 now starting to reappear in larger numbers because of this apathy toward necessary inoculations.

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

Issue - **Teen Suicide Prevention**

Message Points:

-- Teen 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 third leading cause of death in the 15 to 24 year old age group, preceded only by homicide and automobile accidents.

-- Suicidal persons hurt. They often feel trapped with no form of escape in sight. They feel helpless about being able to change their future. They are pressured by their peers as well as adults to succeed at all costs and if they can not, they see themselves as failures or worthless.

-- The American Legion provides a brochure called "Warning Signs" that can be used to educate youngsters and adults on what to look for and what can be done.

Issue - **Child Abuse and Neglect**

Message Points:

-- The American Legion has been concerned about this problem 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 abuse and neglect.

-- Teachers, coaches, administrators and others responsible for children while they are away from their parents should familiarize themselves with the symptoms of child abuse and, when necessary, have these children 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.

-- Public awareness of this issue should be promoted to emphasize that this dangerous situation is real as well as knowledge about the states reporting laws when evidence does present itself.

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 the individual is "hooked", the juvenile must then commit crimes against society 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 use of 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, Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the U.S. Customs Service.

-- Investigation is necessary by all concerned, to insure 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 reduces present laws against pornographic material in their production, sale or distribution or reduces any existing penalties that would be enforced.

Issue - **Child Abduction/Missing Children**

Message Points:

-- The Department of Justice indicates there are 500,000 incidents each year where children are abducted, run away or are thrown away.

-- Approximately 150,000 children are abducted each year with 50,000 being taken by strangers and 100,000 being taken by non-custodial parents.

-- Run away and throw away children have the same needs as other children in our society but are at a great risk of loss of life by being forced to live on the street and endanger themselves in illegal activities to survive.

-- The American Legion became involved with this issue in 1983 to produce materials to educate children on ways to keep themselves safe from abduction. We are also now working this program in partnership with the National Crime Prevention Council. It is called the McGruff Safe Kids Program.

-- Community volunteers are also encouraged to seek methods to provide alternative conditions to our children of the street that they may also be allowed to develop to their full potential.

Issue - **Catastrophic Illness Among Children**

Message Points:

-- There is an ever-widening crisis in many states relating to the delivery and accessibility of health care and medical treatment to the children of this country.

-- Historically, it has been The American Legion's position that all children should have adequate health services to assure their physical, mental and emotional well being.

-- 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.

-- The American Legion continues to ask for necessary legislation to provide funding that will assist families of need when they face catastrophic illness in their children.

Issue - **Protecting Children from the Unrestricted Media**

Message Points:

-- A recent study shows that the number of U.S. children online has tripled in the past three years to more than 25 million. The number is expected to increase by another 70 percent.

-- 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 are encouraged to 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 – **Children's Miracle Network/The American Legion National Walkathon and WWII Memorial Dedication Awareness Campaign**

Message Points:

-- The American Legion's tradition of service to America holds that all children should have quality health services to assure their physical, mental and emotional well being.

-- Since May 1997, as authorized by our National Executive Committee, American Legion Departments and Posts have partnered with local children's hospitals that are affiliated with Children's Miracle Network, America's largest children's charity, to improve the quality of life for millions of children throughout this nation.

-- Over the last three years, The American Legion has raised more than $3 million to benefit 42 million children served by the 170 children's hospitals affiliated with Children's Miracle Network. These hospitals treat children with all types of afflictions rendering treatment based on need and not just the ability to pay.

-- The American Legion and Children's Miracle Network have developed a proprietary campaign that will benefit children, boost the public's perception of The American Legion, and reinforce the importance and worth of military service by an association with the World War II Memorial Dedication.

-- Elements of this three-year campaign will include nationally televised specials and public service announcements to raise public consciousness of the sacrifices of veterans; student competitions in the form of essay, video and art contests; and fundraising events such as the National "Miracle Miles for Kids" Walkathon designed to culminate at the dedication of the National World War II Memorial in 2004.

-- A portion of the proceeds from this campaign will come to The American Legion and be used in support of Legion charities: The American Legion Endowment Fund, the American Legion Child Welfare Foundation, and the National Emergency Fund.

CITIZENS FLAG ALLIANCE

FLAG PROTECTION AMENDMENT

2002 – 2003

MESSAGE POINTS

Issue – **Constitutional amendment to protect the Flag of the United States from intentional, physical desecration.**

Message Points:

The Citizens Flag Alliance is a national coalition of organizations that have come together to persuade the Congress of the United States to propose a constitutional amendment that will return to the American people the right to protect their flag.

- CFA is comprised of 143 organizations representing over 20 million Americans.
- Independent surveys over ten years indicate nearly 80 percent of Americans favor flag protection. The most recent, a 2002 Market Strategies survey, showed three in four respondents (76%) said they favored the passage of a constitutional amendment that would allow Congress to enact laws protecting the U.S. Flag.
- All 50 state legislatures have passed Memorial Resolutions petitioning Congress to send the amendment to the states.
- More than three million signatures have been gathered on petitions in favor of the proposed amendment.

The Flag of the United States of America is a national treasure that deserves to be protected.

- It says "America." It is our one, unifying symbol of nationhood and national unity.
- State laws banning flag desecration were on the books from the 1880s until 1989, when a Supreme Court ruling (*Texas v. Johnson*) struck down those laws.
- The American Flag is the one unifying symbol for a nation of immigrants.
- "Old Glory" predates the Constitution by a decade.

The 1989 U.S. Supreme Court decision means that the only way to protect the American Flag is through a constitutional amendment.

- Congress voiced "profound disappointment" and "concern" over the high court's decision and passed the Flag Protection Act of 1989.
- In 1990 the Flag Protection Act of 1989 was declared unconstitutional.
- The Flag is not mentioned in the Constitution, therefore it cannot be protected by the Constitution.
- Among the rights set out in the First Amendment is the right to petition the government for a redress of grievances. We are exercising our First Amendment rights to petition Congress for redress on the flag protection issue.

The broad-based CFA coalition is going about this the right way, seeking opinion and counsel from Constitutional Scholars and elected officials.

An amendment to the Constitution requires 2/3 favorable vote by both chambers of Congress and ratification by 3/4 (38) of the states.

- 1995 - House vote on the flag amendment = 312-120; Senate 63-36 (3 short of passage)
- 1997 - House vote on flag amendment = 310-114 (290 votes required for passage)
- The measure was lost in the 105th Congress, when the Senate failed to consider the amendment before the close of the Session, Dec. 1998.
- 1999 - House vote on the flag amendment = 305-124
- 2000 - Senate vote on the flag amendment = 63-37 (4 short of passage)
- 2001 - House vote on the flag amendment = 298-125

-- It is crucial that all Americans contact their U.S. Senators and Representatives and encourage them to support the flag-protection amendment.

-- A flag-protection amendment is not about legislating patriotism. The amendment does not compel any type of behavior, nor would any subsequent law. For 100 years, the American people had the right to protect their flag and a flag protection amendment is about returning that right to the American people.

-- The flag-protection amendment introduced in the 107th Congress reads: "Congress shall have power to prohibit the physical desecration of the Flag of the United States."

-- The American Legion has adopted numerous flag education and flag etiquette programs. Additional information regarding the proper display of the flag and flag etiquette can be found on The American Legion's webpage at **www.legion.org/our-flag/of_main.htm**.

-- **What is a flag?** The amendment says the "flag of the United States." That's a clear, legal term for what is being addressed. The Congress agreed, in the Flag Protection Act of 1989, that the term "flag of the United States means any flag of the United States, or any part thereof, made of any substance, of any size, in a form that is commonly displayed." That makes it pretty clear we are not talking about ties with flags on them or birthday cakes with Stars and Stripes icing.

-- **Desecration vs. disposal**: For 100 years our courts and the American people were able to tell the difference between desecration and the proper disposal of worn flags. It didn't present a problem then, and it doesn't present a problem now. In 1989 Congress passed the Flag Protection Act, and it was able to define "desecration" and "flag." Congress defined desecration as "to knowingly mutilate, deface, physically defile, burn, maintain on the floor or ground, or trample upon the Flag of the United States." An exception for disposal was written into the law. Unlike some of our opponents, we trust the good common sense of the American people and the fairness of the courts.

-- **Didn't the U.S. Supreme Court rule that flag desecration was a form of free speech?** Flag burning should not be defended as free speech – it is conduct. There are a lot of physical acts that aren't defensible as free speech. The Supreme Court has upheld that burning a draft card is not free speech. Defacing U.S. currency or a mailbox cannot be defended as free speech. Indecent exposure is not considered free speech. Burning crosses is illegal; and burning our flag falls into the same category as these unacceptable forms of conduct.

Note: If you see coverage of the flag protection issue in your local newspaper, please clip the item (ensure the clip is dated), and mail or fax it to the Citizens Flag Alliance at P. O. Box 7197, Indianapolis, IN 46207-7179. Fax (317) 630-1385. Also, visit our home page at: www.cfa-inc.org